One way to maximize your time and that of your board is to utilize technology for more efficient meetings.

# The Evolution of the Board Meeting

**Craig McMillan** RCM, ACCI is general manager operations of Maple Ridge Community Management, an ACMO 2000 certified company.

When you look around these days you almost always see heads angled down as people gaze at their smartphones or tablet screens. This is how we share information, communicate with clients, colleagues, family and friends in 2016 from almost anywhere, at any time of day.

Access to emails and instant messaging applications on these devices means we are always connected to the world. Most people and organizations would not be able to function without the Internet. Try leaving your smartphone on the kitchen counter before you head out to work tomorrow and you will understand just how important that device is to your daily life.

For all the benefits we have acquired from technology there is one thing technology will never be able to deliver, and that is more time. One way to maximize this precious resource for those that attend board meetings is to utilize technology for a more efficient meeting.

## How Do We Utilize Technology in a Board Meeting?

The current *Condominium Act* does have some restrictions in place; the requirement for a bylaw to authorize holding electronic meetings has restricted their wide scale adoption. The current bylaw requirement affects many corporations that otherwise would benefit from this type of board meeting as corporations already struggle to achieve quorum at an annual general meeting, never mind meet the requirement to pass the required bylaw. The amended Act removes this bylaw requirement clearing the way for electronic meetings. Finally we can catch up with the 21st century. Better late than never.

The business world has been using web-based meetings for over a decade. There are many proven products on the market that will allow for all directors to participate concurrently: Go-To Meeting and WebEx are good examples of web-based meeting products that are widely used. These providers host over 50 million meetings annually for their clients, they will give your online board meeting the

tools it needs to be successful, including screen sharing capabilities so all participants can view the same document simultaneously, highlighting function so any item of interest can be discussed or explained with ease, as well as recording functions and video conferencing.

## What are the Advantages

There are many advantages to web-based meetings from allowing participation of directors that may be out of town on business trips to dealing with inclement weather challenges.

## Planning is Critical

With proper planning your web-based meeting will be a success. With the loss of physical presence in an actual room setting, body language and non-verbal clues are not available to you, keeping everyone focused on the meeting items may become a challenge. It's important to keep communicating with the participants and solicit feedback after each agenda item is complete.

The manager or chairperson has to be able to navigate through the meeting platform seamlessly, as well as demonstrate knowledge of the issues being discussed, so preparation for these meetings becomes crucial. The chairperson also needs to monitor the flow of the meeting and let participants know where they are frequently as the meeting progresses.

Identify the risks of this type of meeting before they occur and plan a response. These may include a participant not being able to log in to the meeting. A solution to this issue is to have a backup telephone number they can call into. A participant who is unfamiliar with how the process works is another risk – a solution for this issue is to hold a demonstration session with anyone that may require it, which may go a long way to making your meeting a success.

For the first web-based meeting you may want to suggest to the board to plan for a traditional board meeting either prior to or after the first web-based meeting to put everyone at ease as they try this new format.

Most web-based meetings are considerably more efficient as the attendees are focused on the meeting itself and tend not to wander off topic; also, the normal social interaction found in a traditional meeting is kept to a mini-

mum. There is also more flexibility for when the meeting is held as no one has to rush to get to the meeting location. These meetings can happen when it's convenient for everyone.

You should consider the prospect of these meetings being too well received; the meetings can be so successful that directors and the manager want all board meetings to be web based. While these meetings are effective and efficient you should still schedule traditional board meetings and retain web-based meetings as an option for time-pressed months or when inclement weather plays a factor in travel.

Web-based meetings are a very effective tool when used as a resource to support the manager's efforts in streamlining our schedules, but they can never replace the positive impact of a face-to-face meeting. I would recommend using these meetings to complement traditional meetings rather than a replacement of traditional board meetings. ■