

LEADING THE WAY

A Leadership and Mentoring Kit for Blind Women

**Produced by The World Blind Union Women's
Committee 2003**

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FORWARD

The World Blind Union (WBU) Women's Committee has developed this kit, as its' major project for the 2000-2004 quadrenium. The kit is a resource we hope will be useful to both women and men who are blind who want to develop leadership programs within their own organizations.

We hope that women and men will gain the confidence, knowledge and skills to form local groups or networks and become active leaders within their organizations at the local, national, regional and world levels as we change what it means to be blind.

There are many references listed throughout the kit that provide further reading, ideas and tips for designing training programs and I encourage you to make use of these.

Acknowledgements

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permission to use and adapt material from "Taking the Lead", A leadership and mentoring resource for women with Disabilities, produced by them June 2000.

Maryanne Diamond
Australia
Chair, WBU Women's Committee

INTRODUCTION

Much of the content contained in this kit may refer to women but the material could also be equally applied to men. Some sections include practical exercises that could be used to help run workshops. One major issue to highlight is that the majority of the material contained in this kit has been developed by Australian and North American organizations; therefore some modification may be necessary for it to apply to other cultures and countries. Throughout this kit the term “blind” refers to people who are both totally blind and people who are visually impaired.

Much of the material was developed following workshops flowing on from two important international forums for women. One of these was the International Women's Conference held in Beijing in 1995, and the other was the International Leadership Forum for Women with Disabilities, held in Washington in 1997. These two international meetings identified the need for leadership training for all women, including women with disabilities.

Qualities identified by women who are blind as necessary to become leaders and mentors in their local communities are listed below.

Leadership Qualities

- Self confidence
- Assertiveness
- Being able to help people
- Not being overbearing
- Being supportive
- Bringing out the best in an individual
- Recognising potential in others

- Not abusing others through self-importance
- Reliability
- Being part of a group and sharing responsibility
- Not needing to be a wonder woman
- Being able to make mistakes
- Knowing that someone else may be better
- Being understanding of people
- Being able to influence in a big way or a small way
- Having mutual trust

Leadership Practice

- Encouragement
- Empowerment
- Briefing and sharing (knowing the facts and reporting back)
- Using consensus approach to clarify issues
- Focusing on the issues
- Group participation
- Information
- Knowledge
- Power
- Sharing decision-making
- Giving everyone a go
- Mentoring - passing on knowledge and skills
- Leads from behind
- Accountability
- Leading and learning

Leadership Skills

- Opening doors
- Allaying fears
- Development
- Collaborative action

- Enabling
- Knowing when to step in or let go
- Saying no
- Acting on the same level as everyone else
- Facilitation
- Delegating
- Organising
- Using disability to your advantage

Further Readings

If you wish to read more about the topic of leadership, Women with Disabilities Australia has a very informative website with many useful links to other sites.

<http://www.wwda.org.au>

Cox, E. (1996) Leading Women -Tactics for making the Difference; Random House Australia.

Duncan, B. & Berman-Bieler, R. (Eds.) (1998) International Leadership Forum for Women with disabilities Final Report; Published by Rehabilitation International; New York, USA.

Higgins, M. & Pate, L. (1995) Damned if you do and Damned if you don't: Do differences in leading and deciding lie in sex or in stereotype? Paper presented at the 4th International Women & Leadership Conference, Edith Cowan University, Perth, WA.

Smyth, A. & Boucher, C. (1995); Managers in Waiting: The significant early experience of women managers; Paper

presented at the 4th International Women & Leadership Conference, Edith Cowan University, Perth, WA.

Weeks, W (1994); Women Working Together – Lessons from Feminist Women's Services; Longman Cheshire Pty Ltd; Melbourne.

Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA) (1997); Women with Disabilities Australia National Leadership Workshop Report; WWDA, Canberra.

HOW TO USE THIS KIT

The kit has been designed in a way that each section is self-contained and selections of these can be used depending on the type of workshop or seminar being organized and the group the training is being designed for.

Ideas for workshops and forums using the material contained in this kit are provided. However, they are a guide only. There are numerous selections of the material that could be used to run a workshop or seminar for 1,2 or more days in length.

For example, if you want to establish an effective group you could use the following parts of the kit:

- Getting started - Forming A Group
- Group Building
- Getting Your Group To Work Together
- Group Development
- Things To Foster In Your Group
- Communication In Groups
- Tips For Effective Decision Making
- Effective Delegating

If you want to establish a mentoring program you could use the entire section on Mentoring.

If your focus was on preparing and managing meetings you could use the following parts of the kit which should prove useful:

- Conducting Meetings
- Tips For Chairing A Meeting

- Minutes
- The Decision Making Process

If you are not sure how to undertake a publicity campaign then look at the following sections of the kit:

- Publicity
- Lobbying
- Funding Guidelines
- A Guide To Writing Submissions

If you want to improve the communications in your group then you should find useful material in the following sections:

- Non-Verbal Communication
- Tips On Handshaking
- Effective Listening
- Verbal Communication

In other words, use whatever sections suit the audience and their needs.

SECTION 1: MENTORING

History Of Mentoring

The term 'Mentoring' is being used extensively today. Government departments and corporate business organisations are introducing mentoring into managerial positions. In fact they see mentoring as a major part of their workplace training. To those people who are not involved in these areas, a mentoring program can be seen as something confusing, intense, alien and frightening. That need not be the case.

What is Mentoring?

One of the earliest records of mentoring was documented by Homer in 'The Odyssey'. He tells the story of the hero Odysseus who was preparing to leave for the siege of Troy. He had a young son Telemachus, and before leaving for battle Odysseus appointed a guardian to care for the boy in his absence. For ten years his guardian acted faithfully as teacher, adviser, friend and surrogate father to Telemachus. The name of this mythical guardian was Mentor.

During the Middle Ages apprentices learned their craft from a master. Today, mentors continue to play a critical role in passing on knowledge and experience to successive generations. (Australian National Training Authority 1996).

For the purposes of this Resource kit the woman who gives advice or teaches will be called 'the mentor' and the woman who receives advice will be called 'the mentoree'.

Why women who are blind can benefit from a mentoring program

Women who are blind need to take control of their lives and to raise community awareness - to do this they need to have access to a system of training that is adaptable to their needs. Mentoring is such a system. The benefits of mentoring are many. The woman who becomes a mentor is given the opportunity to pass on information and life skills, thus enabling her to feel a valued member of society. The woman who takes on a mentoree role is given the opportunity to learn in a way that is beneficial to her disability. For example: A woman is able to learn skills and become educated in the many aspects of disability in surroundings that provide support and acknowledges any restrictions her blindness imposes on her. The organisation benefits by providing opportunities and a supportive environment to those women who will eventually take responsibility for the running of the organisation and the education of the community about women who are blind.

Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA) define mentoring as personal, one-to-one support, assistance, guidance and challenge that one woman can give to another. Whatever age or period of life we have attained, we are constantly been mentored by other women - our mothers, our sisters, our aunts, our friends and our teachers etc. In turn, we have mentored others - our daughters, sisters, nieces and friends. Mentoring is a two way process. The advice and help that we have received from others we have passed on to those we care about. This type of mentoring is called informal where the process of learning and building self esteem and confidence is passed on from one woman to another and is dealt with later in this section.

Women's mentoring is a different approach. It has to be, for women are in different positions of power and often do not have the same authority and control that men have.

Women's mentoring is often done in a collective way, where one woman may promote the concerns and careers of a group or groups of women. This role of mentoring may be because women's activities, especially those women who are blind, do not always take a direct path. In fact women who are blind are faced with discrimination on two levels, as a woman and as a person with a disability. A woman with a disability, who is the mentor in one situation, may become the mentoree in another. Margaret Cooper, of WWDA says:

"I believe feminists are those women who are getting to their goals and who are also assisting other women up and out of victimised positions. When one woman gains an opportunity, then I feel she has an obligation to bring another woman through the door with her. Working within women's organisations is one way of doing this."

A mentoring program can be tailored for specific purposes. For example, assistance in learning how to write submissions to funding bodies, or it can be aimed at helping women increase self esteem and confidence. It is important that both mentor and mentoree understand the purpose of their mentoring program in order to promote trust and confidence.

The most important element that a mentor and mentoree needs is Time and Commitment. With the best will in the world, a mentoring programme will fail if the mentor or mentoree is unable to commit herself and her time. The time committed does not have to be all consuming, 2 hours a week maximum which is negotiated by the two parties, is often sufficient.

There are two different types of mentoring techniques -'the formal or structured' and the 'informal'. For those women who wish to learn specific skills (ie,writing and preparing funding submissions), a mentoring programme based on formal or structured lines might be appropriate. For those women who require general help and guidance to promote self-esteem, an informal mentoring approach may be better suited. For each mentoring situation it should be the couples (mentor and mentoree) decision as to which program best suits them.

Different Styles of Mentoring

Formal or Structured Mentoring

A formal structure can provide a clear set of guidelines when teaching a specific skill. The process can be planned by both mentor and mentoree. The group can be involved by adding additional information and advice. Each stage of the program can be evaluated and monitored, either by the couple, the group or both. The mentor may be identified due to the qualifications and experience that she has and the mentoree may have shown signs of an aptitude for a specific skill. The convenor, a member of the group, should then work on a program for the couple. When matching mentor and mentorees, the convenor also needs to bear in mind that the personalities of both the mentor and the mentoree are of the upmost importance so that a successful matching can take place.

Informal Mentoring

This approach generally has no direct planning and can make evaluation and monitoring hard to measure. Where

the mentor and mentoree relationship is based on acquiring specific skills, informal mentoring would only work where personalities are compatible. In this case, the mentor would probably be a respected and trusted friend.

Examples of Positive and Negative Mentoring Programs

Example 1

Jenny is a member of a woman's organisation. She has had no training in committee skills but has a wealth of knowledge derived from life experiences. She was approached by the co-ordinator to be a member of a committee that comprised of professionals. Whilst these 'professional' people had been trained in the area the committee were examining, they had no life experience of the situation. Jenny was given help by a mentor (who had the skills and qualifications) to apply for the position and was successful. Jenny talks to her mentor after each meeting and before the next, they discuss ways of dealing with situations, her mentor helps her understand some of the lengthy documents that need to be read and is always available for Jenny when she needs advice and help. Jenny says that she respects her mentor and she has learnt that she 'isn't as dumb as she thought she was and knows that if she needs help her mentor is always there'. Jenny is a respected member of this committee and has been recognised by them for her valuable contribution.

This is a positive example of a mentoring program. In this example the mentor was approached by the co-ordinator who, having known both women for a period of time, had assessed that their personalities were compatible. They shared the same sense of humour and believed in the same set of values. The mentor admired Jenny, seeing her

strengths and her capabilities whilst acknowledging her weaknesses. Jenny admired her mentor and was therefore prepared to listen to what she said but knew that she could question any information without fear of reprisal. This is a successful mentoring relationship.

Where personalities have not been matched and no support or training is provided to the couple, the mentoring will probably fail.

Example 2

An organisation, which dealt in a specific disability decided to put into place a mentoring system. When a new client approached the organisation, they were given a telephone number of a person who was willing to talk, give information and support.

Hilary was a person with a degenerative eye condition . She had had this condition for several years and had learnt how to cope with it. She had informed the organisation that she would be willing to talk to new members. Hilary had been a highly successful woman who ran her own business. She gave orders and expected them to be carried out without question. She felt that her opinion and views were always right and that those who questioned her were always wrong. The new client was a woman who had a job in the public service and attained a high position. She did not trust other people's opinion and, because she had had to fight for her position in the public service, she believed that others were trying to undermine her.

In this negative example of a mentoring program both of these personalities were similar, rigid and unbending, which caused a huge barrier between them. They both believed that their way of dealing with their disability was the correct

way and were incapable of allowing the other to have a different viewpoint. Instead of supporting each other they ended up shouting. The result was that the new client never approached the organisation again.

The organisation was responsible for this catastrophe. There was no 'matching' of personalities, clients were only asked if they were interested and if the answer was affirmative then telephone numbers were given. There was no support for the mentor, no training and no evaluation. The mentoring project was dropped after 6 months and even though other clients have requested a link to other people with a disability, the organisation has refused, citing the disastrous consequences of the previous mentoring program.

The type of mentoring program (be it formal, informal or a mixture of both) is a decision that needs to be self-determined. Once the group has decided on the type of mentoring they wish to undertake they will need to appoint a convenor to be responsible for matching the mentors and mentorees. Doing this will ensure that personalities will complement each couple and the organisation can offer support and help when needed.

The Mentor Role

To help groups identify promising mentors the following is a guide to help find suitable women. Whilst any individual mentor may not possess all these characteristics, most capable mentors usually display many of these qualities when working within a group.

Characteristics needed to be a successful mentor

- group determined

Knowledge of their own abilities and skills

- Considered by their peers to be experienced in leadership
- Set high achievable standards for themselves
- Enjoy and are enthusiastic about their activities within their organisation
- Continue to update their knowledge of issues and current local need

Earned Respect from the Group

- Listen to and communicate effectively with others
- Display positive feeling about their own and organizations accomplishments
- Appreciate excellence in others and encourage it always
- Committed to supporting and interacting with other women who are blind in their region
- Are able to visualise the ideas and understand the views of other women
- Enjoy intellectual challenge and like to help others
- Are sensitive to the needs of other women and generally recognise when others require support, direct assistance or independence
- Exercise good judgment in decision making for themselves and the welfare of other women in the group

Guideline of attributes a mentor may need to possess

How do you know if you have the right attributes to be a mentor? The following is a guideline of those qualities that prospective mentors may need.

Mentors are often thought of as women who:

- Possess good communication and listening skills
- Welcome a new person into the group and take a personal interest in their development and well-being
- Share knowledge, experience, skill and wisdom with their mentoree
- Offer support, challenge, patience and enthusiasm whilst encouraging others to new levels of capability
- Guide the mentoree and demonstrate substantial evidence of what a woman who is blind can achieve
- Show the mentoree new ideas, perspective's and standards, values and norms of the group
- Are committed to helping a woman who is blind achieve some of her goals

Self Questionnaire for Those Interested in Becoming Mentors

If you are considering the possibility of sharing your experiences as a mentor but feel unsure whether or not you have the necessary skills, you may wish to fill out this questionnaire. It is designed to provide a description of the qualities and strengths most often thought to be found desirable in mentors. There are three parts to the questionnaire. Part One tells you how to score your mark; part two is the questions; and part three is provided for you to add those extra qualities that make up your unique, special, individual assets. Following the questionnaire is a form for you to fill in entitled: 'I Wish to Become a Mentor'. If you are a member of a group, you could give the completed form to your Group Convenor so that she can match you up to a mentoree who will suit you.

To use the checklist, read each statement and place an “X” in the appropriate column. Each statement is classed in the following way:

1. Strongly Agree: that the statement represents your feelings
2. Agree: that the statement represents your feelings
3. Disagree: that the statement does not represent your feelings
4. Strongly Disagree: that the statement does not represent your feelings.
5. Neutral: don't know if the statement represents your feelings.

It is important to remember that there is 'no ideal profile' and this is not a test in which one fails or passes. This questionnaire represents the degree to which of these statements identifies the way in which you see yourself. Questions 1 - 10 and 15 – 19 apply to all women whilst questions 1 - 14 focus on some leadership qualities.

It is also very important to recognise that many of the qualities listed here are those that have been learnt or developed.

If you are unsure about your strengths and qualities it might be useful to get a friend/family member or someone who knows you well to fill in the questionnaire with you. You never know it might be fun and you might be surprised by how others see you.

Questionnaire for Potential Mentors

Using the Scale 1- 5 as listed above place a number to the right of each of the following statements.

1. I don't see myself as being people-orientated
2. I like and enjoy working with other women
3. I am a good listener and respect my colleagues
4. I do not recognise when others need support and independence
5. I want to contribute to the development of other women
6. I want to share what I have learnt and experienced
7. I think I've come a long way without help from others, sometimes I think I deserve to keep the credit for myself
8. I am willing to find reward in helping someone who needs my assistance
9. I see myself generally as flexible and willing to adjust my time to meet the needs of others
10. I am usually patient and tolerant when explaining something to someone
11. I am confident and secure in my knowledge
12. I make an effort to be well informed on issues
13. I enjoy the contacts with other women in my group
14. I don't like to fail and I don't like other people letting me down
15. I use a variety of communication methods to get the message across
16. Other women look to me for information
17. Overall, I see myself as a competent woman leader
18. I am able to explain things at various levels of complexity and detail
19. Other women are interested in my ideas

Please give a description of your unique and special assets for mentoring

I wish to become a Mentor

Name:

Address:

.....
Telephone: (Business) (Home)

Facsimile: (Business) (Home)

E-Mail address

Have you participated in mentoring before? If so, please specify, including whether you were a mentor or a mentoree.

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What do you expect of the mentor/mentoree relationship?

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In what areas are you interested in mentoring? Please specify those areas that you feel you could contribute the most in.

Please indicate any other areas of interest.

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Do you have particular preference regarding a possible mentoree (age, geographic location etc?).

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Are you prepared to accept more than one mentoree?

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Please provide any other details that you feel are relevant.

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Introducing the Mentoree and Her Role

The mentoree plays a significant role in the mentoring program. After all, this is a partnership that will be successful only if both women are committed to what they are trying to achieve. Sometimes an experienced woman within the group may pick an inexperienced member and form an informal mentoring relationship.

This is more likely to occur if they have the same sort of values and beliefs. However, there may be many women within the group who fail to recognise their own potential (and this can apply to mentors too).

Women who are interested in becoming a mentoree need to consider what sort of skills they wish to develop. Such skills might include things like: increasing self-esteem; assertiveness and public speaking. Some of these areas are discussed here, including exercises mentorees can use to help develop these skills.

A strong woman's movement for blind women must be based on women who have a feeling of self-esteem. With self-esteem women who are blind can feel they have rights and deserve to have rights. Women who are blind can get angry and do something about it, but too many women who are blind most of their lives have fallen victim to a system that is paternalistic at best and treats them as charity cases, or is cruel and arbitrary at worst and ignores both the existence and potential of women who are blind. However we know the truth. Being blind is just a way of being. It's natural, healthy and normal. Or at least it could be if women who are blind had the resources and supports they need. Understanding this fact is the beginning of building the self-

esteem it takes to build up a movement that speaks up for women who are blind. Adapted from J. Heumann 1998.

