

HOW-TO GUIDE FOR CLUBS

PROGRAM PLANNING

AAF AMERICAN ADVERTISING FEDERATION

Beyond question, the program chair is eminent among those contributing to the success of any club. The program chair directs one of the most important club activities. Without good programming no club can be successful or even survive for very long. This guide is designed to help carry out this all-important assignment.

The job is not easy. It takes imagination, planning, determination and follow-through. It's hard work, but can also be the most rewarding job in your club.

Good luck in meeting the challenge.

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Planning for Programming

Interesting, entertaining, informative and exciting programs are essential to all successful clubs. Time and again, club membership surveys indicate that programs are among the chief reasons members belong to the organization. Membership committees all recognize that good programming is their best tool for increasing membership.

Programming is so important that most clubs have a Program Committee whose sole responsibility is programming meetings.

Good programming fosters an actively interested membership, well-attended meetings, membership growth and many opportunities for expanded activities.

The Program Committee

Since your club's success during the year is due in large measure to the leadership, talents, skills and ingenuity of your program committee, you should select members with care. Committee members should be chosen from as many different classifications of club membership as possible, e.g., traditional agencies, in-house marketing departments, digital agencies, production companies, media, graphic designers, and so on. Such a committee represents a good cross section of the club interests and contributes to balanced, well-rounded programs.

Another method is to form groups or subcommittees of four or five members each, representing the different classifications of membership. Under the guidance of the general Program Committee, each subcommittee works on a specific number of meetings during the year. This lightens the workload and actively involves more members.

Programs should be timely, interesting and diversified; social activities should be interspersed to allow members to network and get acquainted in a congenial atmosphere.

The committee should realize the value of continuity and plans should be made which span months and bridge administrations to ensure the future of the club as a viable organization in the community.

Budgeting for Programming

A club with no budget for programming is at a distinct disadvantage, particularly in getting exceptional speakers. Some speakers who might be ideal for your club may charge a fee. Many other fine speakers available to you charge no fee but require that their expenses be paid. And sometimes other programs that do not involve bringing speakers may still involve some expenses such as audiovisual equipment.

Your club should have a budget for programming. The amount, of course, will depend on your club's income, expenses and priorities. However, if you have little or no budget for programming, perhaps you should consider conducting a special fund-raising event specifically to finance programming expenses.

Surveying the Membership

The program committee's most difficult job is providing programs that will have the greatest appeal to club members. Some clubs poll the membership by email surveys. Others use personal contacts, committee reviews or handouts at meetings. Whether formal or informal, such surveys will serve as a guide for the programs committee. Regardless of surveys, however, the committee must constantly be thinking of new ideas and striving to make every program interesting, stimulating and timely.

Planning the Programs

Once your committee has a programming budget and is aware of the membership preferences in programming, it is time to develop a tentative outline of programs with meeting dates for the entire year. Each of the various topics is assigned to

the appropriate subcommittee (or individual member, if the programming is in the hands of a single committee).

Hold program committee meetings on a scheduled basis. Distribute copies of the general outline of meeting dates to committee members. Issue progress reports from time to time in the form of a schedule showing speakers definitely booked.

Ask each committee member in charge of a program to provide, at the appropriate time, an agenda in writing for the president and committee chair. Discuss promoting the programs, guest speaker arrangements, follow-up thank-you letter, etc.

The use of a planning guide (such as the one in Appendix A) can be a great help in organizing the program and ensuring that major elements are considered. It is also wise to keep an “idea file” of speakers, suggested topics and special programs for future reference or for next year’s Program Committee.

Maintaining Programming Flexibility

Sometimes unexpected opportunities come up for exceptional programs. An unusually good speaker may just happen to be in town and available to speak to your club, or perhaps a community happening provides a chance for a very special program. It is important to keep your program schedule flexible enough to take advantage of such opportunities. This may involve rescheduling speakers or programs or holding your meeting on a different day than usual. Whatever is required may well be worth the effort for an outstanding program.

Despite the need for flexibility, do not fail to plan for and schedule programming for every meeting. (You can’t afford to count on windfalls.) In fact, you should also plan in advance (and hold in reserve) programs to use in case of emergency, such as a last-minute cancellation by a speaker. (This subject will be discussed in more detail later.)

