

MANAGING FACTIONS WITHIN THE COMMITTEE*

FACTIONS WITHIN THE COMMITTEE – WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Factions or disharmony are something that can quietly but seriously undermine the effectiveness of any Committee. You can spend all your time managing conflict and get nothing done.

Factions are internal divisions that often form around strong personalities or competing interests. If left unchecked, they can derail meetings, create mistrust, and damage the organisation's reputation.

HOW TO SPOT FACTIONS

Factions usually show up as consistent voting blocs, decisions being made outside meetings, exclusions, whispered side conversations, strong personalities driving personal agendas or rising tension in meetings.

Factions can seriously impact the operations of the Committee (or a Company Board). Some Committee members may stop contributing to meetings as they become resigned to putting up with the controlling faction.

It is important to acknowledge these patterns early and not avoid them. If allowed to persist, each Committee Member is at risk of failing to act in the best interests of their Association.

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

Remind everyone that the Committee exists to serve the stated organisational purpose not individual interests.

Revisit the conflict of interests register to help focus attention on the Association's best interests.

Referencing your Association's purpose or strategic plan at the start of meetings can also help re-centre attendees on their role.

Seek to improve inclusiveness and transparency by making sure everyone can contribute to the Agenda development.

Share meeting papers in advance and be clear about how decisions will be made – often this is stated in the Constitution.

In the meeting itself, the Chair should manage discussion, so all voices are heard. Sticking to the Agenda can also help keep discussions on track.

Consider ways to build trust outside the boardroom. Simple things like informal check-ins, coffee catchups, or small collaborative tasks can help build a positive culture over time.

Finally, it might be necessary to have a difficult but structured conversation centred on organisational purpose with difficult Committee members if behaviours that divide rather than unite persist.