What is Self-Esteem and why is it Important?

Self-esteem is a picture or a view that we have about ourselves. It is a picture that only we can see, other people may see us differently, we may look as if we are happy and in control of our lives, whilst we may be feeling lost, lonely and in despair.

Self-esteem is a complex issue. It has a different meaning for each one of us and it seems to vary over time and place. One thing that can be agreed upon is that we all want a positive self-esteem.

With a positive self-esteem, women who are blind can feel comfortable with who they are, recognise their qualities; achieve their dreams and work towards leading a fulfilling life.

Self-esteem is a combination of beliefs, both conscious and unconscious, which we believe are true about who we are. Parents are the first human contact that we have in our lives and their attitude towards us can affect the way we think about ourselves. For example; if your parents, teachers, relatives or people who cared for you told you:

- "You've got beautiful eyes you are a pretty girl."
 - "You are a very special person and I love you very much."
- the chances are you felt good about yourself. This is called positive self-esteem.

However, if your parents etc told you:

- "That's not good enough, you'll never learn to do anything properly."
- "You never understand what I tell you, you must be stupid."
- "You are so stupid, how can anyone love you?"
- "You'll never have a normal life with your disability/condition so you'd better get used to it."
- "It's a pity you can't look as pretty as Jane/Beth the chances are that you saw yourself in a negative way. You probably felt that you were so dumb/ugly that no one could ever love you. This is called low self-esteem.

This picture may have been reinforced by your peers, friends, teachers etc while you were growing up. Some of the messages that may have been received might have been:

- "Hey fatty!"
- "Four Eyes, look she's as blind as a bat."
- "Your stupid because you're in a wheelchair."
- "Who'd want her, she's disabled."

Unfortunately many of us believe these negative and cruel phrases and take that image into our adult lives. A negative self-esteem could be affecting our relationships with others, our work, and our lives. As women who are blind it is more than likely that we have had to contend with situations and issues that may have affected our self-esteem in a negative way. At school we may have been 'classified' by our teachers as low achievers. The fact that we may not have been able to see what was written or had adequate access to buildings, equipment and information appeared never to be taken into account.

Some of us may have attended a 'special' school, or been placed in a 'home'. This increased our isolation from the community making it difficult to access the knowledge and skills necessary to become active contributors to society. Being sheltered in a 'special' school we had a lower standard of educational opportunities and were totally unprepared to re-enter the community. The impact this isolation and lower educational skills had on our self-esteem, which was fostered during childhood, is often carried through in the way in which we conduct our lives.

"Low self-esteem is a loss of courage. A fear that you have to be careful and do certain things or be a certain way so people will love you. Low self-esteem is giving up, deciding you've already lost love or respect and that there's no way to get it back. You need to get your courage back because you can do anything!"

(Adapted from: Lott, Kent & West, 1993)

The message is clear: self-esteem is not something that you were born with - it is learnt from other people. However, it is never too late to teach an old dog new tricks! Positive self-esteem can be achieved with courage.

With Courage a woman [who is blind] can do anything. It's the effort that counts, the action, the attempt, the doing.

(Adapted from: Lott, Kent & West, 1993)

How to improve Self-Esteem

Improving self-esteem will take time, patience and energy. It is important to get to know what your strengths and weaknesses are. Acknowledging your strengths is important. If you feel that you do not have any, try asking a friend or a family member to help out. Interestingly, those

people close to us can often identify strengths that we fail to see. You may be pleasantly surprised! Understanding and recognising your weaknesses gives you a firm basis on which to change some of your behaviour.

Remember: Women who are blind have already proved they have strength and courage, in order to live with their disability everyday of their lives. They are already strong women.

"Getting to Know You" Exercise

This is an exercise to help you, as a woman who is blind, know who you are. You might think that this is a simple exercise or that you already have the answer, but sometimes we don't have the time or the courage to ask ourselves who we are and where we are going. To develop good self-esteem and self-confidence this is a good place to start.

This exercise might be useful to do with a group of women who are blind or you may wish to do it in your own time. Working in a group may help you get to know each other but if you feel more comfortable answering these questions at your own pace or on your own, then that's fine too.

If you do this exercise in a group then the following questions can be answered by writing down responses with each woman telling the group her answers. Or the group may wish to split into smaller groups or couples where each person asks the other the following questions. The choice is up to you, as a group, to find that which is most comfortable.

"Getting to Know You," Questions Are you?

- Discovering that the path you're on is a cul-de-sac?

- At a new beginning, taking the first steps?
- At the top of the hill, looking at the view and wondering 'what now'?
- At a crossroads and wondering which way to go?
- Going in totally the wrong direction?
- Having fun and enjoying being you?
- Trudging along, doing OK but feeling that something might be missing?

Now ask yourself the following questions.

1. What does being a woman mean to you?
2. What are the advantages of being a woman? (Give examples of qualities, experiences, opportunities)
3. What are the drawbacks to being a woman? (Give examples of closed doors, prejudice, lack of opportunity etc.)
4. What does it mean to you to be a woman who is blind?
How has it affected your life so far?
5. How many opportunities have been opened or closed as a result of your disability?
6. How relevant is being blind to the way you want your life to develop?
7. The time in my life when I have had a good time is when?
8. I like myself best when I?
9. My ideal future looks like?
10. A woman who has had a great deal of influence on me is/was
11. A woman who has had a positive influence on me is/was
12. The thing about me I would most like to change or develop is

Assertiveness

By being assertive, a woman who is blind takes control of her life. She becomes powerful.

Behaving Assertively means:

- Your self confidence increases
- You are properly understood
- Other people know exactly where they are with you
- You are more open to receiving feedback
- Your relationships are based on reality rather than illusion
- You stand a better chance of getting what you want
- You feel better for expressing your feelings

Being Assertive is easier if:

- You use clear, easy to understand language
- You make sure that the person you want to communicate with is able to listen to what you have to say

Those women who are blind who speak in an assertive manner have sometimes been labelled aggressive, especially by people who do not want to listen to what they have to say. This is often about control and power. There are those in our society who wish women who are blind to stay within a safe 'box' - quiet, unassuming, grateful and passive. When a woman who is blind speaks assertively and says what she wants, how she wants it and why she wants it, they can feel very threatened.

Behaving Aggressively means:

- Getting your own way, no matter what
- Getting your own point across at other people's expense
- Being loud and violent
- Interrupting others

- Winning at all costs
- Being so self minded, selfish, self-centred that it interferes with developing close relationships
- Being lonely, because you never listen to others

Behaving Passively means:

- Keeping quiet for fear of upsetting people
- Avoiding conflict
- Saying yes when you want to say no
- Always putting other people's needs first
- Not expressing your true feelings
- Going along with things you don't like or agree with
- Apologising excessively
- Inwardly burning with anger and frustration
- Justifying your actions to other people
- Appearing indecisive
- Being lonely, because no-one will listen to you

The difference between aggressive, passive and assertive behaviour

Whilst we are all capable of behaving assertively, aggressively or passively, most people have a tendency towards one form of behaviour.

Aggressive behaviour does not come from being over-confident - quite the reverse; it comes from a lack of confidence and fear. Most women who are blind have all experienced the classic 'bully' at some time or another. But underneath the 'blustering' is a coward, a real person who's feeling just as scared or threatened as a person behaving passively' (adapted from Willis & Daisley 1990). Whilst we may sympathise with these people, if we feel generous, one of the aims of this kit is to help build positive assertive skills.

Passive behaviour stems from lack of confidence or self-esteem. It is a fear of thinking that you are not good/strong/intelligent enough a person. Unfortunately, as women who are blind, we have been conditioned to act within a passive role. For example: How many times have you been in a restaurant with a friend, especially if you are obviously blind and the waiter or waitress has focused their attention on your friend? When you tell him/her what you want to eat, they don't look at you or speak to you. Instead of saying anything, you sit there and allow their behaviour to affect your evening. The experience has left you feeling invisible/unworthy/ embarrassed.

Assertiveness can be defined as the 'ability to express one's own desires and feelings and to maintain one's rights in interactions with others' (Gray, 1999). Most importantly, assertive behaviour promotes self-respect and the ability to respect other people's rights.

To be assertive with other people can take a lot of courage. In order for you to take control of the situation it is important that you understand and recognise those human rights that each one of us want to live our lives by.

What are human rights?

Human rights are part of what make us human. They are essential to achieving the goal of human dignity that is the preserve of every human being. Human rights are not exclusive to any particular society or group of individuals no matter where they live. Human rights are for everyone, everywhere and at all times. Human rights are an inextricable part of our lives. In fact, they are so much a part

of every day living that we often take for granted the protection they offer us. Consider, for example, how often you drink clean water; eat food; go to school or university; say or write what you think; practice a religion (or not); vote for a political party; demand privacy, and expect to be treated fairly by others. All of these everyday activities depend on the adequate protection of your human rights as well as those of your neighbour. Where the protection is inadequate or missing altogether your human rights suffer.

There are many different sorts of human rights, such as:

- Civil and political rights - such as rights to life, liberty, free speech, movement, political thought and religious practice, a fair trial, privacy, to found a family and to vote.
- Economic, social and cultural rights - such as rights to adequate food and water, health care, education, a clean environment, to respect for cultural practices and to welfare assistance.
- Humanitarian rights - that is the rights of those who are involved in, or affected by, armed conflict, such as the treatment of prisoners of war, of the wounded or sick or shipwrecked, of civilians, and of women and children in particular.
- Various categories of rights as defined by the nature of the holders - such as the rights of workers, women, children, minority groups, refugees, Indigenous people's, and people with a disability etc.

Source: Australia, Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission 1999

The following is a list of those rights that, as human beings and members of society, we expect for ourselves and from others.

- I have the right to be myself.
Sometimes you may feel swamped by all your responsibilities and other people's expectations but it is important to remember to make time for your own personal wants and needs.
- I have the right to be treated as an equal.
On occasions where we feel less sure of ourselves, we may allow ourselves to be treated as less capable or less intelligent than what we really are.
- I have the right to an opinion.
It may be difficult to voice an opinion which is contradictory to the rest of our family's / friends'/ work colleagues' views, but we have the right to express it. We also have the right to expect other people to listen to our opinion.
- I have the right to express my feelings.
It is important to be able to identify how we feel at the time of the event and let others know how it is affecting us.
- I have the right to make a choice.
It is important to feel free to make our own choices about what we want or if we don't want to do something, without having to justify our choice on other grounds.
- I have the right to be wrong.
Many of us feel overwhelmed with anxiety when we make mistakes but it is important to recognise that we are not infallible, and that to make errors is human and natural. It may be unfortunate but it need not throw us into turmoil.
- I have the right to say "I don't understand".
Asking for an explanation when you are confused can be difficult (especially when everyone else seems to be

taking things in) but you cannot know and understand everything. You are perfectly entitled to ask for clarification without feeling stupid.

- I have the right to ask for what I want.
Many of us do not ask for things in a straightforward manner. We drop hints; make suggestions, hedge around the subject, hoping that someone will get the message. We may feel that the request will be rejected or worry about causing inconvenience to others or being seen as a nuisance. We must remember that we have the right to make requests of other people.

Remember

Assertiveness is about:

- Respecting other people
- Building your own self respect
- Dealing with your feelings

How To Be Assertive

- Listen effectively
- Say what you think and feel
- Say as clearly as possible what you want to happen
- Consider what the consequences are for you and others in any joint situations

1. Listening effectively.

Being an effective listener is not something many people are born with. It is a skill that comes from practice and anyone can learn it.

- a) Listen carefully to what is being said. If you don't understand, ask the person to explain; they won't bite you, they will probably be happy someone is taking the time and care to really listen.

- b) Demonstrate that you understand what the other person is saying. You can say something like "you seem very angry and disappointed". This helps make clear to you and the other person what the main issue is. It can also help put the problem into focus.
- c) Do not interrupt with your feelings/thoughts etc while they are speaking. Allow the other person to state their problem without interruption before you speak.

2. Say what you think and feel.

- a) Take responsibility for your feelings.
- b) You have every right to say what is bothering you or making you angry but focus on the behaviour not on the person. Don't take it personally!! What someone thinks about your behaviour is not necessarily what he or she think of you.
- c) Take your time when speaking, do not allow the other person to interrupt you.
- d) It is all right to pause when starting to speak, or in the middle of a sentence. This will help you get clear your thoughts and feelings.

3. Say clearly what you want to happen.

- a) Do not drop hints or beat around the bush. The other person might not understand the real problem.
- b) State clearly what you want to happen. By doing this you know you will be understood. Remember your rights; you have the right to ask for what you want and the right to express your feelings.
- c) Listen carefully to the response that you receive.

4. Find joint solutions and the consequences.

- a) Find the gap or area in what you want and what the other person wants. By using listening skills and letting the

other person hear your feelings, finding an area that could be a solution for both of you is possible.

- b) Joint solutions mean that you are both satisfied with the outcome as opposed to compromise, which means neither of you may get what you want.
- c) When exploring joint solutions look at the effect these may have on yourself and other people.
- d) Sometimes solutions are not always possible and a compromise needs to be made. Make sure that you are happy doing this. Finding a way that is satisfactory to both of you can sometimes be better than leaving issues unresolved although sometimes issues need to be left until a later time to allow both you and the other person the space to think about what has happened.

Remember:

You are in control.

Being Assertive When No-One is listening to What You Say

There is nothing worse than when other people don't listen to what you have to say. It can make you feel stupid, dumb, lonely, angry, sad and hurt. It can also reinforce negative feelings if you have a low self-esteem. Even if you're having a good day or have a positive self esteem, when someone doesn't acknowledge your feelings/views, you can become frustrated and depressed. So how can you change the situation?

How To Be Assertive With Yourself

Think of situations where you would like to be more assertive with yourself. Remember the difference between acting aggressively (being angry, 'storming' out of the room etc) and being passive (accepting without questioning, ignoring a situation when you really feel like putting your point of view across).

The following table is a way in which you can identify situations where you want to be assertive, explore how you felt when the situation occurred, and how you would do it differently.

What Happened?

How did you feel?

What can you do differently?

Positive Self-Talk - When working on changing your behaviour it can be useful to participate in 'self talk'. Whilst we are not suggesting that you continually hold conversations with yourself whilst others are present (friends and family may think you have gone a little crazy!), talking to yourself is a positive way of giving you confidence.

Self-talk can help you be clear about your feelings and provide you with an action plan on how to achieve your goals. It can give you control of the situation.

Role Play - If you have a friend or a family member who you can trust, try getting them to do a role-play. Role-plays have been used extensively in personal development courses.

Practicing or rehearsing when you know a situation is likely to occur can help give you the confidence you may need.

You could try either of these scenarios with your friends/family until you felt comfortable. It is also useful to get feedback from the other person in the role-play; they could tell you if you sounded aggressive, assertive or passive. There is also more than one way to get your message across, picking the right one may take time and energy but the benefits are huge. You will become more self-confident and learn to use assertive behaviour to express your feelings, thoughts and ideas.

Public Speaking

A section on public speaking is included in this kit because, whilst there are several well known and successful organisations that teach this subject, the majority of personal development courses/books etc fail to discuss the fear of public speaking and its significance in the role it plays in promoting self esteem and self confidence.

The fear of public speaking is a frightening ordeal for most people. Even those who possess high self-esteem and confidence often find standing in front of a group of people very difficult because they can never be sure as to how the audience will react to what they want to say. This can be especially true when talking about disabilities. The community still tends to think of women who are blind as being 'poor sick women'. Standing up and challenging this concept can take a lot of courage but, if approached in the right manner, the results can be wonderful.

The need for women who are blind to conquer this fear is extremely important, because we need to communicate our needs, wishes and ideas to a wide range of people.

Politicians, government departments, private corporations and disability service providers all make decisions that affect women who are blind. But they often make these decisions without knowing what we want. Unfortunately they rarely, if ever, consult with those people who know better than anyone else what they want, why they want it and how they want it, in other words - US!

It is this attitude of "we know best" that has to be changed. To do this we need to be assertive within the public sphere. To be effective, women who are blind need to have the confidence to stand up and speak. Only then will society start to see us as for who we really are: women who are articulate, intelligent, loving, caring and, oh yes, I almost forgot - disabled.

How do we learn to speak effectively, without the fear of heart pounding, knees turning to jelly, tongue sticking to the roof of mouths and suddenly forgetting who we are, let alone why we are there?

For women who are blind the opportunity to develop sound public speaking skills could be achieved within a group of women who are blind. A member of the group could be responsible for initiating a program that practices public speaking skills. The following are a couple of exercises that a group of women who are blind could do together.

Exercise 1: Introducing Topics for Discussion at Meetings

The group of women who are blind should decide which topics could be discussed at their next meeting. These can range from the serious stuff (like: disability and access, or disability and sexuality) to fun topics (something that happened on TV, a funny event that occurred within the last 2 weeks). Those women in the group who wish to participate would then have a week to prepare their 'talk'. At the specified meeting, each participant would be given a time to give their talk. A timekeeper would need to be present so that each woman receives the same time. After the talks, the topics and how they have been delivered can be discussed by the group as a whole.

Exercise 2: Increasing Vocabulary for Self Confidence

The second exercise is based on learning a new word. This helps increase vocabulary as well as increasing self-confidence, as we know - the more information we have the more confident we will become. The group can decide on the word that they wish to learn, then, like the first exercise, participants will have a week to prepare themselves. At the next meeting the participants have to use the new word as many times as possible. Once more someone will need to take count of the number of times the word is used.

The mentoring program is another way in which public speaking skills can be achieved. Mentorees could practice their skills, using their mentors as guides/coaches. They could then present a "talk" at a meeting of a group of women who are blind.

The following form entitled: 'I Wish to Become a Mentoree' can be filled in by prospective mentorees. If you are a member of a group, you could give the completed form to your Group Convenor so that she can match you up to a mentor who will suit you.

I wish to become a Mentoree

Name:

Address:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Telephone: (Business) (Home)

Facsimile: (Business) (Home)

E-Mail address

Have you participated in mentoring before? If so
please describe.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

If you have never been in a mentoring program
before, please state what you think a mentoring
program is.

.....
.....

How do you expect a mentoring program to help you?

.....

.....

.....

What would you like in a mentor? What would you like to learn, or what kind of person would you like to get to know?

.....

.....

.....