Getting the Speaker

Most club meeting programs consist of a speaker talking about a topic of interest (hopefully to all members). So the key question of all program chairmen is: Where do we get the speakers? The first source, of course, is other committee members. Because they represent all areas of the advertising industry, they may well have sources in their area of specialty. For example, those representing broadcast may be able to tap sources such as the radio or television advertising bureaus of the major networks; advertising agency representatives may be able to call upon outstanding experts from major agencies; printing industry representatives may be able to provide excellent graphic arts specialists, etc.

Your next source is obviously your other club members who themselves might be excellent speakers or know of outstanding presenters in their own firms or their industry.

Beyond those two most accessible sources (your committee and club members), other avenues are limited only by your imagination. Consider the following as leads to speakers:

- From your local chamber of commerce or Better Business Bureau
- Through careful and continuous study of programs of regional and national conventions and local trade meetings
- By attendance at AAF regional and national meetings (If possible, extend invitations on the spot)
- From reports on programs that appear in business and trade media
- Through newsletters from other national organizations
- Through other AAF club newsletters (sign-up for their mailing lists)
- Through local newspapers, local media websites, radio and TV stations

- From visitors and convention bureaus
- From nearby colleges and universities
- From AAF's National Speakers Directory (Online at aaf.org/speakers)

Using Special Programs

Bringing in outstanding speakers from out of town will always be a very attractive and desirable option, even though it can also be an expensive way to ensure good programming. Even when you do not pay an honorarium, the airfare and expenses alone are often high, and for many clubs, unaffordable on a regular basis. Consider contacting an ad club nearby and suggest they use the same speaker the following day and share the expenses. Consider the following special event programs:

- A program to promote the American Advertising Awards. Promote last year's national winners which reside in your market as a means of generating more entries in your local competition. (It's best to do this just after your call for entries goes out.)
- A program to highlight legislation—Invite a member of your state legislature, your congressman or your senator to address your club on matters pertaining to advertising. Allow time for a question-and-answer period.
- A program on education—Many valuable educational projects may be launched under this program title. These include: Advertising Career Day (in both high school and/or college), one-day seminars and workshops on professional subjects.
- AAF Silver Medal Award presentation—Conducted as an annual event, the Silver Medal Award is a means of bringing favorable publicity and prestige to the club. It honors an individual who has made outstanding contributions to advertising and his/her community.
- A program to update members on the AAF—Early in the year schedule a meeting that explains the AAF and an overview of the advertising industry.
- A program to spotlight the NSAC—Make your club aware of the skill of student teams in the National Student Advertising Competition. A copy of the winning team presentation is available through the AAF.
- A local economic forecast program—Schedule a panel discussion on the economic forecast for your local area.
- For panel members you might invite the manager of your chamber of commerce, the business editor of your local newspaper, a vice president of a large area bank or others who are knowledgeable about local economic conditions. This program should be of interest to all members of your club.
- Joint meetings—Several groups in the city have joint meetings occasionally. This offers opportunity for a “big name” speaker who may only come for large groups.
- Club members in the spotlight—A panel of articulate and well-spoken club members discuss a timely and relevant subject.

AAF Speakers Directory

AAF headquarters in Washington, D.C., publishes the National Speakers Directory, online at aaf.org/speakers. This is an index of speakers interested in appearing before advertising clubs and includes topics discussed and costs involved, if any.

Etiquette for Corresponding and Working With Speakers

Guest speakers are the single most important ingredient in your club's recipe for successful programming. Speakers deserve very special consideration and treatment. Common courtesy, gratitude and respect should be your guides in dealing with guest speakers. You want every speaker to feel good about your club when he/she leaves your meeting. It is not only good public relations, but may even help your efforts to get other good speakers in the future.

Much of your contact with speakers will be by e-mail. At least three letters or e-mails are involved: the invitation, the acknowledgement of acceptance and the thank-you letter. When possible, it is good public relations to write a letter or e-mail to the speaker's supervisor or the president of his/her company.

The Invitation to the Speaker

- Write the speaker at least two months in advance of the meeting.
- Provide a profile of your club: size, history, officers, membership, programs, other speakers who have addressed the club, etc.
- Give the date, place, theme, composition of the audience and any other information pertinent to the meeting.
- Define the type of presentation desired and specify the amount of time allotted. Tell the speaker whether a question-and-answer session will or will not be expected.

