

BEST PRACTICES

Best Practices #035: Meeting Frequency and Location

Heading: Chapter Structure



Our chapter changed the day we meet three times before we finally settled on the second Thursday of each month. Why the changes? We are all individuals with different interests, jobs and responsibilities. As such, we all needed to find a time and place which was attractive to the majority of our members. So far, this day has worked out great for us. Sure, a couple of our members come in half way through the meeting, but they do make it. If you can muddle through all of the discussion on the best day/time and come to a vote (or two) you will succeed. That doesn't mean it can't change though. (See the first sentence of this paragraph.) The most important thing for success is that you establish a consistent day and time for your meetings. People need to be able to make plans, and along with that goes a set meeting location.

Where to meet actually turned out to be a bigger challenge than when to meet. At first, we met in my home workshop. (Be sure to thank the spouse). After six months, our chapter had outgrown my shop, and we needed to look for another location.

The first place we tried was the local libraries. Libraries have meeting rooms that are open to local clubs, and don't cost a thing. Problem was, we could not do demonstrations. Librarians take a real dim view of wood chips all over their meeting rooms. But, I must say, they were very gracious and accommodating, even letting us use their systems to show videos in lieu of demonstrations.

Local woodworking shops and outlets often are eager to attract groups of potential customers. Even if they don't have a lathe, they may be willing to let you supply one for your demonstrations. Many shops will also give chapter members a discount on wood and supplies. Good for you and good for them. We didn't have one in our area, so...

We began looking to the school system since they are also publicly funded. I have to be honest and tell you that we did have trouble with a couple of schools before we found one willing to let us use their wood shop. Some schools don't want to be bothered. Others no longer have a wood shop or lathe, or aren't interested even if you donated a lathe to them. We finally found a high school that has a wood shop and was willing to let us use their lathe, as long as we cleaned up afterward and had insurance. AAW to the rescue! Since we had just become a Local Chapter of the AAW, we had the insurance paper, and we were in.

Once the day, time and location are fixed, be sure to include this information in your chapter newsletter, including directions. You may want to repeat this information for two or three months, and then keep it available for new members. Not all members have e-mail, so remember to mail hard copy newsletters to the other members.

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