Do you have particular preference regarding a possible mentor (age, geographic location etc)?

.....

.....

.....

Please describe briefly why you wish to become a mentoree.

.....

.....

.....

Please provide any other details that you feel are relevant. List any interests or hobbies you have.

.....

.....

Developing a Successful Mentoring Relationship

In order to implement a successful model of mentoring, it is important to recognise the various stages that both mentor and mentoree may go through so that you can help them when necessary. Bonnie McKenzie in her book 'Friends in High Places' identifies these phases as: 1) The Transition Phase, 2) The Recognition Phase, 3) The Development Phase, and 4) The Redefinition Phase. Whilst the book is taken from a mentorees' perspective, these identified areas are equally important in the relationship between mentor and mentoree.

The Transition Phase

Bonnie McKenzie points out there are times when every woman feels that she is not being fulfilled in her life. Her job or her social life may appear to be 'boring, without challenge, frustrating and lacks motivation' (McKenzie, 1995).

As women who are blind, we experience many of these feelings some, if not all, of the time and with good reason. Juggling family and/or friends, work, study, voluntary work and more often than not several disabilities, is extremely difficult, to say the least!

Some of us may be unable to get employment, our blindness may be such that either potential employers are unable to see the woman behind the disability, or we may feel such a lack of self-confidence that we don't try to get a job. Likewise, our family and social life may also be in a state of stagnation. As women who are blind it can be hard, both physically and mentally, to get out and meet new people. For those of us who live in remote areas or for those of us who have limited mobility the chances of going out can be

slim. We may not have access to transport; we may have to rely on other people to take us out, perhaps 'look after us' and then bring us home. Whatever the reason, most women who are blind can relate to the negative feelings in this so-called Transition Phase.

The following exercise might be helpful in identifying someone who can either become a mentor or help the group find a mentor.

Exercise: Identifying the Key People in Your Life

1. Make a list of 4 - 5 people in your life that you feel you can talk to comfortably. This may include family, friends or women in your group.
2. Select 2 - 3 people and ask them if they could spare the time to talk with you.
3. Have a clear plan, before you see them, about what you want to accomplish. This can either be one or several things that you would like to change. However, bear in mind that if your plan is too cluttered or extensive, your ability to successfully achieve them might be limited.

The above exercise can help sort out what you are seeking from a mentor/ mentoree relationship.

Remember:

Mentoring can help teach women practical skills as well as help build self-confidence.

The Recognition Phase

Once you have recognised the bit that you want to change, be it building your self confidence or learning a new skill, it

will be easier for you or your Group Convenor, to look for a suitable mentor who can help you achieve your goal.

When looking for a mentor or a mentoree, there are a few points to remember:

- Make sure that you like your mentor/mentoree. A relationship between the two of you needs to be one of trust.
- If there are any cultural differences between you, be sure that you recognise and respect them.
- Choose the most appropriate mentor/mentoree for a particular point in your life/career.
- Decide on the number of mentors/mentorees you want. Remember that mentoring requires time and commitment so do not overextend yourself.

The Development Phase

Once you have found, or your Group Convenor has found a mentor/mentoree, it is important for both of you to take the time to discuss each of your concerns (if any), any interests you may share and the expectations you both have with regard to the mentoring program.

Bonnie McKenzie has identified 5 areas that are important to the mentoring program:

- Have an affinity, or liking, with your mentor/mentoree as discussed in the 'Recognition Phase'.
- Build the relationship; appreciating the time and effort it takes to build a mutually productive relationship.
- Manage the growth stage; developing a relationship so that each woman trusts and respects the other.
Sometimes to do this you may have to give a bit more

information about yourself than you normally would, but remember to only do what you feel comfortable with.

- Take responsibility for your half of the relationship; think through the good and bad things that you will bring to this mentoring relationship. Remember to follow through on any commitments that you may make to each other.
- Share inner ambitions and goals; be willing to share your personal ambitions and goals. Once more, only share those things that you and your mentoring partner are comfortable with.

The Redefinition Phase

This is the final process or phase in the mentoring relationship. The goal that the mentor/mentoree has been working on should be successfully completed and this will be the time to discuss whether or not the mentoring relationship should change or end.

For those mentoring partnerships that have been based on an informal role, there will come a time when the relationship between mentor and mentoree will change. The mentoree may have acquired the skills and self-confidence that the mentor has, in other words instead of being teacher - pupil they may be on an equal footing. Often, mentoring relationships that have started out as formal or informal partnerships may change into a friendship, with both partners being equal. Likewise, having achieved the goals that the mentoring set out to do, the partners may end their relationship and go their separate ways. If the mentoring relationship has been successful the mentor may help the mentoree when, and if, she wishes to become a mentor.

If, at any time the relationship between mentor and mentoree is not working then it is important to talk to the Group Convenor.

The benefits of mentoring are numerous. A program that has been well planned and had the support of everyone will be a resounding success. Not only will the people in the mentoring partnership feel a sense of achievement, but also the whole group will benefit in many ways. As women become more experienced in identifying issues, consulting with others, and implementing positive action, the group as a whole will gain knowledge, experience and wisdom. By promoting a safe environment where women who are blind can fulfil their potential, the group will attract more members who want to take up the fight.

For mentors, the benefits of participating in a mentoring program include:

- Reaffirmation of their professional knowledge, experience and skills.
- Opportunity to share their knowledge, experience and skills with other women who are blind.
- Opportunity to contribute to the organisation in its direction towards benefiting all women who are blind.
- Opportunity to gain an understanding of different viewpoints and interests.
- Opportunity to share with other women, the intrinsic benefits, knowledge and experience derived from her life journey.

Benefits a mentoree can receive from a mentoring program include:

- Gain relevant experience and confidence to be able to work on committees and working parties.

- Self confidence; which can be nurtured by someone who shows concern and has confidence that the mentoree can achieve their full potential.
- Guidance; the knowledge that those skills that had otherwise appeared impossible to attain can be achieved.
- Support; knowing that someone is there to help and assist.
- Help; knowing that, as a mentoree, you have earned the right to ask questions that will be answered to the best of the mentors ability.

For mentoring to be truly successful, each group has to take full responsibility for the program. The group should aim to appoint a Convenor to oversee the program. As previously explained, the Convenor will be responsible for matching mentor to mentoree - taking into account specific skills, goals and personality. Both mentor and mentoree should feel comfortable about approaching the Convenor if they have any questions regarding the program or if they are having problems. Whilst the Convenor can act as a mediator or facilitator (see Managing Conflict) it is vital that the Convenor can call on the entire group for help, support and guidance. With united support from each member of the group, the relationship between mentor/mentoree will be a successful one and any problems that occur can be quickly sorted out.

Useful Internet Sites

Mentoring

Guidelines on Mentoring for women

<http://adminwww.flinders.edu.au/WomensInfoMentoring.html>

Contains information on mentoring, benefits of mentoring, models, personal experiences of mentoring etc.

The Mentors Forum
<http://www.mentorsforum.co.uk/>

A 'generic' mentoring site. Contains publications and fact sheets on mentoring; tools for mentoring; links; latest news; mentoring in different environments; discussion groups and more. The site also includes case studies.

Self-Esteem
How Strong is Your Self-image?
<http://www.womensmedia.com/seminar-self-image.html>

Provides information on negative and positive self-esteem, including how to use affirmations to improve self-esteem.

Disabled People in International Development
<http://www.independentliving.org>

The disabled person's image and self-esteem - also legislation.

Power, Control, Confidence, and Courage
<http://www.independentliving.org/LibArt/Leoi!e97.html>

An article by Jayne Leone about confidence, self-esteem and empowerment in relation to disability.

Assertiveness
Helpful Hints For Assertive Behaviour
<http://www.hsc.edu/stu/counseling/selfhelp/assert.html>

Provides information on a range of strategies you can use to become more assertive.

Public Speaking

<http://www.cybernetik.com.au/chp2excpt.html>

Looks at the common fears people have about public speaking and ways to overcome them.

SECTION 2: STRATEGIC PLANNING

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Introduction

Strategy has been defined as "that which has to do with determining the basic objectives of an organization and allocating resources to their accomplishment." A strategy determines the direction in which an organization needs to move to fulfill its mission. A strategic plan acts as a road map for carrying out the strategy and achieving long-term results.

Strategic planning is different than long-range planning. Long-range planning builds on current goals and practices and proposes modifications for the future. Strategic planning, however, considers changes or anticipated changes in the environment that suggest more radical moves away from current practices.

Similarly, an organization, such as a community recreation council, makes long-range planning decisions (e.g. rental prices or fees, or staffing) based on current conditions. However, strategic planning may result in facility expansion, or major changes to programs as a result of social or demographic trends.

Gaining Commitment to Strategic Planning

When strategic planning, your organization should emphasize team planning. By involving those affected by the plan, you build an organization-wide understanding and commitment to the strategic plan (participants acquire an "ownership" of it).

Strategic planning requires a significant investment of time and energy. Organizations will also have to overcome barriers raised by comments such as: "a lack of time", "things are changing too fast", "we're doing OK now", etc. A visible commitment from top leadership is required for effective strategic planning.

Strategic Planning Model

The steps of the strategic planning process will be described in the following sections.

Elements of Strategic Plans

Organization Mission Statement

Strategic Analysis

Strategy Formulation

Long-term Objectives

Implementation and

Operational Plans

What

Why

Where

When & How

STAGE 1: Mission Statement

The mission statement establishes what the organization plans to do, for whom, and for what benefit it will exist. The mission statement identifies organizational purposes and the reason for its existence. It addresses the "what" questions, i.e. what is our role? What business are we in? etc. It is a short (1-2 sentence) statement.

WHAT SHOULD IT TELL YOU?

Some of the following questions should be answered:

- What is our business?
- What is our principle service/product?
- Who are our principle clients/users?
- What is unique about our organization (geographic, type of member, mandate)?
- What are the benefits? What? For whom? And Why?

STAGE 2: Strategic Analysis

The strategic analysis is an in-depth look at all factors likely to have the greatest impact on the future of the organization. During this analysis, critical issues facing the organization should be identified.

This analysis forms the basis for decisions affecting the organization's future. Thus, it is essential that sufficient accurate information be available on which to base judgments. All assumptions should be identified and checked.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

(a) Strengths and Weaknesses of the Organization (Internal)

In this part of the analysis, factors, which are internal to, or within the control of the organization, should be identified. Their impact on the ability of the group to fulfill its mission should be discussed. These may include: membership numbers, skills or resources, structure, shared values, finances, staff/directors and style of leadership within the organization or systems such as communications channels.

(b) Opportunities and Threats Facing the Organization (External)

All organizations are affected by outside influences over which they may have little control. These factors have varying degrees of impact, both positive and negative, on the organization. Factors to be addressed here will relate to the mission. They may include activities of competing organizations, government policies, society/community influences or trends, markets, the economy, lifestyles, the environment, demographic trends, technological advances or alternatives.

(c) Critical Issues

To conclude the SWOT analysis, identify the issues most critical to the future of the organization. Their significance can be measured by the size of the gap between the current status or performance of the organization and what is

needed to favorably respond to internal and external factors in the future. These issues may affect growth or financial stability or form barriers to the accomplishment of the organization's mission.

A short report for each critical issue should be compiled. It may contain the issue, supporting information, underlying causes and conclusions with respect to impact on the organization.

STAGE 3 – Strategy Formulation

In this phase, the focus should be on where the organization should be going rather than how it should get there. A three to five year planning horizon is recommended. The critical issues facing the organization in accomplishing its mission should be the basis for this stage. Make sure that decisions "fit" with the directions defined by the mission statement.

There are three steps in this stage:

(a) Identification of Key Strategic Areas:

This step produces a listing of key strategic areas or thrusts that must be emphasized to address the critical issues. They should be stated in no more than a few words.

Other examples of key strategic areas in organizations may include: improving image, broadening educational focus, training of members/leaders/staff, profitability, public profile, etc.

Each key strategic area will require extra effort from the organization in the future. They are important in addressing one or several critical issues identified during the strategic

analysis. Ideally, there should be no more than seven to ten key strategic areas formulated in this stage.

(b) Establishing Priority of Key Strategic Areas

Some strategic areas will be more crucial to the organization's success or survival than others. The next step is to prioritize the strategic areas. Criteria for ranking should be based on which area has the greatest effect on the organization's ability to fulfill its mission.

It is a good practice, prior to ranking, to state clearly and agree on what each strategic area encompasses. The highest ranking key strategic area will be the "driving force" of the strategy and the one requiring the most time and resources allocated to it.

(c) Develop Strategy Statement for Top Ranked Areas

The key strategic areas are the basis for future actions of the organization. Thus, they must be carefully documented for communication to the membership.

Strategy statements for each area (two to three paragraphs) should answer the following questions: What shall be our future key strategic areas? How do they differ from our current areas of concentration? Do they represent changes? Are they compatible with our mission and the conclusions from our strategic analysis?

STAGE 4 – Long Term Objectives

Within the most important strategic areas, identify what must happen to move the organization closer to accomplishing its

mission and strategy. These objectives should be broad and visionary.

Write the objectives using the following format: "To have (or become) ... (the results) ... by ... (year)".

Test the objectives to determine if:

- They can be measured
- They are achievable or feasible within a given time frame
- Collectively, are they flexible or adaptable to allow for the unknown and for exploring new opportunities
- They are consistent with the rest of the plan

STAGE 5 – Implementation

A comparison with the current strategy should be undertaken at this stage. An examination of the structure and operations of the organization must be carried out to ensure a fit with the newly stated strategy or objectives. Areas to be scrutinized, and possibly changed, include:

- Allocation of resources: will enough resources be available for the highest ranked strategic area? What do we cut back to free up resources?
- Organization structure: are jobs adequately defined? Are committees in place to deal with thrusts?
- Information systems: what will be the organization's communication needs? Feedback on results?
- People responsible: are there people identified as "in charge" of each objective?
- Reward systems: how will people be recognized or rewarded for achieving results?

The time frame for implementation should reflect the scope of the required change. In addition, some sort of ongoing criteria and techniques for evaluation should be established.

STAGE 6 – Operational Plan

Finally, short-term objectives (e.g., one year) are set, based on the long-term objective. These will include activities and programs. The written analysis employed for these objectives should be similar to those used when developing long-term objectives.

The result should be a map of activities or programs, responsibilities of people, resource allocations, and a time frame for the next planning period.

In subsequent years, if checks for fit indicate that no changes to the strategy or long-term objectives are required, this stage will be the only required planning activity.

The Planning Process – Hints

1. Strike a planning committee to undertake the strategic planning task.
2. The benefit of involving the whole board or membership at certain stages (for reaction or ideas) is increased awareness and sense of ownership of the plan.
3. Allow plenty of time! There should be gaps in time throughout the organization. It provides a point of reference for all major planning decisions. When it is

communicated as a basis for key decisions, commitment is gained from within the organization and support from those outside is generated.

4. In many cases, using an outside facilitator for the process can minimize members' biases, challenge assumptions, and allow all members to contribute equally.
5. Allow for lots of brainstorming, especially in stages 1 and 2. This allows new ideas to be considered.

Conclusion

Strategic planning is a thought process as well as a plan. Part of developing sound strategies is learning to think strategically, learning how to ask questions and to think broadly and creatively.

Source: Canadian Ministry of Agriculture & Food, 1989.

SECTION 3: GROUP FORMATION & DEVELOPMENT

GROUPS

Getting Started – Forming A Group

Organisations develop as a result of a few people seeing a need or an issue in their local community and deciding to form a group to try and tackle that issue. Some of the reasons:

- To develop leadership skills and practice
- To get personal support and understanding
- To share personal experiences and issues
- To work towards achieving personal and collective goals
- To develop personal and collective power
- To increase self-esteem and confidence
- To work on common issues and concerns
- To make positive changes for women who are blind

Once you have decided to form a group of women who are blind in your local area, it is important to do some background research and get support from others for what you are trying to achieve.

Networking

Getting Support from Others

It is a good idea to start your background research by talking to other people about what you are trying to achieve. Listen to what they have to say and see if they share your concerns. People who share your concerns will probably know others who are similarly concerned and they can put

you in touch with them. Talk to as many people as possible and encourage them to help you. Don't be afraid to ask for help and support.

Some suggestions for your background research:

Other Women Who are blind

- Talk to other women who are blind. Do they see their needs and issues of concern in the same way you do?
- Ask them what they think is needed. Invite them to become involved.
- Consider conducting a survey in your local community. Students studying in a welfare, social work, sociology, or psychology course may be able to help with this kind of work.

Community Organisations and Groups

- Talk to people in other local community organisations. Tell them what you are trying to achieve. Ask them for help and support.

Key People in Your Community

There are many key people in your community that may be able to help you.

- If you have a local Council, find out who the elected Alderman are. Make contact with them and explain what you are doing. Ask them for their help and support.
- Find out whether there is a person who represents your area in government.
- Talk with key professionals such as doctors, social workers, and community health workers. Some of these

professionals are able to work with community groups as part of their job.

- Meet with key activists in your local community. For example, is there a well-known person with a disability who has experience in community issues? Is there a local woman who has a high profile in your community?

Government Departments

- Government departments can be a good source of information. Talk to people in relevant government departments.
- Ask relevant government departments if they have any information that they can give you. Has the Department got any reports or other documents concerning women who are blind? Has the Department done any research involving women who are blind? What can the Department tell you about women who are blind in your area?

Studies and Statistics

- Contact your local library, agencies, government or universities to find out if there are any studies or reports on issues concerning women who are blind.
- Ask other community organisations if they have any studies or reports regarding women who are blind. Places like community health centres, women's health centres, disability services, and advocacy services are a good place to start.
- For example in Australia, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is a good source of statistical information about the characteristics of the population. Be aware that

there may be a cost involved for getting information from the ABS.

Internet

- The Internet is a good way of finding background information relevant to your group.
- You can use email discussion groups to research information you need. There are a number of email discussion groups available on the Internet that has been developed for people with disabilities.

Remember:

Make sure everything you find out in your background research is well documented, organised and filed properly. The information you find out will help you get a clearer picture of what you are trying to achieve. It will also be important for your group in the future - particularly if you are applying for funding. Often, funding applications require information that describes the need for your organisation.

Group Building

OK, so you've got together women who are blind that are interested in forming a group, you have done your background research and got support from others for what you are doing. The next step is to get your group together and work on some exercises that will help to unify your group and get group agreement on what you are trying to achieve. By doing this, you will get to know each other better and you will also be clear on what your group is about.