Acknowledge the Acceptance Promptly

- When the speaker accepts, acknowledge the acceptance promptly. Provide further information about the meeting. Ask for the following:
- A photograph for publicity.
- Biographical material for publicity and introduction.
- Title of the speech.
- Specific requirements for visual aid materials: projection screen, easel, DVD, etc.
- The names of any friends or business associates the speaker would like to have attend the meeting.

Offer to...

- Arrange hotel accommodations—Be sure it is clear who will pick up the costs.
- Meet the speaker upon arrival in your city.
- Take the speaker from the hotel to the meeting.
- Offer to entertain the speaker if there is any spare time before or after the speaking engagement.
- In the event you are unable to meet the speaker, have a note waiting at the hotel with a welcome to the city and confirming who will meet the speaker.

Important

- Inform the speaker immediately if there is any change in the scheduled meeting time and place.
- A cordial reminder e-mail or phone call before the meeting date is advisable.
- If possible, when you thank the speaker, present some small memento of your organization, preferably something that signifies the background of your city or something that is distinctively yours.
- See that all guests are notified in advance and told when they are to meet to avoid confusion at the program itself.

Include a write-up on your club's website after the presentation along with some images that can be easily shared on social platforms as a means of follow-up publicity for the event.

Thank-You Letter

Write the speaker within 48 hours of the meeting or shortly thereafter. The club's appreciation should be expressed in warm sincere terms. Comments complimenting the speaker on specific points in the speech are always appropriate.

Letter to the President of the Speaker's Organization

When possible, the thoughtful program chairman will write a second thank-you letter to the speaker's department head or president of the company. This is tangible proof that the speaker is a good-will ambassador for his/her company while away from the job.

Managing the Program

The Program Announcement

Make sure to communicate the program information to the membership in a timely manner. E-mail and social platforms are the go-to methods for getting information out quickly. Make sure you create event pages in the appropriate channels and communicate updates about the event often. In the week leading up to the event, you may want to place some personal texts or calls to ensure that key people will be in attendance.

The Presiding Officer

The club president usually opens the program. The president briefly makes any necessary announcements, introduces any special guests, and then turns the program over to the program chairman. This chairman presents the various features of the day's program and speaker.

Checklist for the Presiding Officer:

- Begin and close on time.
- Prepare a schedule or agenda of the program with definite time allowances for the introduction of members, announcements, entertainment features (if any) the introduction of the speaker and for the speech itself. Give copies of schedule or agenda to those in charge of the program.
- Make only necessary announcements and keep them brief and to the point.
- Do not bore guests and the speaker with long committee reports or with the discussion of club business that properly belong in a closed business session.
- Keep all entertainment features to the allotted time.
- Make the introduction of the speaker brief. Be correct in the pronunciation of the name, position and business affiliation of the speaker.
- Use humor with care.
- Have a definite understanding with the speaker regarding the time allotted for the talk.
- After the speech, thank the speaker gracefully, but again be brief.

Make sure the speaker is aware of the reimbursement process. If they must submit an expense report with receipts, make the process as easy as possible for them. Submit the reimbursement as quickly as possible (no more than 2 weeks after the presentation.)

Special Reminders

- Prepare a digital piece giving full details regarding the speaker and subject.
- E-mail copies and post on the appropriate social channels, if possible, a week in advance of the program.
- Check carefully the initials and spelling of the speaker's name and business affiliation in all advance publicity and in the program announcement.
- See that the presiding officer has the speaker's correct initials and title and knows how to pronounce the name.
- Be sure the speaker is introduced to club officers and distinguished guests.
- A cue card with information about guests in the order in which they are seated at the head table will enable the president, or whoever is responsible, to introduce them quickly and accurately.
- Before the program, check the meeting place itself:
 - » Check the ventilation and temperature of the meeting room. Overheating and drafts are distractions.
 - » Check the acoustics of the room and if necessary, provide a public-address system.
 - » See that the lectern has proper lighting.
 - » Test the audiovisual equipment.
 - » See that a container of water and a glass are placed near the lectern
- Keep a record of each program with the speaker's name and subject, the attendance record, type of announcement, report of weather conditions and any other factors that might have some bearing on attendance and interest. This information will be invaluable to future program committees.

