**CHECKLIST**

**STEPS TO PLANNING AN EFFECTIVE ANNUAL**

**SHAREHOLDERS MEETING**

Annual shareholder meetings are essential to maintaining current and acquiring future, investors. Therefore, the highest regard must be given to ensure a perfect meeting. The meeting planning process involves much more than merely setting an agenda and choosing relevant speakers. The following checklist provides a comprehensive strategy for the preparation of an effective annual meeting so that no details will be ignored.

* **List every goal that the meeting must accomplish**

This list will provide the agenda for the meeting.

* **Identify the topics you wish to present**

Select the main points to present, along with existing and possible issues that should be communicated. Keep the number of topics small, to present a cohesive message.

* **Prepare an annual meeting script**

From start to end, draught every detail of what must occur and when, down to the minute. This will make sure that all goals are met whilst still maintaining control and will stop the meeting from running too long, which is sure to displease shareholders and guests.

* **Detail task assignments**

Record all tasks and assignments in a timeline and a check-off format, showing deadlines and the person responsible for completing the task. Automating this record keeping can be done by using software and then printing updated assignments and reports on demand.

* **Select and brief presenters**

Select the relevant presenters and work with them early to outline their scripts.

* **Prepare a list of questions**

Listing questions likely to be raised at the meeting, and preparing thoroughly researched answers will help the presenters at the annual meeting.

* **Make detailed guest lists**

Although shareholders are automatically invited to the annual meeting, other invitees to the annual meeting, and to special events such as a dinner or reception, may vary.

* **Make contingency/backup plans**

A perfect event is rare, if not impossible. What will happen if a key presenter becomes ill, or unavoidably delayed? What will happen if the meeting is disrupted by a fire alarm, loss of power, or other emergency? What will organisers do if a piece of AV equipment fails? Spend some time to make backup plans, it is well worth the extra effort.

* **Create a control book**

The Control Book is the key store for all information regarding the annual meeting and all related events before and after it. It should contain, at a minimum, the date, time, and location of the annual meeting; script; agenda; attendees, all speeches; motions; press releases and other public communications; proxy arrangements; every arrangement with vendors; contact information for all participants, planners, and vendors; and task assignments. The Control Book functions in several ways – to ensure that all the organisers are working from the same "playbook," to make critical information available to all organisers at all times, and will also be a guide for future annual meetings so that new organisers don't have to "reinvent the wheel."

* **Create agenda books**

The agenda books are utilised by all persons making presentations, making, or seconding motions, or otherwise actively participating in the annual meeting. Agenda books should contain the agenda and the script, but should also include individually tailored material such as a speaker's delivery text, or instructions for making motions.

* **Tailor registration for good relations and marketing**

Keep extra copies of shareholder kits for those who arrive without them, and additional guest information, at the registration tables. Such easy considerations are welcomed. Registration record keeping should not be seen as just a legal requirement; it can serve as a marketing tool by providing information on shareholders and prospective investors.

* **Make the annual meeting a quality media event**

Free positive coverage of your company can be a great benefit. Invite media members most likely to attend. Prepare media kits with the annual report, quarterlies, press releases, biographies, product literature, photographs or video, and other material you would like incorporated in an article. Offer interviews with officers and directors, and prepare a special room for them. If you anticipate mass media coverage, especially regarding a sensitive issue, get expert help to manage press contact.

* **Spare no attention to detail in preparing the meeting room**

Ensuring shareholders' comfort and a good impression is in the company's best interest. Make sure that there is enough seating. Make certain that all audiovisual equipment, especially the sound system, is working properly, and that the presenter can be heard and seen well. All displays and other setup should be completed long before any shareholders arrive. Catering and other services should not disrupt the meeting.

* **Rehearse**

Participants and presenters should rehearse the annual meeting at least once to ensure that they understand their role and their timing. Presenters should use a stopwatch to *pace* themselves.

* **Create a follow-up list**

Every event will require follow-up actions. A detailed checklist, like the assignment list, will ensure appropriate handling.

* **Debrief**

Document any good ideas, triumphs, solutions, and disasters, and discuss them all after the event. Prepare a report on lessons learned for the next annual meeting, with any recommendations or suggestions.