Exercise 1: ABC Exercise - Getting to Know You

Aims

- To break down the tension of a new group.
- To start women participating and sharing their ideas.
- To start women thinking about the issues and purposes of the group.

Process

- Divide the participants into groups of three.
- Ask each group who will be A, B, and C.
- Explain you will give each person in turn (A, B and then C) an unfinished statement and they will have about 1 minute to give their response.
- The person who is nominated as A gives their response, then B gives theirs and finally C gives theirs.
- Once each person has had a chance to give their response, rotate the groups – A's move clockwise to the next group, B's move anti-clockwise and C's remain seated.
- The process is then repeated.
- Continue with this process until each person has been around the room/circle once.

ABC Unfinished Statements

- A. On the way to this meeting I
- B. The thing I was most worried about this morning was
- C. The thing I was pleased about this morning was
- D. What is special about being with other women who are blind is
- E. If I had a million dollars I would improve things for women who are blind by
- F. The issue for women who are blind I feel most strongly about is
- G. The thing that makes it easy to participate in a group of women who are blind is
- H. The thing I enjoy most about being in a group is
- I. The thing I am best at in groups is

Note: You don't have to use these questions, you can make up your own! Adapted from: Healthwise Tasmania 1991

Exercise 2: Establishing Group Principles

This exercise will help your group to establish principles or 'rules' for your group. It is a good idea to have a set of principles that are agreed to by the group, because it can help to avoid the situation where some people dominate, where others always keep quiet, or where others are ignored and so on.

Process

Ask the women in the group to identify all the characteristics they can think of that makes a group effective. Write down or record in some way all the suggestions.

You might like to use butchers paper or a whiteboard or you could tape record the suggestions.

After you have listed all the characteristics, the group participants can pick out the ones it wants to keep for your group - you might choose to keep all of them or only some of them.

Here is an example of some group principles:

- To be able to take time out if a member of the group needs it.
- To accept individual differences.
- To respect confidentiality.
- To be supported and ask for help from others.
- To be listened to and not swamped by others opinions or advice.
- To have equal participation.
- To be able to be open and honest about feeling nervous or scared etc.

Exercise 3: Making Clear the Groups Purpose

This is an important exercise for unifying your group. A purpose statement is a short and simple statement agreed to by the group. It states what the group is trying to accomplish. It clearly identifies the need or issue being addressed, the target group and the target area. A Purpose Statement will give the group a clear direction that will make the task of recruiting new members much easier. New members will know what they are committing themselves to and conflicts about the role and goals of the group will be minimised.

Some of the things that make a good Purpose Statement include:

- It gives a clear direction to the group

- It is easy to understand
- It is realistic
- It clearly states who the target group is
- It has the support of all the group members

Process: How to Develop A Purpose Statement

Step 1: Brainstorming the Purpose

Get your group to think about and discuss what the group wants to achieve. You could ask some questions to help: Who is our target group? What do we want to change? Why do we need a group for women who are blind? What do we want women who are blind to get out of this group?

Make sure that everyone contributes. Record all the suggestions. You might want to write them all down on butchers' paper, or you might want to tape record the activity.

Step 2: Rework the Suggestions

- Look at each suggestion.
- Which ones can be discarded? Which ones should you keep? Make sure you get everyone's agreement.
- Of the remaining suggestions, is any one acceptable as a purpose statement? Could they be combined to make a purpose statement?

It is important to remember that your group doesn't need to come up with a perfect statement the first time. You can always rework it in the future.

Step 3: Review the Purpose Statement

Go back and look at what makes a good Purpose Statement. Does your statement give a clear direction? Is it simple and realistic? Does everyone support it?

An example of a Purpose Statement might be:

"The purpose of (name of group) is to provide support and information to women who are blind to enable them to have control over their lives."

Source: Adapted from Planning & Self Evaluation in Community Groups 1991.

Recruiting Members

Once you have established the need for your group, done your background research and clarified your purpose, it is a good idea to look at ways you can recruit members and get more women who are blind involved. You may have already been able to recruit some new members in the process of doing your background research. Here are some ideas for how you might attract new members:

- Develop a pamphlet or a flier about your group and distribute it to organisations and other key points in the community - such as community health centres, disability organisations, women's services, doctors surgeries, shopping centres, taxi companies, community nursing services, etc
- Ask other organisations to advertise your group in their Newsletter. Some organisations may agree to include your pamphlet in mail-outs they do to their members.
- Approach other women who are blind and invite them to join your group. Ask other services and organisations to pass on information about your group to women who are blind who use their service. Most specialist organisations

have newsletters that you can access by submitting an advertisement.

- Contact your local radio station. Many radio stations offer a free community service segment. You can publicise your group in this segment.
- Write a letter to the Editor of your newspaper. Find out if there is a journalist who reports on disability or women's issues. See if you can get an article about your group published in the newspaper.
- Write a Press Release about your group and send it to local newspapers, radio and television stations.
- Hold a public meeting or a community event and use the media for advertising the event.
- Use the Internet to distribute information about your group. Use email to send information about your group to other organisations. Advertise your group on electronic mailing lists, particularly those dedicated to disability and/or women's issues.

Getting your Group to Work Together

In order for your group to work effectively, there are several things that you are going to have to do, such as have meetings, develop agendas, take minutes, and so on. You are also going to have to decide how your group is going to make decisions. For example, will you have a voting system, or will you use a consensus model of decision-making? Getting a group to work effectively will also mean you will need to know how to deal with conflict and other problems that may arise. To be an inclusive and accessible group, you will also need to know about acknowledging diversity. Lets now take a closer look at some of these issues.

Conducting Meetings

Meetings are necessary for making decisions, communicating information, networking and developing relationships. Meetings can take up a lot of time and resources, so if they are to be of maximum benefit, it is important that they are run properly. Let's look at some characteristics of good and bad meetings.

What makes a good meeting?

A good meeting is one where:

- Everyone who wants to contribute does so
- The business gets finished on time
- Everyone understands what happened and what decisions were made
- There is consideration given to the communication needs of participants, i.e. deaf/hearing impaired women; blind/visually impaired women; women of non-English speaking backgrounds and so on
- Everyone understands the meeting procedures
- New members feel welcome
- The business isn't too rushed or too slow

What makes a bad meeting?

A bad meeting is one where:

- A few people dominate the discussion and make all the decisions
- Business isn't finished on time and the meeting goes on forever
- There is confusion or unresolved conflicts
- There are participants who cannot join in because the meeting procedures are not accessible to them

- There is lots of jargon used and participants don't understand it
- New members feel unwelcome and don't contribute

Agendas

How to Structure a Meeting

It is a good idea to have an agenda for any meeting because it helps to give a structure to the meeting and allows participants to know what to expect. An agenda is basically a list of items that will be dealt with at the meeting.

Agendas usually contain the following items.

- Welcome - this is where the Chairperson opens the meeting, welcomes participants and notes the starting time of the meeting.
- Apologies - this is where apologies from any members who cannot attend the meeting are read out.
- Review of Agenda - the agenda for the meeting is discussed with those present. New items can be added or the order of the items can be changed.
- Minutes from the Last Meeting - this is where members can say whether the minutes from the last meeting are accurate.
- Business Arising from the Last Meeting - matters arising are the tasks or jobs which people were supposed to do after the last meeting. This is where members can check on progress being made on those tasks.
- Correspondence - the Secretary can provide a list of any correspondence received or sent since the last meeting.
- Reports - this is where the Chairperson, Treasurer and any sub-committees can give their reports of what's been happening since the last meeting.

- General Business - this is the decision making part of the meeting where items carried over from the last meeting and any new items are discussed.
- Meeting Feedback - this is where participants can give their views on how the meeting went and suggest any improvements that could be made.
- Date of Next Meeting - this is where the members agree on a date for the next meeting.
- Close - this is where the Chairperson thanks participants for attending, closes the meeting and notes the time the meeting finished.

It is a good idea to try and use the same agenda structure for each meeting so that everyone will become familiar with the way the meeting is run. The agenda for each meeting should be prepared by the Secretary in advance and sent out to everyone attending the meeting. Members should always be given the opportunity to put any items on the agenda.

Tips for Chairing A Meeting

It is a good idea to rotate the job of chairing the meetings of your group, so that members can have the experience of chairing a meeting and learn new skills. It is also a good way for members to increase their confidence and self-esteem. One of the best ways to become familiar with chairing meetings is to practice.

Some tips for good chairing of a meeting include:

- Know your agenda and work out how long to spend on each item
- Introduce each agenda item and give a quick summary of the item. Encourage participation, ask people what they think about an issue, don't let everyone talk at once
- Keep the discussion on topic. When a topic has been discussed enough, summarise it and put it to the group for a decision
- If there is conflict between members, stay neutral and let each person explain their point of view without interruptions
- Make sure that everyone understands any decisions that are made and that they are recorded in the minutes

Minutes

What are Minutes?

Minutes are a record of a meeting. They include who attended, who didn't attend, the important things that happened, the decisions that were made, and things that need to be done. Minutes need to contain enough information so that anyone who wasn't at the meeting can understand what happened. Minutes provide part of the history of a group or organisation and are a recorded memory of decisions that were reached. It is usually the job of the Secretary to take the minutes of meetings, but this job can be rotated so that everyone in your group can have experience in taking minutes.

What goes in the Minutes?

Minutes of meetings should include:

- Date and place of the meeting and the time it started
- Names of those present and apologies from those unable to attend
- Reference to the minutes of the last meeting and that they were accepted as an accurate record
- Any business arising from the last minutes and any decisions made
- Notice of any reports presented
- Any information that members want to make known
- Any tasks or action that needs to be taken and by whom
- Brief notes on matters discussed, rejected ideas and decisions made
- Time the meeting finished and date of next meeting

Tips for Taking Good Minutes

- A good chairperson should stop the meeting, summarise the discussion and get agreement from the participants on points to be included in the minutes. If you are not sure if you have recorded something correctly, read it out to the group for their agreement.
- Practice. It is a good idea at each meeting to have one of your members work alongside the minute taker so they can have a practice at taking minutes. The minute taker can use this as a mentoring opportunity. For more information on mentoring see relevant section in this kit.
- Write or record the minutes as soon as possible after the meeting while everything is still fresh in your mind. Sometimes it can be helpful to tape the meetings so that you can listen to the meeting when you are writing up the minutes. Having the meeting on tape is also important for any members who don't have access to the written word.

Sources: Adapted from Management Issues Manual 1993; Developing Your Organisation
(Queensland Department of Families, Youth & Community Care)

How to Evaluate Your Meetings

Good meetings are productive and enjoyable and help to achieve the work of the group. Bad meetings on the other hand, achieve little and leave people feeling they have wasted their time and are unable to get on top of their responsibilities. It is a good idea to evaluate your meetings to make sure that they are working well. You may find it helpful to use the following checklist.

Meeting Evaluation Checklist

- An Agenda has been prepared prior to the meeting.
- Group members have had an opportunity to contribute to the Agenda.
- Advance notice of the meeting time and place has been provided to those invited.
- Meeting facilities are comfortable, accessible and adequate for the number of participants.
- The meeting began on time.
- The meeting finished on time.
- Everyone had an opportunity to present their point of view.
- Participants listened to each other.
- The Chairperson summarised the meeting as it progressed.
- No one dominated the discussion.
- Everyone was involved in making decisions.
- People volunteered to undertake tasks or action required.
- Minutes of the meeting have been provided to participants.
- The Chairperson has followed up with those participants who have agreed to undertake tasks.
- Decisions made at the meeting were clearly stated to the group.
- The Secretary was given sufficient time to record the meeting.

Problem Areas:

Source: M. E. Haynes: Effective Meeting Skills 1992

The Decision Making Process

To get the most out of meetings, it is important to be aware of the actual process by which decisions are made. Two of the main approaches to decision-making in groups are: the semi-formal process and the consensus process.

The Semi-Formal Process

The semi formal process usually comprises the following steps:

- An item is put on the agenda eg: buying a new computer
- The meeting participants discuss the issue - ideas for it, against it, implications, etc
- After some time the discussion has gone as far as possible, so the Chairperson asks for a motion
- Someone will then phrase the feeling of the discussion into a motion: eg, “that this meeting agrees to buy a new computer by 30 June and will spend no more than \$3,000”
- The Chairperson may ask for someone to second the motion
- One of the participants seconds the motion (i.e.: formally agrees with it)
- The Chairperson asks the meeting to vote on the motion
- Participants vote and the majority vote wins

Consensus Decision Making

Consensus decision-making is the process through which an entire group seeks out the best decision to which everyone can agree. It is not necessary for every person in the group to feel that a particular decision is the solution they most want, or even think is best. Members may feel, however, that this is the best solution that can be reached at the time and under the circumstances. Consensus can be a

compromise or it can produce new creative solutions in an attempt to find agreement in the group.

There are good reasons why a group should use a consensus model of decision-making. Some of these include:

- It builds group unity and helps make the group stronger
- It avoids the situation of having 'winners and losers'
- It aims at persuasion not coercion
- It allows and encourages contribution from everyone
- It develops better proposals because all the group is involved
- It encourages openness and builds trust

Consensus decision-making will only work if the group has a real commitment to the process. Members need to have a commitment to group solidarity and be willing to listen to contributions from everyone. Members will need to recognise that everyone's opinion is of equal value.

The process of consensus includes:

- Identify the issue or proposal to be discussed - eg: the purchase of a new computer
- Give a background to the issue or proposal - eg: why the computer is needed
- Spend time discussing the issue, seek clarification and ask questions
- Identify any differences, disagreements and similarities
- Discuss any differences or disagreements
- Create a new proposal if necessary
- Discuss the new proposal and seek agreement
- Check that everyone agrees
- Celebrate the agreement!

It is useful to have a member of the group act as a facilitator when undertaking consensus decision making in the group.

The role of the facilitator in this process is to:

- Be responsible to the group
- Keep the group focused on the issue
- Protect every members right to be heard and to disagree
- Tease out agreements and disagreements
- Suggest ways of resolving any conflicts
- Ensure group members are not left behind or confused

Sources: Adapted from Management Issues Manual 1993; Developing Your Organisation. (Queensland Department of Families, Youth & Community Care)

Acknowledging Diversity Within The Group

Each woman who enters a group brings with her a unique knowledge and experience of life. Life experiences are made up of the way in which you see yourself and the world around you, along with the influence of family, friends and peers.

For women who are blind, different cultural backgrounds are an example of diversity within a society, and community groups are a reflection of this, but diversity also exists within all individuals. Each woman will bring to the group her hopes, fears, attitudes, personal agendas - be it the need to belong to a social group or be part of an action group promoting the interests of women who are blind.

The diversity that individuals bring to a group can be enriching and empowering but it can also bring conflicting and complex emotions. The following points are aimed at helping the group use the qualities that these individuals will bring to the group:

- Recognise that some differences need to be discussed openly i.e. different cultures, different religious beliefs.
- Make sure that each woman has the chance to talk about any problems she may have with either an issue being discussed or another member of the group. Try and make her feel comfortable when talking about these issues.
- Try to impress on the other members of the group that each woman plays a unique part and that the more diverse the group, the better it will succeed.
- Encourage members of your group to develop an appreciation for their ethnic, religious, cultural and personal backgrounds.

- When looking at those issues that concern equality, and the rights and responsibilities of the individual, develop a set of group values that each woman is comfortable with.

Group Development:

All groups are different. They are drawn together for different purposes and they are made up of individuals who are all different. Any group of people will change over time in their attitudes and actions towards each other. Problems can sometimes arise in a group when the group members start to feel that things are stagnating. Although there are no hard and fast rules, here are some ways you can attract new members and keep your group motivated.

Publicity - there is nothing like an issue and knowledge of it to bring people to your door. People will often be attracted to join local groups and organisations if they have a personal experience of, or strong feelings towards an issue.

You can also use other types of publicity to attract new members - Make use of things like community noticeboards; newspaper articles; letterbox drops; free community service advertisements; posters; information stalls at local shopping centres, and so on.

Approaching people in person - this can often bring a greater response, particularly to a local or neighbourhood issue. As well as things like doorknocking, you can also approach local services where you are likely to find women who are blind (such as disability organisations; women's health centres etc). Make sure you have a brochure or an Information Package about your group to leave with the people and/or services you have approached.

Make new members feel welcome - often it is a good idea for someone in our group to take on the task of greeting new

members personally. Introduce them to other members of the group, and take the time to explain what is happening as the meeting continues. If your group has a newsletter, it can be a good idea to profile new members in your newsletter.

Maintain contact with new members - again, it is a good idea to take the time to keep in contact with new members of your group. An existing member of your group can be given the task of ringing new members, inviting them to meetings and events, and explaining the goals and activities of your group.

Delegating tasks - a good way to make new members feel like a part of the group is to allocate them a specific task or area of responsibility. Don't keep them 'shut out' of activities of the group, and don't keep all responsibility with existing group members. Make sure you are specific and honest about what the job entails - don't give them false impressions about the level of work or responsibility. Allowing new members the opportunity to undertake specific tasks is also good for the development of your group.

Personal Satisfaction - most people need a degree of personal satisfaction from their involvement in a group. Very few people can continue to give in an atmosphere of no appreciation, feedback and results. So in general, you should give new members what they want or need in order to keep them happy and involved in the group. Encourage new members to share their ideas and suggestions for ongoing development of the group. Most members will need:

- Praise and appreciation for their efforts
- Social contact through group social activities, new friendships etc
- News on the continued progress of the group

- Work to do, according to their skills and ability to learn
- To feel included in the group
- Help, supervision or training where necessary

Things to Foster in Your Group

- Support - offer friendship, trust, and commitment and so on to other members.
- Listen to other people; try to help them and not yourself. Try to facilitate others' interactions and ideas. Respect each other.
- Group Identity - make it one group with everybody in it. Where the group is divided, its energies are turned inward, against each other. Be united to work outwards towards a single goal.
- Encouragement - encourage one another; encourage participation; harmonise and encourage compromise between extremes in the group; help communication.
- Be flexible.
- Solve Problems - don't make them. Verbalise accepted group standards in conflict situations; try to feel the emotional climate; relieve tension periods with breaks.
- Support - support the group and its leaders.
- Group Relationships - take group relationships outside the group atmosphere if appropriate. Make friends in the group to include in your day-to-day life - and help to make committee or fundraising occasions into social get-togethers.

