

Your Organization Night: Building Your Organization's Community

Your Organization Night is the concept of having all or most of the standing/operating **committees meet on the same night in the same location**. If effectively implemented, this concept takes the energy available from many committed people and transforms it into positive synergistic accomplishment. By following a monthly or quarterly repetitive format, it is easily possible to **market Your Organization Night to the general public as a port of entry into your nonprofit**. Many sources of media can be used to advertise Your Night including newspaper, TV, radio, church bulletins, posters in public places and prepared postcards handed out after speaking engagements.

Here is a list of potential benefits for holding a coordinated Committee Night, when properly utilized:

- **Opportunity to build "community" and support an atmosphere of shared vision**
- **Consistent meeting time and location eliminates scheduling headaches**
- **Face to face and immediate communication mechanism**
- **Mutual accountability and understanding of the "big picture" of the nonprofit**
- **Opportunity to recognize volunteers, donors, and clients consistently**
- **Opens up committee volunteer opportunities to more people**
- **Provide a forum to involve new people, rather than simply asking them to serve on the board**
- **Immediate engagement of new committee members**
- **More active committees reduces potential for burnout of executive leadership**
- **Can help keep board and committee meetings to a one hour time limit**
- **Protect board members from serving double duty on two committees**

A typical agenda looks like this:

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| 6:40 P.M. | Committee chairs gather to communicate regarding policy issues or events affecting other committees and the organization as a whole. (This can also be done afterwards.) |
| 7:00 P.M. | General meeting occurs -- coffee and cookies available. A board member, on a rotating basis, gives announcements related to organization-wide happenings. |
| 7:15 P.M. | New volunteers attend an orientation to Your Nonprofit and receive a tour of the committees in action. |
| 7:15 P.M. | Committees meet. |
| 8:30 P.M. | Options: Continued fellowship. Committee chairs can meet. Subcommittees can work on strategies for projects. Adjournment. Etc. |

One complication to this program is finding the courage to identify one night that everyone can transition to. One way to begin the process might be to include only committees that are newly organizing. To help effect this model, some organizations meet as a board for a short meeting, then move forward with Committee meetings. **Note: the "single night" DOES NOT WORK if you hold the Committee meetings first.**