

1. Purpose of a Consent Agenda.

- 1.1. A Consent Agenda or Consent Calendar as it is sometimes called allows for a single vote to be used to approve multiple items during a board meeting.
- 1.2. The purpose of a Consent Agenda is to streamline board meetings therefore allowing more time and discussion to be spent on other issues such as strategic planning.
- 1.3. Preparing a board meeting agenda with consent blocks reduces the number of individual day-to-day operational or personnel issues that many boards must approve before they can be implemented.

2. Structure. What are the structural characteristics of a Consent Agenda?

- 2.1. The Consent Agenda or Consent Calendar is a portion of the regular agenda.
- 2.2. Consent Agenda items must be distributed to the Board members in advance of the meeting. This allows each board member the opportunity to become properly familiar with each item on the Consent Agenda.
- 2.3. Vetting by the board members of the Consent Agenda beforehand ensures that only items appropriate to the Consent Agenda are placed there.
- 2.4. Each board member personally vetting the Consent Agenda before the meeting ensures a full understanding of each item that is up for approval.
- 2.5. Items listed on a Consent Agenda are added because they do not require discussion or debate.
- 2.6. Most non-debatable items can be added to a Consent Agenda with the exception of the approval of minutes and the motion to adjourn. (Zimmerman, 2004)
- 2.7. Consent Agendas are typically placed at the beginning of the meeting allowing any items that are removed to be addressed later in the same meeting.
- 2.8. Suggested items for a Consent Agenda include appointments to committees, committee reports, financial statements, reports provided for information only, correspondence requiring no action, personnel issues and updates on completed work or works in progress that do not require further action.

3. Process.

- 3.1 Before a Consent Agenda is implemented the Board should first adopt a Rule of Order allowing for the consent agenda process to become part of the proceedings. (FAQ, 2008)
- 3.2 Items eligible for the Consent Agenda should be clearly defined before the Consent Agenda is used by the Board.
- 3.3. Two methods are generally for placing items on the Consent Agenda: items can be selected by policy or an agenda committee can choose the consent items.
- 3.3 Items that the Board or any members of the Board want to discuss can and should be removed from the Consent Agenda and added to the regular agenda for discussion.
- 3.4 Items removed from the Consent Agenda should be removed before the meeting begins or at the start of the meeting to preserve the integrity and purpose of the Consent Agenda.
- 3.5 Any member of the Board can remove an item from the Consent Agenda to the regular agenda for discussion.

4. Possible Problems/What to avoid.

- 4.1 The Board and/or members not fully understanding what the consent agenda is or how it is used.
- 4.2 Removing an item from the Consent Agenda can inadvertently bring attention to the item, whether or not that was the intent or if the issue warrants it.
- 4.3. In order to be effective the Consent Agenda requires proactive Board Members who make themselves aware of all the items in the consent block ahead of the board meeting.
- 4.4. Consent Agendas can unintentionally give the impression that a Board is rubber stamping items on the Consent Agenda.

5. *Recommendations. Are consent agendas a good thing as evidence by the literature? How can they be used/improved?*

- 5.1 Consent Agendas can be highly effective if used correctly in cutting the time a Board spends on items that do not require further debate or input from its members.

5.2 Consent Agenda can be a good business practice if the Board is disciplined in its use and it can be especially helpful if you have board members whose knowledge and skill set are better utilized for things such as strategic planning or other agenda items that originally made them a desired part of the Board.

5.3 Consent Agendas should be evaluated periodically by the Board or others and input should be sought to ensure that the Consent Agenda is still being properly utilized. Saving thirty minutes should not come at the expense of the Board's integrity, effectiveness and image as a responsible board.

1. **Samples. Examples of consent agendas.**

Sample Consent Agenda
ABC Jewish Day School Board of Directors Meeting
AGENDA
June 26, 2006

A. Welcome and Introductions (if needed)

B. Any special recognition or announcements needed

C. *Consent Calendar (agenda may include the following)*

a. Minutes of the previous board meeting

b. Minutes of a recent Executive Committee conference call or meeting

c. President's Report

d. Head of School Report

e. Development Committee Report

f. Admissions Report

g. Other Committee Reports as appropriate

h. Routine correspondence

D. Major Discussion Items (taken from Annual Strategic Goals/Annual Board Agenda)

1. Finance Committee Proposals

2. Committee on Trustees Proposals for Consideration

a. Proposal of New Board Member Orientation Program

b. Approve revised Committee Descriptions

c. Consider Bylaw revisions

d. Consider undertaking a board self-assessment

3. Review and Update of Major Program Strategies – 2005 to 2007

4. New Cooperative Programs /Strategic Alliances

E. "What did we do in today's meeting that helped us accomplish our mission?"
(Consent Agenda, 1999)

Board of Directors Meeting
ABC Organization
Monday, January 2, 200X
1234 Main Street, Suite 56
City, ST 78910

8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Full Board Executive Session

- Chief Executive Assessment: Feedback and Approval of the 200X Process TAB 1

9:45 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Board Meeting

9:45 – 9:50 Welcome and Chair’s Remarks

9:50 – 10:00 Consent Agenda

- Minutes of the December 1, 200X Meeting TAB 2
- President’s Report TAB 3
- Planning and Development Task Force Update TAB 4

10:00 – 2:15 Strategic Discussions: Presentations and Feedback

10:00 – 11:45 Strategic Plan: Measures of Success TAB 5

[Noon — Buffet Lunch]

12:30 – 2:15 New Markets Strategy: Implementation Plan TAB 6

2:15 – 2:45 Governance Committee: Discussion Items TAB 7

- Bylaws
- Board Member Recruitment

2:45 – 3:00 Closing

(The Consent Agenda: A TOOL FOR IMPROVING GOVERNANCE, 2006)

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