Communication in Groups

Communication (or success of getting a message understood) in groups affects behaviour to a large degree. Communication is not just verbal - it is non-verbal as well. Communication can often be hindered or helped by external circumstances including things like: the physical environment (warmth, light, acoustics, setting out of chairs etc); the meaning of words; attitudes of speakers; and so on. The same words can often mean different things at different times, or to different people. Body language is not always to be trusted either - since people's bodies don't always say or do what they wish them to.

Tips for Good Communication Practices

Tips to communicate can include:

- Being honest about your needs and desires
- Trying to express your ideas clearly
- Listening to others as they speak
- Asking questions if you need clarification
- Trying to keep your negative feelings under control
- Being prepared to admit you are wrong
- Not being too sensitive
- Treating other people the way you wish to be treated

**Sources: A Management Training Manual for Community Groups 1984;
Women with disabilities Australia 1999.**

Tips For Effective Decision Making

Have you ever had to choose between two items for your organization and had trouble making a decision? If so, these steps may be useful to you and your organization.

1. Clarify the problem or situation. The problem or need for a decision should be clear. For example, trying to get better food in a cafeteria might be clarified as the problem of obtaining more fresh fruit, larger entree portions, and more salad varieties.
2. Collect information. Identify necessary information and available sources. Answer questions like: How much? What will others think? Where? What restrictions are there?
3. List alternatives. Brainstorm and then narrow the list down to the suggestions you would like to consider.
4. Evaluate the remaining alternatives. Consider what would occur if each alternative was selected. Identify the criteria to evaluate each solution. Resources like time, money, interest, and skills may all be criteria.
5. Select a “tentative decision” to try. The alternative that best meets the criteria is usually the solution to implement. Be sure to present this decision to those who may be affected by it or to a larger group for feedback.
6. List the steps to be followed in implementing the decision. Determine what needs to be done to meet the goal of the decision. NOTE: If there are severe time restrictions, step #6 may have to be the implementation of the final decision rather than the tentative one.

7. Evaluate the experience. What good things have happened because of the decision? What went wrong? What has been the reaction of others? What changes will make it better?
8. As in step 4, consider the alternatives and then implement an action. The solution may be a modified version of the original decision or entirely different. Keep in mind the policy, steps, or procedures to be followed.
9. Review the plan periodically.

Effective Delegating

Leaders cannot do all the work for their organizations. If they try, they will not be successful. Learning how to delegate responsibility (the art of spreading the work around) is indispensable for a leader of any organization. In turn, effective delegation helps the organization by:

- Allowing more people to be actively involved
- Distributing work more evenly
- Helping an organization or committee run more smoothly and efficiently

Most leaders have difficulty delegating responsibility. Often, they prefer to do tasks themselves to make sure the job gets done right. While this can be more expedient, it can also breed apathy among non-involved, unmotivated members. Eventually, it can result in the loss of members. Sharing authority can be the best motivator in keeping members and strengthening organizations.

Four basic delegation strategies:

1. Telling – The leader designs the job, and then delegates it to a member.
2. Participating – The leader identifies a job two members might do, and gets a commitment that they will work on it together.
3. Selling (coaching) – The leader involves members in developing a project, and encourages them to volunteer for tasks.
4. Delegating – The leader involves members in developing a project, and then leaves them to do it (“pure delegation”).

The strategy a leader uses to delegate a task depends on the members. A new member may need the leader to explain how to do the task. Conversely, a committee of members with lots of experience may be more successful if the leader uses pure delegation. Knowing the members of your organization is critical to making delegation work. Have trust in your members, learn to be flexible in your style of delegation, and use the delegation strategy best for each individual.

DO delegate:

- When there is a lot of work.
- When someone else has a particular skill or qualification, which would suit a task.
- When someone expresses an interest in a task.
- When a member might benefit from the responsibility (i.e. an emerging leader in the group).

DON'T delegate:

- Your own “hot potatoes” (items with serious consequences, emergencies, etc.).
- Things that are usually your specified responsibility.
- Things you would not be willing to do.
- To a member who may not possess the skills necessary to do the task successfully.

Before you Delegate:

- Decide if the task needs to be delegated. Do you want to give it away? Do you enjoy it? Is it so important that true delegation will not take place? Be true to yourself and delegate those tasks that ought to be handed over.
- Choose the right person for the job. Try to give members tasks they can do best or are interested in. If members truly are not interested in a task, they might not do a good

job. Sometimes members who could do these jobs extremely well may be insecure about their abilities. Communicate your trust in their skills. Their motivation will be higher when they know they are trusted.

- Define the job and set mutual expectations. Give detailed explanations for what the job involves, including all key points. Try to focus on the results rather than the method. Also, work with your members to set mutual expectations. Members are more likely to back a decision if they were involved in the decision-making process and understand how the decision was reached.
- Set a deadline. Members will usually feel more responsible for a task when they are held accountable. With no deadline, it is much easier to procrastinate and lose motivation. Work with members to set deadlines. Make the deadline reasonable so they are not pushed too hard.
- Determine methods for follow-up. Work with your members to set a time for review of performance. This could be a meeting to check progress or a phone call to see if they have any questions. The follow-up should be mutually determined at the start. This way, members know you are not trying to hover, but instead are trying to learn how work is progressing. Criteria for evaluation at this point should also be predetermined so the leader will not be overly critical of progress. Also, let your members know that if they need clarification of the task or have questions, they should ask.
- Train your delegates. Make sure they know how to do the task. Take time to train them, if necessary. Initially, training someone may take more time than doing it yourself but in the long run, training others will improve your efficiency and allow others to develop their skills.

- Delegate your authority. This ties in with setting times for follow-up. As a leader, you need to allow your members the responsibility to make everyday decisions. Sometimes, their decisions will not be the same as yours. That's okay. Everyone needs the opportunity to try new approaches. Just because it is different does not mean it's wrong. Members can easily lose motivation if they have no room to think creatively and act as they see best. Have trust in the members and try to give them the freedom to work without you looking over their shoulders.
- Evaluate performance. After the task has been completed, evaluate the task based on the expectations and criteria set when the task was delegated. If certain aspects were left out when setting the initial job definition, the delegate should not be criticized for leaving them out. Work with the delegate to determine how you and the delegate feel the performance turned out, and also how the performance can be improved.
- Acknowledge achievement and give recognition. Almost nothing is worse than pouring oneself into a task, having it turn out perfectly, and then being ignored by the person who delegated it. Give recognition and praise for the work members have done. By giving recognition and letting them know you appreciate them, they will feel a further sense of pride in their work and may be more willing to help in the future.

Effective Time Management

Ever wonder how some people can fit so many activities into their schedules, while others barely have time to attend classes? Are they smarter? Doubtful. More organized? You're getting warmer. Better at managing their time? Bingo!!

Time management is self-management. Although this handout will give you some pointers on how to manage your time, it is important to realize that only you know your peak work hours, your attention span, and your eating and sleeping needs. Time management is a highly personalized skill, and whatever method works for you is the right one.

Three steps to effective time management are:

1. Organizing

The more organized you are, the more effectively you will be able to use the 24 hours in each day. Ideally, you should make a list each morning of everything you want or need to get done that day. If it works better for you, you can also do this at night before you go to bed. Don't think about which tasks are most important at this point. Just write them all down. Once you get in the habit of doing this, you might want to organize yourself for a few days in advance to help plan longer projects.

2. Prioritizing

The next step is to prioritize the items on your list. Assign an "A" to those things that you HAVE TO DO; "B" to the tasks you SHOULD DO; and "C" to those items that can be

DEFERRED until the next day. Keep in mind due dates for projects. Don't procrastinate! Try not to leave projects for the last minute – that's the least effective way of getting things done.

3. Scheduling

Now that you have your prioritized list of everything you need and want to do, you should look at your schedule to fit your projects around the “givens”(Class, work, sleep, etc.) into your day. Your schedule should be flexible. Leave room for breaks, socializing and those little things that tend to pop up. Allow for the unexpected! Don't try to plan out every minute of your day.

As you are scheduling, keep your personal needs and habits in mind. Be realistic and make a schedule that you can stick to.

An effective way of integrating Organizing, Prioritizing, and Scheduling into your life is by creating “Things To Do” lists.

Here are some ideas to keep in mind when creating your lists:

- Make your tasks “do-able.” Make your list realistic. Overestimating the amount of things you can accomplish can put you into greater time binds.
- Estimate time realistically. Be sure to schedule enough time to get your tasks done. Also be sure to allow extra time in case you have problems; it's better to give yourself too much time than to cut yourself short.
- Don't put too many “shoulds” or “oughts” on your list. You need to maintain a healthy balance between the tasks you want to do, the tasks you feel you should do, and the

tasks you have to do. If you focus too much of your time on the things you want to do, you'll end up having less time to complete the tasks you have to do.

- Establish a daily routine. Determine for yourself what time of the day is best for doing certain activities and get in the habit of doing them at that time.
- Integrate lists. Have your lists include all aspects of your life. Having separate lists for class work, organizations, social activities, and work can be confusing.
- Make time for people and fun. Everyone needs some time to have fun or their productivity will suffer. After taking time off, people often feel revitalized and have more energy to get work done.
- Feel O.K. when you're finished. Spending lots of time regretting failures or feeling frustrated wastes time. Feel good for accomplishing what you have, and then move on.

Learn to say "no"

- Remember, there is not enough time each day to do everything for everybody. In order to keep from burning out, you need to take time for yourself and learn to say "no" to some of the requests for your time.
- Only you can realistically look at your commitments to see if you have the time to commit to other tasks. Say "no" when you don't want to, can't, or don't have the time. If you over-commit yourself, everyone will come out behind.
- Openness and honesty is the key to saying "no." Your friends and co-workers will most likely understand your situation if you level with them.

How do I find time in my schedule to do everything I want? Analyzing your current schedule is one of the keys to determining how and when you can get more things done. Don't forget to put in those sleep hours for the mornings you

sleep in and the relaxation times when you read, socialize or do “whatever.” After you have done all this, take a look at the time that’s still unused. What are you doing during those times? Study this and try to put these hours to better use, whether it is for working, reading, or playing.

Coaching for High Performance

What is coaching?

- Coaching is unlocking a person's potential to maximize their own performance and learning abilities.
- It is based on helping the coach to help her/ himself through dynamic interaction
- Coaching does not rely on a one-way flow of telling and instruction

EXERCISE 1:

Coaching assessment form

- Answer the following questions for yourself and ask one colleague to complete a copy of this page based on their impressions of you. The colleague may use the next page for the same.
- Give yourself a point for a statement if you did the same at least twice in the week.

Scoring

- 1-3 You need to study and apply coaching principles carefully
- 4-6 You can significantly increase your effectiveness at work by applying just a few tips from this workshop
- 7-8 You are nearly a master coach
- 9-10 Give coaching on coaching to someone who needs it

How many times in the last week did I...

1. Provide unconditional praise
2. Give constructive feedback
3. Check a colleague's level of motivation
4. Inspire a colleague
5. Ask for feedback
6. Consciously delegate a task
7. Hold a really effective team meeting
8. Provide upward feedback
9. Check a team's morale
- 10.'Mentor' a more junior person

The GROW Model

Examples of Useful Models when using GROW

Goal

- What is it you would like to discuss?
- What would you like to achieve?
- What would you like from (to achieve in) this session?
- What would need to happen for you to walk away feeling that this time was well spent?
- What would you like to be different when you leave this session?

- What would you like to happen that is not happening now, or what would you like not to happen that is happening now?
- What outcome would you like from this session/ discussion/ interaction?
- Is that realistic?
- Can we do that in the time we have available?
- Will that be of real value to you?

Reality

- What is happening at the moment?
- How do you know that this is accurate?
- When does this happen?
- How often does this happen? Be precise if possible.
- What effect does this have?
- How have you verified, or would you verify, that that is true?
- What other factors are relevant?
- What is their perception of the situation?
- What have you tried so far?

Options

- What could you do to change the situation?
- What alternatives are there to that approach?
- Tell me what possibilities for action you see? Do not worry about whether they are realistic at this stage.
- What approach/ actions have you seen used, or used yourself, in similar circumstances?
- Who might be able to help?
- Would you like suggestions from me?
- Which options do you like the most?
- What are the benefits and pitfalls of these options?
- Which options are of interest to you?
- Rate from 1-10 your interest level in/ the practicality of each of these options.
- Would you like to choose an option to act upon?

Wrap-up

- What are the next steps?
- Precisely when will you take them?
- What might get in the way?
- Do you need to log the steps in your diary?
- What support do you need?
- How and when will you enlist that support

Three Key Requirements for Effective Coaching

- Good Listening
- Good Questioning Skills
- Good Feedback

Essentials for Good Listening:

- Suspend assumptions
- Summarize and check for validation
- Empathize feelings
- Ask questions to gain clarity
- Be clear that each person has the capacity to help himself/herself

Feedback Skills:

In-providing feedback the following areas need to be addressed:

- A: (Actions) the things that the coach is doing well, or poorly, in the area under review
- I: (Impact) the effect these actions are having

-D: (Desired outcome) the ways in which the coach could do things effectively

Helpful hints in providing Feedback

Bad feedback	Good feedback	Hallmarks of good feedback
Creates defensiveness and confrontation; focuses on blame	Creates trust and cooperation; focuses on improvements - possible or achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a contact to discuss issues • Acknowledge coach's feelings
Does not improve skill	Increases skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on 'skills' not person • Paint specific picture of desired skill • Suggest practical steps
Undermines confidence and self esteem	Improves confidence in ability and potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position as need to build or demonstrate vs 'don't have' or 'must prove'
Leaves person guessing	Clarifies 'exactly where I stand' and what to do next"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verify with questions; ask for coach's recap • Jointly arrive at plan
Leaves person feeling 'judged'	Leaves person feeling 'helped'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite coach to assess own performance first • Offer support for future

SECTION 4: PUBLICITY, LOBBYING & FUNDING

The following Section provides information on publicity, lobbying and guidelines for applying for funding. This material was developed by Women with Disabilities Australia. Some of the information may therefore not be appropriate or applicable in your country.

Publicity

There are several reasons why publicity is important for your group once it has been established. Publicising your group not only advertises the group but also helps develop strong local support and helps to attract new members. Publicity can also be important in changing attitudes and making positive changes for women who are blind.

There are many reasons why your group might want or need publicity but how do you go about getting it? There are four basic ideas to remember with all forms of publicity. These are Planning, Simplicity, Personal Contact, and Follow Up.

- Planning: this helps you to establish who your target audience is (i.e.: other women who are blind); the type of event or change you are promoting; the purpose of the publicity; the timing of the publicity; and the follow up required.
- Simplicity: it is important in all forms of publicity to try and get your point across as clearly and simply as possible. It is a good guide to try and keep to 2 or 3 major points in most publicity.
- Personal Contact: most reporters and editors are ordinary people who like to be able to identify a face and a

personality with an otherwise unknown group. It's a good idea to try and have a face-to-face meeting with the reporters/editors you are likely to deal with.

- Follow Up: good publicity is not a one off event. It needs follow up to cement your message in people's minds. For example, if your group gets an article in the newspaper, you can follow it up with some letters to the Editor from group members. You can also look for ways to do a follow up article or perhaps a radio interview.

Adapted from: A Management Training Manual for Community Groups 1984.

Types of Publicity

There are several different types of publicity that your group can use. Lets look at some of them.

The Press Release

A Press Release is what groups use to introduce particular events or issues to the press and other media (such as television and radio). A Press Release must be given to the media in a form which is readily identifiable, easy to read and which makes the issues clear. The following tips to writing a press release can be used as a guide.

- The Press Release should be written on letterhead if possible and include a date.
- It should be no longer than one typed page.
- Each paragraph should be ranked in order of importance.
- The opening paragraph should contain all the most important facts – who, when, where, how and why.
- Any opinions or quotes should include the person's name and title.

- Finish the Press Release off with a contact name, title, and name of the group, address and contact numbers.
- It is a good idea to give other relevant organisations a copy of your Press Release so they know your group's position on the particular issue. Sometimes the press will contact similar organisations for their opinion on the issue.
- Make sure the Press Release is sent to the media before the news deadlines. You may have to check with the particular paper/radio what their deadlines are for receiving press releases.

Information Package

It can be a good idea for new groups to put together an Information Package about the group for the media. The Information Package could contain the following: background material on your group, its aims and objectives, membership, contact information, photos and so on. You can then send the Package to various media outlets (such as major newspapers, television stations, radio stations). That way, if you do write a press release or invite the media to cover one of your group's events, they will already be familiar with your group.

Radio

Radio time given to an issue, interview, or news report is often quite short because radio time is expensive and people's attention span for listening to someone on radio is restricted. This means that your group will need to condense your message into a short, punchy and memorable form. If you are interviewed for radio news you will usually only have 2 or 3 sentences quoted. The usual maximum for a commercial or an announcement is about

one minute of air time, which is equivalent to about 140 words or 4 written paragraphs.

If you are being interviewed on radio, particularly live to air, it is a good idea to work out beforehand what you want to say and how you want to say it. It may be helpful to practice the interview by acting it out with other women in your group.

Television

Working with television may seem a bit intimidating but it is often worth it - television reaches large numbers of people so it is a good way to get your message across or to publicise a particular activity or event. If you are going to be interviewed for the local television news, remember that news clips are usually very quick (often less than 30 seconds). Perhaps the most important skill in this situation is to be able to get to the point of your message fast. The location of the interview can also be important because viewers can often pick up more from what they see than from what they hear. It may be a good idea to use a poster with your group's name on it as a backdrop for the interview.

If you are going to be interviewed for a different type of television program (such as a current affairs show, or a chat show), it can be a good idea to practice role-playing the interview with a friend or another member of your group.

Posters and Pamphlets

Each poster, pamphlet or other written device has two main elements. Layout and design is important to catch the eye and keep attention. Wording is most important to keep the attention and implant a message in the audience. You

should therefore design your poster or pamphlet according to:

- The audience you want to reach (eg: other women who are blind)
- The location for the poster or pamphlet (eg: on a crowded noticeboard)
- The fewest possible words in a lively style to give both understanding and action towards your stated message

Leaflets, pamphlets and brochures provide much more space for background information than a poster but the design elements are still important.

