

HOW TO CHAIR A MEETING WELL

GOVERNANCE ESSENTIALS
BY STEVEN MOE



GOVERNANCE ESSENTIALS: CHAIRING A MEETING WELL

By [Steven Moe](#), partner at [Parry Field Lawyers](#).
Host of [Board Matters](#) podcast and [Seeds](#) podcast.

Being chair can be enjoyable and rewarding but it does take a concerted effort to do it well. The notes here have been created after a few decades of experience but also through feedback from others as well.

Remember, a chair is a facilitator, not an autocratic leader imposing their views. Their role is to help to *guide* the group. Every person that is in a governance role needs to participate actively and carry their share of the load.

Note: Crowdsourced some of the ideas here – the original post is available [to see here](#).

Before the meeting

1. Prepare an agenda and allocate the time that will be spent on the items.
2. Review the minutes. Make sure they are correct and easy to understand.
3. Ensure Board papers are distributed in a timely manner eg at least a week in advance.
4. Read all board papers carefully.
5. Consider “Board Culture” – do you get together outside of the strict board time as well?
6. Maintain a board calendar detailing tasks that need to be done throughout the year: e.g. annual return, financial report, trustee recruitment, grant applications etc.
7. Being Chair involves as much EQ as IQ – active listening, summarising issues, presenting, asking for input – these are all skills you can develop and grow outside of meetings.

During the meeting

8. Begin with a check-in. Allow people a couple of minutes to get into ‘meeting mode’.
9. A karakia or similar is a great way to focus people at the start of a meeting.
10. Bring energy and enthusiasm. People will often mirror the chair’s attitude. It is OK to have some fun too!
11. Encourage active participation. Ask for opinions. Do not dominate. Ensure everyone has a voice.
12. Moving and Seconding? Maybe not... [see here](#)
13. Encourage critical thought.
 - Group-think (agreeing to avoid conflict) is unhealthy but all too common.
 - Ask challenging questions: “What could go wrong?”; “Is this the best option?”; “What will the world be like in 10 years and how does that affect this issue?”

14. Speak up: If something is unclear, ask for clarification. Others will probably appreciate it.
15. Call out bad behaviour professionally. In the words of Taylor Swift: You need to calm down.



I asked for some tips from **Selwyn Mayor Sam Broughton** (a former Seeds guest) who shared:

1. Have a long term vision and know where this meeting is taking you
2. Own the agenda and know exactly what is coming up
3. Expect a range of perspectives, so you can hear all the voices
4. Meetings are for making decisions so be clear on what the meeting has decided, and any actions expected.
5. Consensus decisions are preferable. They can take longer than a majority, but it’s worth the wait.

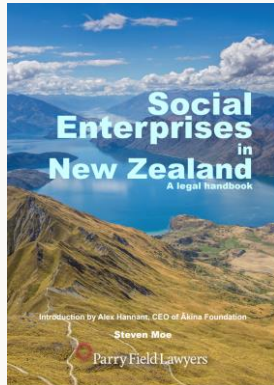
After the meeting

16. Action any tasks allocated to you.
17. Have a discussion with the CEO / management about how it went and give and receive feedback.
18. Work with the minute-taker to draft the minutes in a timely fashion.
19. Get the minutes out as quickly as is practicable.
20. Reflect on your chairing. Consider what worked well and what could be improved. Consider asking for constructive feedback.
21. Be kind to yourself. Chairing isn't easy!

Parry Field Publications and Free Resources



[Charities in New Zealand: A Legal Handbook](#)



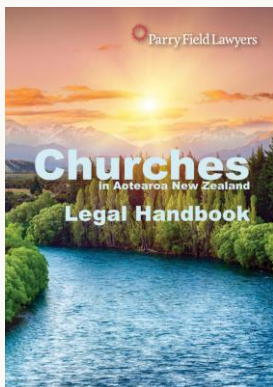
[Social Enterprises in New Zealand Guide](#)



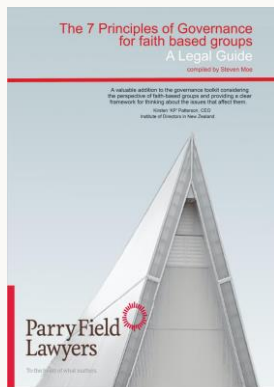
[A Practical Guide for Entrepreneurs in Aotearoa New Zealand](#)



[Doing Business in New Zealand Guide](#)



[Churches in Aotearoa New Zealand Guide](#)



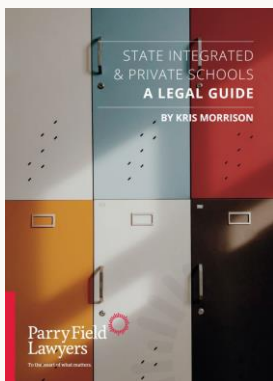
[The 7 Principles of Governance for Faith Based Groups Guide](#)



[Governance Masterclass for Churches Guide](#)



[Governance Masterclass for Community Groups Guide](#)





Email Steven Moe (stevenmoe@parryfield.com) for a copy of:

- Charities Health-checks
- Community Housing Guide
- Guide to Incorporated Societies Act 2022
- Incorporated Societies Navigating Re-registration Guide

Email Kris Morrison (kris Morrison@parryfield.com) for the State Integrated and Private Schools Guide



[Seeds Impact Conference](#)
and [Seeds Podcast](#)



[Board Matters Podcast](#)

Our Information Hubs:

- [Incorporated Societies Information Hub](#)
- [Charities Information Hub](#)
- [Impact Investing Information Hub](#)
- [Faith Groups Information Hub](#)

More resources:

- [Chairing the Board - Volunteering New Zealand](#)
- TPK Resources- <https://www.tpk.govt.nz/documents/download/150/tpk-chairingboard-2006-en.pdf>
- Governance New Zealand- [Chairing The Board: Governance New Zealand](#)
- IOD Resources- [Not for Profit Governance Essentials - online | IoD NZ](#)

Wisdom and Ideas from LinkedIn: Top Tips

Julie Hood: Remove General Business from the Agenda, it's either an agenda item (worked up with relevant paper) or irrelevant & time consuming non-board related chat.

Kate Frykberg: My top tip is setting a ground rule of "equity of voice" where people self monitors to ensure they don't hog the floor. In a meeting of 5 people you should speak on average about 1/5th of the time. Here's a blog I wrote about it <https://kate.frykberg.co.nz/2017/01/09/equity-of-voice-and-why-it-matters/>

Alta Kilsby: An effective Chairperson also ensures that there is consensus at the conclusion of each topic about what has been agreed/resolved and what, if any, actions have been commissioned as a result of the discussion for management to report back on at a future meeting.

Giselle McLachlan: Chairing is so much more than "in meeting" behaviours and responsibilities. Think about preparation, follow up and leading the board's own culture and workload "beyond meetings".

Kate Hodgins: Having a clear agenda with all relevant information well before the meeting. We also have the opportunity to table questions prior to the meeting. This allows for a more streamlined, informed discussion and a focus on decision making at the meeting itself.

Cathie Gould: Include time for each person to reflect on the meeting - what went well, lessons for next time, takeaways. Gives everyone a last chance to speak, and round up a longer session with clarity, positivity and action. Then hands the meeting back to the chair for a respectful and clear close.

Paul Brown: Thanks as always [Steven Moe](#) - you're an exemplary connector and driver of great conversations. I cannot claim these as mine, these are excerpts from Brian Hayward's book "The Great Chair" there are four principles to consensus building:

- 1) Separate the people from the problem.
- 2) Focus on interests, not positions.
- 3) Invent options for mutual gain.
- 4) Insist on objective criteria.

And as Chair, always think WAIT - 'Why Am I Talking?'

Mr G - Galeno Chua: Relationship design: It's considered the 'soft stuff' at the start but it sets the unsaid feelings, thoughts, hopes and expectations for the hui. And and and - when people get asked permissively exactly what their most effective mode for the discussion is, we end up with a format where everyone's much more engaged than the chair assuming:

- 1) What the pace should be
- 2) How the group knows when everyone's on the same page
- 3) How decisions should be made
- 4) How to prepare for following meetings
- 5) When we know it is/was successful so we can get to the finish

Tze-Wei Ng: [Steven Moe](#) thank you for starting this discussion and tagging me (and doing a great job chairing the GAIL APAC meetings!) Actually something I've been thinking quite a lot about, given people already have little time for meetings (eg if it's non profit board meetings where finding an evening slot that fits everyone is hard enough and there are tonnes of issues to go through). If it's



Steven Moe • You

Solving your legal problems | Partner at Parry Field Lawyers | Seeds Podc...
3w • 🌐

#Crowdsourcing here - What advice have you got that I should include in a #top #tips #paper about #chairing a #meeting? Drop a comment with your tip and it might make it in a short paper am working on now (will acknowledge all who input too)...

🌐 I get asked about #chairing a lot and what best practice is when it comes to this aspect of #governance.

👤 Am looking forward to taking this free session run by the [Selwyn District Council](#) next month.

hybrid / via zoom that's even more challenging. I think it's the chair's job to make sure meeting starts and finishes on time, but this is more about good preparation rather than making the meetings feel rushed - definitely a work in progress for me! Indeed it's the "soft stuff" that keeps people together as a team - a lot of good reminders and tips here in this discussion thread!

Anne Dowden: One effective technique for supporting community representatives board members to develop (relatively quickly) into effective and proactive board members is what might be termed as Chair Coaching (as in coaching by the chair). This includes one-on-one coaching face-to-face over a coffee or on a walk. Initially before and after each board meeting - to go over what the board papers are about, how they will be used, and to answer any questions about the procedures/what happened. It builds the relationship, enhances mutual understanding & respect for each person's divergent life experiences, the mentee gets answers to all their 'silly' question (often without asking), the mentor/chair develops a better asset focused knowledge of their new board member. It seems extreme, as it requires a lot of time, but it is useful when there is a huge imbalance of power/formal education/experience, and often-times a cultural difference. While strategic or board focused education can be provided to such board members it can often be too general and less well suited to their needs/knowledge gaps.