Potpourri of Programming Ideas

- Music Is Advertising, a presentation by an outstanding "jingle" creator.
- A time management program.
- Publisher of a very successful national magazine.
- Major advertising agency presentation, introducing a new product.
- How to Start an Advertising Agency.
- Former presidential press secretary.
- Panel on TV programming.
- Advertising and the Law.
- A Look at Rating Services.
- Outtakes from TV spots.
- National American Advertising Awards reel.
- Retail advertising workshop.
- Media workshops: newspapers, radio, internet, TV, magazines, etc.
- Political Advertising—An Examination.

- Sports programs, featuring outstanding sports personalities.
- National Student Advertising Competition reel of winning presentation.

What to Do When Your Speaker Cancels

No one can prevent “acts of God,” and indeed everything from illness and client demands to snowstorms and floods can prevent your speaker from showing up for your program. You can plan for such emergencies and set up a reserve of programs in case a speaker cancels.

The following are a few things you can do in case of cancellation:

- First, check with your scheduled speaker; perhaps a substitute can be provided.
- Call upon an interested personality within your own community.
- Consider rescheduling one of your other speakers.
- Look to your club members for strong advertising-oriented programs that can be substituted at a moment's notice.
- Panels of members on creativity (print, digital, or broadcast) can be very effective.
- Retail advertisers from nearby communities can often be asked to fill an emergency program discussing their approach to advertising.
- Faculties of local colleges often have prepared presentations, or can present their students' work from classroom situations.

The key is asking in advance that such programs be available in case of emergency.

Checklist for Program Chair

Who Should Serve?

- Club representatives of as many facets of advertising as possible to ensure a well-rounded approach to club programming.
- A balance of innovative thinkers and conservative members so programs will not be too avant-garde or too stodgy.
- Members who have an understanding of the membership's attitude toward programs but will retain the objective of programming oriented to advertising.

What Do You Need to Know?

- A schedule of club program dates and their proposed location(s).
- What “traditional” program dates must be accommodated, i.e., American Advertising Awards gala, Silver Medal ceremony, Christmas party, past president's day, students day, awards ceremonies, etc., that are annually scheduled at about the same time each year.
- Membership preference in programs. A survey of the membership completed prior to the beginning of the club year regarding program preference can be useful.
- The size of the budget. Your club must allocate a reasonable amount to program expenses.
- Availability and costs for audiovisual equipment in your community, and more specifically at the locations(s) of your programs.

When Should You Begin?

- 90 days before your first scheduled program is not too soon. Speakers need plenty of lead time to commit to a date.
- Schedule regular meetings of the committee. Keep the committee abreast of changes and opportunities.

How Does the Committee Function?

- Establish a tentative list of attractive speakers and program features within the framework of your survey results.
- Prepare a model invitation and follow-up letter to speakers.
- Develop a checklist to cover program details such as accommodations and local transportation, program notes, introductions for the president and A/V requirements.
- Designate committee members to follow up on each tentative program. Each committee member should be charged to deliver a report on progress to the full committee at the next program. Committee members must stay within budget and have the responsibility for program details outlined above.
- Assign one or more committee members to serve as promotion liaison to keep the communications chair informed of the programs and communicates with any local media.

Why is This Committee So Important?

- Time and again, surveys of clubs have emphasized that a major reason for membership is the opportunity to attend good programs.
- Without good and varied programs, attendance at regular meetings declines. Your club membership committee loses a valuable tool to convince prospective members of the value of membership.

Appendix A: Program Planning Guide

Meeting Date: _____

Place: _____

Dinner/Lunch: _____ Cocktails?: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Speaker's Name: _____

Speaker's Address: _____

Speaker's Phone: _____

Topic: _____

Goal of Meeting: _____

Speaker's Needs: _____

Person Responsible for Getting Above List: _____

Speaker's Arrival Time and Travel Plans: _____

Expenses: _____ Total: _____

Other Details: _____

1. Does speaker need room accommodations? ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Have you sent a letter of confirmation to the speaker?
3. Who will introduce the speaker?
4. Do you have a résumé or other data for introduction?



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