Remember:

If you are going to produce a pamphlet about your group, consider the various information needs of women who are blind. You should try where possible to produce the pamphlet in alternative formats - such as in Braille, audio form and in large print. Try using pictures too instead of lots of words. As always, cost is likely to be a restricting factor in producing your group's pamphlet. However, there are ways around it – it's just a matter of seeing how creative you can be. Here are some suggestions:

- You could design the pamphlet as a group activity. You might prefer to take a group photo and use that instead of drawings.
- Try asking a large stationary company to donate the paper you will need for your pamphlets. Or you could ask local businesses for a small donation towards the cost of paper and printing.

Find out if there is a local printing company that can donate their printing services. If you only want to produce a small

number of pamphlets (say 200) it might be better to have them photocopied. You could try asking your local Member for Parliament if your group can access their photocopier. You could also try asking another disability or women's organisation if you can use their photocopying facilities.

Newsletters

Newsletters are a good way of keeping your members informed about the progress and activities of your group. In the early stages of your group's development you could produce a one page, double-sided sheet that could be photocopied. Here are some things to consider when developing a newsletter:

- Make sure your newsletter is interesting. Try to keep it lively, chatty, and up to date. Try including pictures or something that will break up the text a bit. You may want to give your newsletter a name.
- Try to encourage members of your group to have input to the newsletter. Someone in your group might be happy to take on the role of Editor of the newsletter. This is a task that could be rotated every few months so that all members in your group can get experience in co-ordinating the production of a newsletter.
- Advertising, subscriptions and/or donations can help to cover the costs of producing the newsletter. Just remember that if your group is going to accept advertisements in the newsletter, you may need to decide what types of advertisements are appropriate.

A newsletter is a great way of keeping current members informed of your group's progress. It can also help attract new members and can assist in getting more members actively involved in your group.

Working With The Media

To work effectively with the media it is a good idea to know what kind of stories the media generally runs. To do this, your group can look at your local newspapers, listen to community service announcements on radio, and watch your local television news and current affairs programs. This will help you to get an idea of the types of stories covered, the subject matter, the time allocated to the story, the length of the article, the style and so on.

Journalists and reporters are often interested in covering human-interest stories, especially in local media. Human-interest stories usually involve people or animals. Look for ways your group can bring a human-interest angle to the event or issue you wish to publicise. Just remember that if you are going to use people's names, locations, or any other personal information, you will need to make sure that the people involved have given their consent.

When dealing with the media it's good to remember the following points:

- Provide the media with a simple presentation of interesting facts, accurately recorded, neatly presented and maybe with a human-interest angle.
- Make the newsperson's task of reading, presenting, and following up your story as easy as possible.
- Try and learn which journalists are understanding of disability and women's issues. Get an idea of how particular journalists' report on disability and/or women's issues. Ask other relevant organisations what their experiences with media have been like.

Lobbying

Lobbying can be an important part of your group's activities, particularly if you are working at a local level to improve things for women who are blind.

Earlier in this kit we gave examples of how community groups can be effective in making positive changes for the people they represent. In many cases, these groups have had to 'lobby' politicians and policy makers to get the changes they want. Governments don't usually take action on their own account – their action is often in response to demands from the community.

There are basically two main lobbying options:

- Go directly to those who make the decisions; and/or
- Go to those who influence the decision makers.

It must be remembered that in each country different political systems operate, which may influence what lobbying options are appropriate.

NOTE: The following comments regarding lobbying have been suggested by Women with Disabilities Australia, and therefore may not be appropriate within your own country.

Basic Lobbying Rules

1. There really is no substitute for persistence. Take the example of Sojourner Truth, a lone black woman campaigner against racism and slavery in America. One of her detractors compared her to the smallest of insect irritants - the flea. She replied by saying: "That's alright, but Lord willing

I'll keep you scratching". And she did. Her continuing efforts helped to remove strongholds of distrust and greed.

2. Concentrate the efforts of your group. Tackle one issue at a time - don't push for too many changes at once.
3. Be well informed - Know your subject and be specific about facts and what you want done. Don't be too general because it is easier for politicians and bureaucrats to say no to broad generalisations.
4. Plan your approach - especially for face-to-face meetings with politicians and bureaucrats. Think about the types of questions you might be asked and have your responses ready.
5. Know the decision-makers. Know what decisions they can make and which are outside their area.
6. Be willing to use direct and indirect lobbying techniques. Direct techniques include face-to-face meetings, interviews and so on. Indirect techniques are things like letters, petitions, use of the media etc.

Basic Lobbying Techniques

Meetings with Government Ministers and Bureaucrats.

It is a good idea to find out who the Minister responsible for disability and/or women's services is in your area or country. Make an appointment to see them and inform them about issues of importance to your group. Most Government Ministers have an Adviser - it is a good idea to get to know the Advisers and try and meet with them on a regular basis. Be aware that many Government Ministers don't have a lot of time, so make sure you use the time effectively and get

your message across. Find out which government departments are responsible for disability and women's services and programs. Find out who the relevant bureaucrats are within these departments and organise to meet with them. Leave relevant written information with the Minister and bureaucrats you meet with. Give them a copy of your group's Information Package. It is a good idea to put relevant Ministers and bureaucrats on your mailing list so they can be kept informed of your group's progress.

Letters to Politicians and the Press.

Letters to politicians and the press are an easy and effective tactic. The best letters are personal, direct and with only a small amount of information. Like press releases, letters to politicians should be short, sharp and to the point. 'Form letters' (the same letter sent by lots of different people) are not as effective as personally written letters.

Meetings with your Member for Parliament.

It is a good idea to find out who your local Member for Parliament is. Members for Parliament are meant to consult with and represent their local community, so make the most of this. Organise to have regular meetings with your local Member for Parliament to keep them informed of what your group is doing.

If your group has issues of particular concern (eg: no accessible public transport in your community) then take your concerns to your Member for Parliament and ask them how they can help you.

Petitions.

Petitions to government can take a lot of effort to organise and seldom change anything by themselves. They can however, be a useful technique in trying to generate media interest in an issue. Smaller petitions can be useful at a local level particularly if they are going to local councils or companies.

Media.

Don't be afraid to make use of the media as part of your groups lobbying activities. It can be useful to use the media if you feel your concerns are not being taken seriously by the politicians and bureaucrats, or if decision makers are slow in responding to your concerns.

Sources: adapted from A Management Training Manual for Community Groups 1984; Managerial Issues 1993; The Marketing Handbook 1984;

Funding Guidelines

Most funding bodies have developed systems for allocating funding. The system says who they are prepared to fund, to do what, and how the funds are to be calculated and paid out. When it comes to government departments, nearly all decisions to make a grant are taken on the advice of public servants sticking to the guidelines of their own departments system.

Tips for Understanding what they want

One of the first steps in making a submission for funding is to understand exactly what the funding body is prepared to fund and why they have set up the particular funding program. That way you can explain your ideas in the context of what is fundable.

What do they want to fund?

- Any special target group? (Eg: women, people living in rural areas, migrants)
- Any special functions? (Such as information centres, respite care, toy libraries etc)
- Any special way of operating? (Such as self-help, use of volunteers, sharing facilities etc)

How is the money calculated?

- Is there a maximum grant, or a minimum grant? Do they prefer big projects?
- What will they fund? (Eg: some guidelines say they will pay salaries but not equipment; others will pay for equipment but not salaries. Some grants will not pay administrative costs.)

- Do you have to raise money? (Eg: some grants require you to put money towards the grant; some grants are paid in arrears so you have to have enough money to spend before you can claim it back)

What is the timing of the grant?

- Some funding programs receive submissions all year round and pay the money out straight away
- Some funding programs make allocations for a calendar or financial year, with a deadline for applications several months in advance
- Some funding programs have a strict queue, while others fund 'on merit' which means that good proposals 'jump the queue'
- Some funding programs will fund a group only once, whereas others will re-fund successful projects from year to year

How to find out what they want

After you have researched what grants programs are available to your group, the next step is to get the application forms or the brochures that describe the funding program. You can then contact the people responsible for administering the grant to ask any questions, to give them an idea of what you want to do and to ask for their advice. As well as helping you to understand what they want, your personal contact means that they will recognise and be interested in your submission when it reaches them.

Explaining what you want

Every funding submission, no matter how the application is set out, needs to show the following information:

- What you want to do
- Why its needed
- Why its a good idea
- How much it will cost
- How you will make it work
- How you will show if its been a success

Source: Adapted from the South Australian Council of Social Service, 1990

A Guide to Writing Submissions

This submission checklist may be a useful guide when preparing a proposal to submit to a funding body. Many of the funding bodies will have their own Application Forms that you will need to complete, but this checklist can be of value in helping you to make sure you have included all the relevant information in your submission. It can also be used as a guide when there are no application forms.

Remember

Funding bodies usually want a submission which is easy to read, which answers every question on the application form and which is short enough to be read or photocopied quickly.

Project Title and Contact Details

This section of your submission should include the following information:

- Project title: A short catchy name for your project.
- Brief description: A sentence, which gives a brief description of the project.
- Date: Date submission is written and date due.
- Submission to: Name and contact details of the funding body.
- Submission from: Name and contact details of your group.
- Contact Person: Name, position and contact details of the contact person for the project. The contact person should be the person responsible for either carrying out or managing the project. The contact person should also be available during the grant decision-making time.

Organisation Details

This section of your submission should include the following information:

- History and Aims: A summary of the aims and objectives of your group, and when it was formed.
- Community Served: Information on who your group is for (i.e.: women who are blind) and the geographical area your group covers (eg: local, rural, state-wide, national). You should also describe how women who are blind are involved in the management and running of your group.
- Key Programs: Outline the primary work of your group and one or two recent achievements.
- Structure and State the groups legal structure and describe the Leadership: administrative and management leadership. Include information about the tax status of your group.
- Annual Budget: You can include your Annual Report as an attachment or if you don't have one you should include evidence of your group's financial accounts.

Project Details

This section of your submission should include the following information:

- Project Objectives: Clearly state the aims and objectives of the project.
- Project Need: Describe the problem you are addressing in your project.
- Include any statistics or other information that can support your case. State who will benefit from your project, and how and why they will benefit. Include information about what will change if the project is undertaken.

- Project Planning: Describe how the project was selected. Provide information about how women who are blind were involved in the planning of the project. Describe how the project fits in with the overall aims of your group.
- Project Outcomes: Describe what outcomes are expected by doing the project.
- Project Staff: Provide information about the background and experience of the people who will do the work. Explain what their various roles in the project will be. Describe how women who are blind will be involved in the project work or the project management.
- Project Timelines: Describe the specific activities, steps and timelines to be used throughout the project. State when the project will start and when it will finish. Describe how you will provide information on the project to women who are blind, other key organisations and the broader community. Describe how information about the project and its results will be distributed at the end of the project.
- Project Evaluation: State who will evaluate the project and when it will be done. Describe how you will measure whether or not the project was successful.

Budget

This section of your submission should include the following information:

- Project Budget: Provide figures on the total budget for the project. List any 'in kind' support you have been able to obtain for the project. Provide information on any other potential sources of funding to assist with the project (such as membership fees, fundraising etc).
- Amount Requested: State how much money you are requesting from the funding body. Provide information on

what these funds are for and when you will need the money.

- Attachments: List any attachments you have included with your application. Attachments may include: Annual Report; financial statements; auditors report; your group's pamphlet etc.

Source: Adapted from The Australian Directory of Philanthropy, 1996, The Grants Book 1990, Frohmader, 1994.

SECTION 5: COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Non Verbal Communication

What we don't say bears more meaning than what we verbalize. We constantly transmit and receive non-verbal messages, often revealing our attitudes and feelings before we say a single word. Once you increase your awareness of these signs and develop your ability to read and understand them - you will greatly improve your ability to communicate and work effectively with others. Each posture, each movement, and each gaze - is a message sent from within. Try and figure out - what is the meaning of each posture?

Body Language is the unspoken communication, those subtle messages conveyed without words that are transmitted and received in every Face-to-Face encounter with another human being. These include posture, facial expressions, gestures, mannerisms and your appearance. These messages tell you someone's true feelings towards you and how well your words are being received. Between 60-80% of our message is communicated through our Body Language, only 7-10% is attributable to the actual words of a conversation. Some psychologists claim that the impact you make on others depends on what you say (7%), how you say it (38%), and by your body language (55%). Since how you sound also conveys a message, 93% of emotion is communicated without actual words. It's often not what you say that influences others; it's what you don't say. The signals that you send nonverbally suggest attitude, understanding, empathy and ethics. The moment you meet another, they judge you by what they see and feel. The

process takes less than 10 seconds but the impression is permanent. The signals that you send during this first contact may make or break a sale or change the outcome of any meeting.

Your ability to read and understand another person's Body Language can mean the difference between making a great impression or a very bad one! It could help you in that job interview, that meeting, that business function, or special date!

Everyone has experienced the feeling that they have just been lied to, haven't they? The words of the conversation probably weren't what we noticed as a direct lie. It was more likely to be the body movements and signals that gave them away. Darting eyes, palms not visible, shifting from one foot to another, hand covering mouth or fingers tugging at the ear are clues. All the clues are there. Our subconscious picks them up, and if we're lucky enough to be perceptive, decodes them and tells us that the words and gestures don't match!

Whenever there is a conflict between the words that someone says and their body signals and movements, we almost always believe their body!

Non-verbal signs are very effective. They have a crucial influence on communicational processes, on the impression you create and the manner in which others treat you.

Understanding the messages transmitted through the body is of considerable importance in order to improve communication skills, to advance your personal and professional targets and to increase personal effectiveness in inter-personal contacts.

So, being aware of the cues and signals being sent to you by others is a crucial skill if you want to understand a person's attitude towards you, regardless of what they are saying.

Make Your Body Language Work for You!

Learn how to use it to influence others or to create the right impact at first sight.

To be effective in your communication and to gain the competitive edge in business, practice some of the following areas of body language.

1. **NOTHING CROSSED.** Keep arms, legs and feet relaxed and uncrossed. Also, if you are wearing a jacket, open it up. It relays the message I am open and honest with you.
2. **LEAN FORWARD.** Move within 6 to 8 feet of your client. Lean slightly forward. Interested people always pay attention and lean forward. Leaning backwards demonstrates aloofness or rejection.
3. **MIRRORING.** Pay attention to your clients breathing and the pace that they are talking at. Is it fast or slow, then mirror them. If they cross their legs. slowly do the same.
4. **DIRECT EYE CONTACT.** Direct eye contact is a compliment to most people and builds trust in you but be aware of the customs of people from other countries. It may be a sign of disrespect.
5. **HANDSHAKE.** Not too hard and not too soft. Pay attention to how you are shaking someone's hand.

Source: Amended from Raam consultants- Body Language & Non Verbal Communication

Tips On Effective Handshaking

Always shake from a standing position.

Make immediate eye contact, if possible, and smile.

Do not pull away from the handshake too quickly, as this sends a message that you don't want to get too close.

Hold the other person's hand for a split second longer than duty requires. This practice conveys confidence and pleasure in meeting the person.

Whenever possible, volunteer your name first. It shows confidence and self-control.

Offer your hand first and firmly grasp the other person's palm. Avoid clasping the other person's fingers, as this may appear condescending.

A man no longer has to wait for a woman to extend her hand first. Women should shake hands with each other as well as with male associates.

Repeat the name of the person to whom you are being introduced, for example, "It's a pleasure to meet you, Elaine." This is courteous; it also helps you remember the other person's name.

Be conscious of the strength of your grip. The "bone-crusher" handshake says that you are either a bully, or are insecure and have something to prove. Too soft a handshake speaks of insecurity.

Hand positions can communicate dominance or submission. An upturned palm indicates submissiveness. A down-turned palm shows a need for power.

To show warmth and sincerity you can use the two-handed handshake. Shake with one hand while clasping the outside of the person's hand with the other. Use this only with people you know very well.

If you are drinking a cold beverage, hold the glass in your left hand to avoid shaking with a clammy right hand.

Wear your nametag on your right side. It can be read more easily by the other person as you shake hands.

If you suffer from sweaty palms, keep a tissue in your pocket. Squeeze it prior to shaking hands. Washing your hands in advance with hot water will delay perspiration.

Source: Usheroff Institute

Effective listening

A sense of another person's importance can be conveyed by how you demonstrate attentiveness. Effective listening involves more than making eye contact and nodding in agreement. As Stephen Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, says: "Most people listen, not with the intent to understand but with the intent to reply."

Face the person with your full body.

Maintain an open facial expression. Keep your mouth slightly open to relax your facial muscles.

Control your body language so that you will not look bored or uncomfortable.

If possible, develop the habit of looking into just one of the person's eyes; it keeps you from being distracted.

If you are able to, notice where people focus their eyes when they talk and when they listen.

Encourage the speaker to continue by saying, "tell me more, this is interesting?"

Paraphrase or summarize what was just said. Ask questions.

Wait until they are finished talking before you speak. Resist the temptation to jump in and speak until you are sure that the other person is not just taking a breath.

Source: Usheroff Institute

Verbal Communication

Five Steps to Getting Your Ideas Across

The information you are expected to deliver is often critical to the people you work with. The way you explain procedures or give information can make the difference between being productive or frustrated. How you present the idea makes the difference between whether or not anyone really listens to you.

Communicating clearly and convincingly is neither an inherited ability nor a complicated process. It is a learned skill developed over time and experience. The following five steps will help you when you have an important message to deliver. It relates to when you are speaking in a group or to an individual.

Step One: State the purpose and main point of your message

When you state the purpose at the beginning of your message, you encourage your listeners to focus on your information and be more receptive. They won't have to try to guess what your point is and will be more open to follow along as you develop your discussion. Starting your main point right away grabs your listeners' attention.

Say: "The reason I want to discuss this is "

"The purpose of this meeting is "

"I want to discuss how "

"I believe that "

Step Two: Present points to help understand why

You will establish credibility and respect when your explanations or ideas are built upon clear facts and/or observations. It helps your listeners to gain insight into why you have arrived at your decision.

- Present your supporting points in logical order.
- List all your points first. Then go over each one with more detail.
- Keep it short and simple.
- Use logic that your audience can relate to.
- Say it with enthusiasm.

Step Three: Do a reality check and ask for understanding

Misunderstandings need to be corrected quickly. When you ask people for their viewpoints, it shows that you respect their knowledge and opinions and are prepared to be objective.

- Ask closed-ended questions to see if you were clear, if the information was useful, etc.
- Ask open-ended questions to uncover any ideas or problems that you may have overlooked.

Step Four: Respond rather than react

Projecting an attitude of openness will encourage participation and help achieve consensus from your audience. This quality is displayed by how you respond to people when they question your statements or opinions. Avoid reacting as they may simply be asking for clarification.

- Show respect for your questioner by validating their question or the need for it.
- Thank them for asking or commenting.
- Paraphrase to verify what the person has asked before you answer. Say, "Let me check - are you saying that...."
- If you feel attacked, focus on the situation or behavior, not the person. Say, "I understand your concern. Let's try to come up with some options."

Step Five: Summarize your main point

Restate your main idea simply to refocus on the essential message. It also clarifies “who needs to do what” for any follow-up to take place.

Say "In summarizing, I believe that this new system will increase our productivity. I suggest we try it for a week. At the end of that time, we can get together to evaluate."

Smart Talking

Smart talk is the ability to constructively use self-talk that helps you create a positive outcome. How you talk to yourself impacts on the image that you project. If you look at situations in a negative fashion, you create stress talk and your audience will perceive you to be negative.

Beware of the following:

- Ignoring all the positive aspects of the situation and focusing exclusively on the negative ones.
- Referring to a simple action a person has done and putting a general negative label on it.

- Expecting the situation to have a negative outcome.
- Focusing on a situation as either black or white.
- Exaggerating by using words like he "never" listens.

Communication Traps

Different people will talk very differently, not because of the absolute level of their confidence or lack of it, but because of their habitual ways of speaking. When you sound sure of yourself, people are more inclined to believe you. Should you sound tentative even when you are confident in your statement, people are more skeptical.

- Project confidence when you speak. Avoid hesitation.
- Speak with authority. Avoid phrasing your ideas as suggestions.
- Seek respect from your audience. Never say that it's just your opinion.
- Speak directly. Do not beat around the bush. If the message is too softly delivered for fear of being disliked, you won't be heard.
- Speak with self-assurance. Avoid apologizing out of habit.
- Speak with believability. Don't ask for approval. Instead, ask how your audience feels about the idea. Whenever you ask for a "yes" or "no" answer, it might suggest that you are seeking approval.
- Speak with enthusiasm and conviction. Keep your voice steady. Be careful not to end a sentence as if it were a question and avoid letting your voice trail off at the end of a sentence.
- Speak like an expert! Focus on your experience when you present an idea. Avoid the phrase "I think" for your dictionary. Substitute it with "I believe" or "It's been my experience".

Saying No

It's not what you say but how you say it. This applies to your choice of using the word "NO". There are two techniques for saying no.

THE HARD NO

The delivery of hard no leaves no room for negotiation, compromise or understanding. Some examples of the hard no attitudes are:

- That's not my job.
- I have no idea.
- I'm not allowed to do that.
- That's not company policy

THE SERVICE NO

The service no is more accepting to your customer. It first considers what the customer needs and how you can provide it to the best of your ability. The following steps will permit you to be more effective and respectful of your customer at the same time.

- What I will do is

This phrase tells the customer that you want to help them to resolve the problem. Although you may not be able to accommodate their specific need, it will create an acceptable resolution to the problem. You are letting them know that you are prepared to help them and that you truly care.

- What you can do is

This phrase lets the customer feel that they have control over the outcome. You are inviting them to help resolve the problem and they will still feel in control.

Source: Usheroff Institute

Making Powerful Presentations with Dynamic Delivery

You are the message. Do you know what the audience sees? Most people don't. But if you are called upon to make frequent presentations, you want to optimize the way you come across.

It is a myth that great speakers are born, that they have been blessed with the innate ability to speak in front of groups comfortably, without anxiety.

Many people shun giving presentations - with good reason. Most presenters are not dynamic under these stressful conditions. A presentation gives you an opportunity to shine. But you will have to do more than make a good presentation. You must put in an arresting, powerful, and memorable performance.

Speaking to an audience is comparable to learning a new sport. Initially, it can be frustrating, but after you learn the theory and practice some of the basic skills, you become more confident. To become masterful at speaking requires that you continuously seek out opportunities to practice public speaking. Joining Toastmasters or volunteering to speak at associations helps you feel more comfortable with the basics. Each opportunity to speak brings you closer to perfecting your techniques. Trial and error is the best teacher; the more experience you gain, the more comfortable you will become.

The seven overriding principles of being an exceptional presenter are:

- Have expertise on your subject
- Be prepared

Know your audience
Involve your audience
Speak with passion
Entertain your audience
Connect with your audience on an emotional level

"The 8-Second Rule"

Most participants decide within eight seconds whether you are worth listening to. You are the message. Your persona, platform manner, posture, voice, gestures, attitude, enthusiasm and energy level all directly influence your participants' decision to listen to you.

How do you rate as a presenter? Check those qualities that you believe you need to address.

Qualities of an excellent speaker

Polished and appropriately dressed
Confident
Decisive
Organized
Knowledgeable
Prepared
Approachable
Inspirational
Excellent communicator
Encourage participation
Passionate
Articulate
Nonjudgmental
Flexible

Qualities of a poor speaker

- Sloppy in appearance
- Unprepared
- Doesn't know material
- Late
- Inconsistent
- Condescending or rude
- Doesn't involve participants
- Unable to use AV equipment properly
- Boring
- Insensitive to group's needs
- Reactive
- Poor communicator
- Judgmental
- Rigid

The following pre-presentation questionnaire is designed to facilitate your presentation and set-up. I created this form for my own personal use and have found it to be extremely helpful. It will eliminate anxiety about details and focus your attention on your delivery.

Pre-presentation questionnaire

In order to properly prepare for the upcoming presentation and to meet the specific needs of your audience, please complete the following information.

Event

Date and time

Location

Length of presentation

Scheduled break(s)

Audience profile: Expected number in audience: Male/female ratio if known: Level of experience:

Other relevant information:

Identify objectives:

Points to include in your introduction:

Strategies to be used (icebreakers/relevant stories/questions to ask):

Research and/or statistics that must be included:

Points to include in your summary:

What specific skills or knowledge do you want the group to have when the presentation is completed? What action do you want your audience to take?

What challenges/concerns would be important to know about the audience before addressing your topic to them?

How will the information benefit the participants? How will this enhance their job performance? What measures will you take to evaluate the success of your presentation? With whom?

Seating Arrangement:	Theatre style	Classroom
Room setup:	U-shaped	Other:

Room set-up: What are some challenges you need to anticipate? Are there any preventive measures you can take?

Lighting: Can you adjust the room's lighting when using specific audio/visual equipment? Are there any preventive measures you can take?

Audio/Visual Equipment: What alternative measures have you planned for should the equipment fail?

Refreshments: What type of food and beverages will you be ordering? From where? What arrangement have you made to ensure correct time for delivery? Are there any special dietary requirements for the participants? Will you be serving food and beverages before, during, or after the presentation?

Equipment Checklist

35 mm slide projector and screen for horizontal and vertical slides (check positioning of screen)
Cordless remote control for slide projector (if possible)

Table for displaying product and materials

TV and VCR

Microphone - cordless lapel type if possible

Water pitcher and glass

Handouts and program material

Notepads or writing paper and pens for participants

Overhead projector and screen

Lectern or podium

Flipchart with fresh markers

PowerPoint/outlet/electrical wiring

Spare bulbs for AV equipment

Extension cord

Name tags/tent cards

Masking tape

Ability to set room temperature

Notes

Preparation

Here are some strategies for constructing your presentation and for making the most of your delivery.

Step One

Research and investigate your audience

Presenters understand that messages need to be focused on the participants. Knowing your audience is the first and most crucial step. You must understand their needs, interests, concerns, attitudes, beliefs, and even their personalities.

Who are these people?
What do you have in common?
How knowledgeable are they, and what is their level of competency?
What are the potential areas of conflict?
Are there any special circumstances surrounding your content? How will it impact on a listener's frame of mind?

Step Two
Link clearly defined objectives to the participants' needs
Why is this important?
Who really cares?
What should I be saying?
What is the point?
Does this add anything?
Am I speaking in a language that everyone can understand?
Am I using examples that are applicable?

Great materials and activities mean nothing without a clear directional plan. Don't rely on these things to carry your message. It is imperative that all presentations begin with the group's needs and objectives.

Step Three
Identify human needs

When you take the time to understand your audience, you can identify their needs and connect with individuals on a deeper level.

We operate on two levels: the conscious level and the subconscious level.

The conscious level

The conscious level can be reached through logic. This is important, but it is not always the quickest route to take to make your point accepted. The conscious level is based on intellectual rationalization. Because you may have been brought up with values different from those of your audience, they may be less willing to believe your reasoning.

A Harvard University survey estimated that approximately 20 percent of your audience is skeptics initially. When there is controversy around the speaker's logic, the message becomes tainted.

The subconscious level

The subconscious level is based on "gut feeling? It senses things through intuition. It is driven by our most basic needs: food, shelter, hope, fulfillment, and power. Your audience responds to messages from their subconscious level. You must therefore connect with them on this level to ensure that your message is accepted.

Step Four

Hook your audience with your introduction

Personal biography (Including why you should speak on this subject)

Objectives
(Why the audience should listen)

Content
(What you will cover; whether there will be a Q & A period, and when)

Goals
(Concrete examples of what the audience will take away)

Structuring your presentation

The simpler the structure, the higher the impact
The rule is to sell the big picture in 45 seconds, then spend the rest of the time explaining how you arrived at that conclusion.

The P O W E R Formula

In *The Articulate Speaker*, Granville N. Toogood defines five key strategies for designing your presentation. What most impressed me about his theory was the simplicity and applicability to all situations, whether you have time to prepare a formal presentation or are challenged to think on your feet. Use this formula as your checklist.

Punch - Strong start
One theme - One message, plus sub-themes linked to main theme
Window - Specific examples, illustrations and stories to back up your main theme
Ear - Speak conversationally
Retention- End strongly (summary, loop, questions, positive attitude)

Have one theme

Mr. Toogood uses the analogy of a presentation to a pearl necklace. Each pearl is connected with a common thread. The thread is your theme; the pearls are the ideas and examples that hang onto the theme. Each pearl or thought should relate to the thread or your main idea. Link every sub-topic to the original theme.

Develop three to seven points that you wish to share. You should begin with the simplest and most general ideas, then move to more complex points.

The conclusion goes first

The opening statement should be your final message. This lets your audience know immediately what your focus is, and stops people from wondering where you are going. Think of the pearl necklace: It has the thread that connects the pearls, and it becomes complete when you attach the two ends together.

Three stages of a presentation

Types of openings

- Begin with the ending. Never say: "It's nice to be here today? It's a cliché that is rarely believed.
- Ask an involving question. Use an open-ended question or ask for a show of hands.
- Use a rhetorical question that can only be answered with an obvious question.

- Tell a personal story that makes a business point. Use it as an attention-grabber that will inform, clarify, or benefit the listener.
- Use an anecdote, illustration, or analogy to make your point.
- Use a quotation to start. Limit it to one or two sentences. Identify the source of the quotation.
- Position yourself as a visionary. Project into the future using credible evidence based on current facts or logical predictions.
- Look into the past, define it, and link it to the future. This shows the big picture.
- Use humor, not jokes. Relate it to a business point and be tasteful.

Persuading with evidence

In the core of your presentation, choose from seven strategies to persuade your audience:

Facts

Expert opinion

Demonstration

The strong finish

- Summarize your key points. One or three, never two or four.
- Loop back to the beginning: Let your ending repeat the start.
- Close with a strong statement, personal story, or quotation.
- Always end on a positive note.
- Project what you see in the future.

- End with a strong visual image that captures the message.
- Should you require your audience to make a decision, address the need in your conclusion. Tell them what specific action they need to take, how to take it, and when it must be taken.

Use 4x6" cards

Peter Urs Bender, author of *Secrets of Power Presentations*, recommends that you write your presentation in note form on 4x6" note cards marked with key words to trigger your memory. He explains that this will ensure that you don't forget key points and will help you deliver your message in a logical sequence. Using note cards assures your audience that you are organized. It forces you to think on your feet, speak more naturally, and focus more attention on the audience rather than on your written material. Number the cards on the top right corner to avoid potential hazards. Highlight specific points in different colors for emphasis and to remind you when to use correct gestures, vocal emphasis, and pauses. Ideally, you should know your material well enough that you only need to glance periodically at them. To move freely in a room, place note cards in various places to keep you on track.

Techniques to involve your audience

The sooner you involve your audience, the quicker you engage their belief. Make your audience feel like participants, not just spectators. Use words like "you" and "we" rather than "I" and "my."

Begin with questions that open with How many of you would or Imagine that you. This creates instant connection with the audience.

Have you developed a "WIIFM" (What's in it for me?) statement? Does your audience really understand why they should listen?

Appeal to the audience by identifying a need, then explaining how to satisfy this need. Speak about changes, trends, research or developments. Put yourself in the shoes of the audience. Would you be convinced to stay?

Stand for something.

Remember... People don't care about how much you know until they see how much you care.

Ensure retention

The average listener has forgotten 40 percent of what was said after a half-hour; 60 percent by the end of the day and 90 percent by the end of the week. Therefore clarity, simplicity and repetition are essential. Use the old guideline: "Tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, and tell them what you told them'

Perfecting delivery: verbal strategies

Speak conversationally

The key is to be consistent and conversational whether sitting down or standing up. Imagine that you are having an enlarged conversation (even if you are speaking to 100 people). You will appear more natural and break down barriers when you appear relaxed.

Focus on communication that is easy to understand, straightforward and to the point. Speakers who are long-winded annoy listeners and lose attention.

Be prepared for the 18-minute wall

In the 1970s, the Navy conducted a study to find out how long people can listen to others. Their conclusion: only 18 minutes. After that, an audience's attention drops off. Consider the amount of information you have just delivered. To ensure that your audience retains it, choose from the following:

- Solicit questions from the audience. Refer back to the information just covered in this time frame.
- Create an opportunity to solicit feedback.
- Have another speaker add some supportive points.
- Tell a business story. This helps drive the point home in an entertaining way.
- Use a video, slides, or written quiz.

Talk with pictures

Your audience is 43 percent more likely to be persuaded with visuals than with words alone. Wherever possible, engage your audience's imagination to illustrate your point. They will absorb your information quicker and become better listeners. Apply this theory when you are speaking about a subject that might be dry and boring. If you have a statistic that you feel makes your point, find a valid way to illustrate it.

Talk in layman's terms

Use simple, everyday words. Avoid technical jargon. Focus on being unpretentious. If you must use technical language or industry buzzwords, explain them. Use strong, active, positive words.

Speak in context, not content

People are no longer prepared to follow unless they feel valued and believe that you have their best interests in mind.

Avoid delivering a presentation that focuses initially on content. Content refers to rules, information, and systems. It answers the questions of "what" and "how" it works. Context refers to "why" it is important. When you focus on the "why" before the "what" and "how;" it allows people to understand your reasoning. It provides them with the logic before the mechanics. Therefore they are engaged and participating and feel respected as listeners.

Speak from the heart, not the head

In order to be inspirational, your audience must believe you. Speak from your emotional side. Be prepared to show your vulnerability. Demonstrate a willingness to communicate openly and honestly. Admit when you are wrong or not certain. Focus on your own personal experiences, not just rules. Demonstrate that you are authentic and sensitive to other people's feelings.

Speak with passion

Be animated. Other people may have the same information you do; what sets you apart is your personality, experiences, and effectiveness in connecting with the audience. Show your enthusiasm for your topic and how happy you are to be there. Be an entertainer, not just a presenter. When people are entertained, they are more attentive and receptive; they remember your message better and enjoy the experience more.

Work through the following questions for your next presentation.

What is your main theme?

Your introduction begins as follows: An intriguing question

A shocking statement (statistics are effective here)

Humor

A business story

A personal anecdote

A rhetorical question

A quotation

List the three to seven points you will cover in your content.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

What technique(s) will you select to convince your audience? Describe it beside your selections:

Personal Experience

Example

Analogy

Statistics

Facts

Expert Opinion

Demonstration

What points will you make in your concluding remarks?
Include three ideas that you want the audience to remember,

a call for action if applicable, and a statement demonstrating your appreciation for their attention.

Creating the charismatic persona on the platform

Emotional connection

In order to influence your audience, you must be able to influence their emotions. To ensure people are in the correct frame of mind, ask questions that direct their emotional memories to elicit a specific feeling, such as times in their lives when they felt victorious. Focus on presenting questions that influence people to relate to you, as in "Me too!" rather than "So what!"

Questions

Ask basic questions of your group. Invite them to raise their hands in positive response. This generates interest in the topic and involves the participants. It demonstrates that you care about how they feel. Additionally, you are guiding them towards making a connection with you. As people answer your questions, they become more conditioned to accepting your leadership. It encourages potential skeptics to accept your simple directives immediately.

Physical alignment

Skilled presenters create a comfortable environment before they deliver specific directives or information.

Before you begin, direct your group to stand and participate in an activity that requires them to physically follow you, such

as a stretching or handshaking exercise. The participants will become accustomed to following your directions where it appears natural and safe. This prepares them to be more open to you when you begin presenting content.

Voice presentation

- Check with colleagues prior to your presentation. Rehearse in the room where the presentation will be held and ask your colleagues if your voices carries. At the beginning of your presentation, it is appropriate to ask your audience if you are speaking loud enough.
- Avoid talking too fast. The average conversational rate of speech is about 125 words per minute. When speakers become nervous, the rate usually increases. This is not necessarily negative but the speaker's articulation must be excellent. However, if your audience needs to take notes, or you are using technical terms, speak more slowly.
- Avoid speaking in a monotone. This is usually caused by anxiety and the tightening up of muscles in the throat and chest. Prior to a presentation, I recommend deep breathing exercises or several large yawns to reduce your nervousness. Any form of physical activity is extremely helpful, even something as simple as running on the spot in a private location before you present.
- Stay away from caffeinated beverages before your present. Don't drink milk before you speak it stimulates the mucus glands and causes you to want to clear your throat or cough. Room-temperature water is best. Use a throat lozenge before speaking to coat your throat.
- In a one-on-one situation, synchronize your voice with the other person to build rapport by matching the other's tempo and volume.

- When addressing a group, be aware that there are three types of listeners: slow processors, moderate processors, and speedy processors of information. Therefore you must be sensitive to how quickly they absorb your words. Begin your presentation using a slow deep voice for those people who process language slowly. Once you have related to these people, pick up the pace after three to four minutes for your moderate listeners. After another three to four minutes, pick up the pace again for the speedy processors. Everyone in the group will now feel comfortable with you and has now adapted to your speed. You must vary your speed to keep everyone's attention.

Humor

Use humor to bring your group closer together. As your audience laughs, they begin to feel more relaxed and comfortable with you. Be sure to use humor effectively and in a non-offensive manner. Never tell controversial, sexist, racial or religious jokes.

Allow the participants to laugh at stories that relate to your personal experience, never at their expense. Self-deprecating humor is safe and your audience will trust you more if you poke fun at yourself.

Be sure that the humor is in context with your speech. The secret to using humor is not to try to be funny, but to tell an amusing story that entertains.

Pause after the punch line to let it sink in. Wait for the laughter to subside before continuing.

Stories and word pictures

Stories touch your audience on a subconscious level and captivate their attention. They are usually believed and certainly remembered. They position you to be entertaining and allow your personality to emerge. Be careful not to make yourself the hero of all your stories. Success stories have most impact when they involve a participant in your audience. Make sure that the stories relate to your content.

Be cautious when sharing intimate information in your story. Make sure that you have come to terms with the incident so that you don't break down while you are telling the story. The audience won't hear the story if you are choked with emotion.

Word pictures activate emotion and stimulate imagination. This technique adds strength, focus and personality to your material.

How to introduce a speaker

Time frame

A proper introduction builds instant rapport between the audience and the speaker and encourages everyone in the room to listen. Duration is important. It must not exceed one to one-and-one-half minutes in length.

Remember that a good introduction does not make up for a bad speech but a bad introduction can turn people away from the best of presentations.

Three-step process

Peter Urs Bender, a master of presentation skills, identifies three steps for effective introductions.

1. Establish the importance of the subject.

Create a context and give a concrete example of the subject so that the audience can relate. (If you are speaking at a conference, link it to their main theme.) It may be a new idea attracting wide interest, research, or a problem in need of a solution.

2. Relate the immediacy of the topic to the audience's current interest. Explain how your subject will help them to reach their professional and personal goals. Spell out precisely "What's In It For Me" so they listen attentively.

3. Highlight the speaker's qualifications to address the topic of the presentation. Mention the speaker's accomplishments and why he or she is qualified to speak on the subject. Highlight personal qualities and attributes. Say things that are relevant to the audience as you explain the speaker's career history. Here's an example of an introduction: "I have to begin with a confession: When I heard who was going to be our speaker, I insisted that I be the one to introduce him. I have admired this individual for many years. He is the epitome of true leadership in the area of... My only concern was: How do you introduce someone of such stature, someone who has been awarded 10 honorary doctorates, been a recipient of... It is with admiration that I introduce..."

Fine-tuning A/V equipment

General guidelines Visuals

1. Never begin a presentation or end a presentation with slides. If you begin and end strongly, you do not need visuals. They only serve to distract.
2. Place blanks between each slide, except where there are a series of slides that must be displayed together. The purpose for isolating every slide is to allow you, the speaker, to dominate, rather than the slides.
3. Use picture slides instead of word slides, unless absolutely necessary. Exceptions are lists and quotations. Eliminate titles, agendas, and slides made up of whole sentences and paragraphs. You don't want to read the words to the audience. Avoid turning your back on your audience. Picture slides also shorten your presentation.
4. Keep visuals simple; make just one point per slide.
5. Be clear and concise. Use key words (about six words per line) and limit those to six lines per page. The more information you pack in, the smaller the numbers and letters become, and the more difficult they are to read.
6. Make every slide count. Ask yourself if this slide is really necessary and if the graphics connect properly with the main message.
7. Use one image per concept. For example, when showing two pie charts, separate graphics have more impact. This

allows your audience to see change from one slide to the other. It also permits you to use different sizes for effect.

8. Make sure the size of your graphic accurately reflects the change you want to emphasize.
9. Use graphics to depict good news and tables for not-so-good news. Graphics are easier to understand than tables. Your audience will see your point immediately. A table with complex information may confuse your audience. It does, however, minimize the impact of information that is not favorable.
10. Prepare a slide presentation that shows mostly graphics and a handout copy that shows everything, including graphics and text. Advise your audience that they will receive the expanded version in the handout.

Tell and show

Tell and show rather than show and tell. First explain. "Here's a slide of what I'm talking about...?", or "As you will see...?. Be silent when you show the visual. Allow the audience to shift from listening to you to looking at the slide. Remove the slide. Then offer a further explanation. For example, you might say: "So, what does this all mean?" or "Where do we go from here?".

Positioning Yourself

Touch-Turn-Talk

- Touch the visual in silence and think. Point to the part of the visual where you want the audience to look.

- Turn in silence and find a person's eyes.
- Talk to one person at a time.

Overheads

- Use numbered cardboard frames for the slides.
- Make trainer notes on the transparency frame.
- Cover the light bulb or screen with a solid piece of cardboard between slides to eliminate glare.
- The screen and projector should be on your left as you face the audience.
- People read from left to right. Stand with the projector on your left so that their initial attention is on you.
- Stand with your feet pointing to the audience.
- When pointing to the screen, use your left hand. Don't move your feet.
- Remain next to the screen when you are talking about the visual. If you walk away from the visual, you divide the audience between two focal points in the room - you and your visual.
- Avoid using a pen, pencil, or finger to point to items on overheads. Instead, lay a pen or pointer on the light tray.
- Alternatively, highlight a number or word to catch the audience's attention.
- To add interest, write on the slides with color markers.
- Laser pens might show that you are nervous when the dot bounces around. Use one hand to hold the pen and rest it in the middle of your other arm to balance it.
- Keep your hands away from the projector to avoid creating distracting shadows.
- Use full room lighting where possible. Or dim the lighting by the screen. Don't darken the whole screen area; you should be clearly seen.

Slides

- Check whether the room lights can be dimmed. It is best to light the room from the back and keep the front dimmed.
- Number the slides in the top right corner for easy placement.
- Be sure the locking ring is secured.
- Run through the whole series of slides in advance to check equipment and correct slide positioning.
- The more slides you show, the less visible you become.
- Face the audience and follow body positioning as suggested for overheads.
- Follow the same lighting tips.
- Keep a blank screen when you are talking. Don't compete with your visuals.
- Stand next to the screen where the audience attention is centered.
- Keep your hands free of the remote when not needed.
- Avoid using a pointer. Tell your audience where to look instead.

Laptop computer presentations

In addition to the above suggestions:

- Show up early enough to ensure that the wiring and outlets are in place.
- Always have an extension cord with you.
- Make sure that you are confident enough with the technology so that you can use it with authority. Be prepared for computer failure. Have an alternative method of illustrating visuals just in case.

Flip-charts

- Place the easel just off center to your left or right. If you are right-handed, place the flip chart to the left. If you are left-handed, place the flip chart to the right. This stops you from blocking the flip chart while you are writing.
- Leave a blank page between note pages. This prevents "bleed-through"
- Use wide-tip markers; print large and legibly.
- Write notes in pencil so your audience can't read them.
- Add color for interest.
- Avoid writing while talking to the audience.
- Use only the upper two-thirds of each page.
- Use two charts to illustrate contrasting ideas.
- Use line or grid pads.
- Remember: Flip charts are most effective for groups of 25 or fewer.

The art of Q & A

You may have finished your presentation, but you aren't finished. Don't be caught off guard. The beauty of Q & A is that it allows you to redeem yourself if you feel things haven't gone as well as expected.

- While you are being asked a question, watch the person who is asking it. You will pick up clues to the intensity of the question, the feelings behind it, and possible hidden agendas.
- Wait patiently until the question is completed. Never interrupt. Show respect for each question and your answer will be regarded the same way.
- Prepare questions (with answers) that might be asked. Investigate any issues of contention that might surface.

Acknowledge them up front. "Before I begin, I understand that some of you might be feeling.'

Dealing with nervousness

Inhale deeply. Count to three before continuing or answering difficult questions.

To release tension try tightening your muscles up through your body. Start with your toes, and then move to your calf muscles, thighs, stomach, chest, shoulders, and arms, right up to your fingers. Immediately release all of the tension and take a deep breath. Repeat this exercise until you feel the tension start to leave your body. You can do this exercise quietly, so that no one knows you're relaxing.

Move. Don't stand in one place. You need to release tension by allowing your muscles to flex. You can't gesture too much if it is natural.

Structuring the Q & A interaction

Step 1. Raise your hand to ask, "What are your questions?" or "Next question?" Never ask: "Are there any questions?" Have someone in your audience already prepared with a question. If no one responds, start off by saying "The question most frequently asked is.. ?

Step 2. Look directly at the questioner and listen for the issue behind the question so that you grasp the question. Ask yourself, "What's the issue? What's the main point?" Here is where you have the opportunity to clarify the question. Never say that the question is unclear because it

may be clear to everyone but you. Simply state that you do not understand.

Step 3. Rule of thumb: Begin your answer looking at the questioner (spend only 25 percent of the time) then look at the audience (spend 75 percent looking at others) and always return to the questioner to complete your answer. This avoids a one-to-one conversation. Looking at the audience also solicits their involvement and makes them feel that you care about their opinions.

Step 4. When you don't wish to address the question any longer, look to the rest of the audience as soon as you have completed the answer and ask: "Who else has a question?".

Step 5. Raise your hand for the next question to signal that you are ready to move on. This stops you from rambling.

Bridging

Turn any question and answer with your own agenda.

Use people's names when you want to personalize the answer. It allows people to feel connected to you.

Never say, "That's a good question" because others may think that their question was not important.

Don't answer too quickly. Pause as it gives you time to think. Look away, think in silence and then reconnect your eye contact with the person who originally asked the question. This will allow you to shorten your answer and avoid "um's? It shows the audience that you are respecting the question. It prevents you from appearing long-winded, unsure or nervous.

Defuse loaded questions. Repeat them. It shows sympathy for the person asking the question. You could respond with, "I can understand how you feel and I would like to add..."

The best answer to an impolite question is, "That's a question I really hadn't expected. Could you give me a few seconds to think about it?"

Avoid "As you are aware" statements; these may sound condescending. Instead, say, "Have you thought about...?"

Use the bad-news-first approach. If your audience asks a question that presents a negative fact, admit to it and then bridge the idea with a positive thought.

Agree before you disagree. Hear the question, pause, and then agree to something the person said. Say "You have a point" or "You're right about that. I wonder if." This presents you as reasonable.

Avoid the word "but" as in "That might be true, but let me tell you what I think". It negates the validity of the other person's opinion, and you could appear arrogant or antagonistic.

Piggyback on what someone may have said earlier. "George made a comment suggesting that or "George's comments earlier reminded me of another way we can best meet your needs" Then add your point. It will gain the support of someone who may have opposed you earlier.

Rephrase a negative question in a positive way before replying. Use the past, present and future to answer a difficult question. Discuss how the strategy evolved in the

past, what the present looks like, and your vision for the future.

If you don't know the answer, be honest and admit it. Let the questioner know that you will find the answer and respond to the question.

Dealing with difficult participants

One challenge faced by every presenter is that of dealing with participants who impede or negatively affect the group. When a participant makes your life (or the lives of other participants) difficult, it is important to remember that most "disruptive" behavior is not malicious.

Participants have personal as well as business needs, and these needs can manifest themselves when you are on stage. Because presentations resemble "classroom" situations, it may evoke long-established (and perhaps unconscious) patterns of negative behavior.

Use the following strategies when feedback is solicited during the presentation or at Q & A period. There will be occasions when nothing will satisfy the participant. The best strategy is simply to say: "I appreciate your perspective/suggestion/involvement" or "Thank you for your feedback." Move on to the next point. Choose only the battle you are prepared to fight.

The dominator ("big shot")

Traits:

- Primary objective is to show that he or she is the most important person in the room.

- Talks a lot but is a poor listener.
- Tends to shut down other participants.

How to respond:

- Acknowledge and show respect for the dominator's authority, knowledge, and experience.
- Encourage the person to share insights and experiences if time permits.
- Encourage others to respond to the dominator's opinions and ideas.
- Set limits in a friendly way. ("Let's hear from everybody here! Would anyone else like to offer some thoughts?")

The expert/challenger ("I'm the expert")

Traits:

- Seems to enjoy challenging your competence, authority or knowledge.
- Summarizes discussion points or elaborates on what you say.
- Argues with other participants and/or assumes others are "wrong."
- Gives the impression that he or she already knows it all.

How to respond:

- Call on the challenger early in the Q & A period so that he or she will be less likely to challenge you.
- Acknowledge the challenger's remarks (without agreeing or disagreeing), and solicit alternative viewpoints from the group.
- If a break is scheduled, spend time with that person to demonstrate interest in the expert's view.

The complainer ("Nothing is right")

Traits:

- Finds fault with everything and everybody, from the content of the presentation to the room temperature and seating arrangements.
- Publicly vocalizes displeasure.

How to respond:

- Seize the initiative, respond to the complaint immediately, let the person know that you will look into it and get back to them at another time.
- Ask if others have similar feelings or perceptions (should you wish to continue this discussion).
- Be tactful, sympathetic and patient.

The dependent learner ("I need your help")

Traits:

- Lacks self-confidence.
- Is suspiciously agreeable and does not seem to express true opinions.
- May be quite attentive, but does not speak much.
- Usually has very good ideas, if you can elicit them.

How to respond:

- Involve the person gradually, beginning with a question they can easily answer.
- Build confidence and participation by making reference to something they had said.
- Take advantage of opportunities to involve the participant (e.g., recording information on a flip chart)

The chatterbox ("The conversationalist")

Traits:

- Involves others in side conversations throughout the presentation.

How to respond:

- Draw the person into the discussion.
- Ask the participant to share ideas with the group.
- Move physically closer to draw attention to you.
- Invite the participant to share their conversation with the whole group.
- Ask the participant to hold the private conversation for after the presentation.

Which personality profile causes you to react? What kind of behavior do you exhibit in this instance? How might you deal with the situation the next time it presents itself?

Summary tips for presenting

Some key points are presented below from Ron Hoff, author of Do Not Go Naked into Your Next Presentation.

Authorities say that a great presentation is 80 percent preparation and 20 percent delivery. Take the time to prepare so that your concentration on the platform can be focused on a dynamic delivery.

Go for a win-win situation. Get plenty of rest. Choose your clothing carefully and show up early enough to be comfortable with the equipment, room set-up, and content rehearsal. Practice stress-releasing exercises. Take care of

yourself before you speak. Take care of your audience when you speak.

If you have a choice in scheduling, volunteer to speak first or last. People are freshest at the beginning of a series of presentations. Speaking last allows you to summarize and link your content to key points mentioned by other presenters.

Never apologize for anything when you begin speaking, particularly if you have no control over the situation in the first place. Never tell people you are nervous. Fake it if you have to.

Use "you" a minimum of 18 times in your content. Other than using a person's name, "you" is the most personal word you can use. Some examples might be: "Have you ever asked yourself...?" "Do you ever feel this way?" and "Now what does this mean to you?"

Listen to your intuition as you are presenting. Pause before you say anything critical. Rephrase statements that your gut tells you might be too direct or antagonistic.

Don't react to a hostile participant. It probably has nothing to do with you. Be proactive. Rather than judge the person, shift the judgment to the person's behavior. Then you will be able to deal with the situation professionally, rather than emotionally.

Don't use any audiovisual equipment that you can't fix. You should not depend on your audience to help out.

Have just enough chairs for your audience. If the room is half-filled, make sure that the audience moves forward. Or

seal off chairs in the back of the room with tape so they have no choice.

Never tell your audience how much they will enjoy the content, story or joke. You may be setting yourself up for stiffer evaluation. Focus on how the information will benefit them, both personally and professionally.

Never look at your watch while you are speaking. It may look like you want to "hit and run? Invest in a small clock (with large numbers) that only you can see.

Always end your presentation earlier than scheduled. Your audience will be appreciative.

Source: Usheroff Institute

The Art of Handling Difficult People

There is a tendency to avoid bringing up important issues with another person for fear of causing the other person to become angry, sarcastic, silent or emotional. When strong or highly emotional behavior enters into a discussion, it often prevents the discussion from continuing in a pleasant productive way. Silence or other emotional behavior interferes with the opportunity to resolve the problem at hand. Dealing directly with these situations can prevent a buildup of emotions that could explode into much more serious problems later.

Step One: Calmly acknowledge the emotional behavior.

When you acknowledge emotional behavior, you let the other person know that you value them and their feelings. It helps to defuse their anger or frustration. It also shows that you are not "putting them down". This does not mean that you are in agreement but rather that you sincerely understand that this is an important feeling. Maintaining the self-esteem of the other person is essential.

Say, "Susan, you are being really quiet and look very tense."

Let the other person vent their feelings once you acknowledge their state of mind. Do not take it personally.

Step Two: Explain how you are being affected by the emotional behavior.

Should the person continue venting, you need to become more direct. When you describe the impact their behavior

has on the discussion, you demonstrate that you still wish to continue talking. You also deflect the focus away from the person and onto the issue of behavior. Explaining how you feel demonstrates your sensitivity.

Say, "John, your voice is so loud that I feel that I'm being shouted at. I'm not able to work this out when I feel I'm being attacked."

Be specific and non-judgmental. Let the person know that you are still prepared to continue the discussion.

Step Three: Determine if it's possible to continue the discussion constructively.

Offer the person the opportunity to cool off or have time alone to collect their thoughts.

Say: "Jane, do you think we should get together later or do you feel up to discussing this now?"

Suggest that it might be more productive at another time.

Step Four: Propose an approach where you both can work together.

Offer a specific suggestion of how you can both work together. This illustrates that you are prepared to deal with the issue that initially triggered the emotional outburst.

Say: "John, we need to work together and I want to help. How about if you start from the beginning and fill me in on what happened. Then we can go from there."

Step Five: Express support and reassurance.

In order to help the person move ahead, a word of support or reassurance from you can help reduce embarrassment or anxious feelings they may be experiencing. Let the person know that you still care about your relationship. Express confidence in working together and indicate how you plan to contribute.

Say: "Janet, I really appreciate your honesty and value your opinion. If we both spend some time thinking about this, I'm confident that we will resolve the situation."