ORDER OF OMEGA
COMMITTEES

Committees are an extremely important facet of basic organizational management. However, the word "committee" sometimes has negative connotations associated with it because members do not understand the role, importance or function of a committee structure. When members hear the word "committee," they visualize

- One or two members (perhaps a clique) dominating the meetings, not listening to other members' input, doing whatever they want (motivation by self interest, poor leadership or hidden agendas.)
- People sitting around, wasting their time and not knowing what to do (unclear goals, lack of focus, unnecessary time commitment.)
- Actual work never getting done; and when it does and the committee reaches a decision, but does nothing (lack of follow through on assignments, inconsistent commitment, leadership unresponsive to the committee, no action taken.)

However, this does not need to be seen within your organization. You CAN make your committee system productive. Committees also provide for decentralization of power. Productive groups carry out the organization's work without the bureaucratic structure of a leader. Their smaller membership usually makes it easier to convene and to handle complex subjects. Since most committees have "hand-picked" members chosen for their skills and interests, they are more likely to be sincerely interested in their tasks. Finally, committees provide a superb training ground for emerging leaders.

SELECTING YOUR COMMITTEE MEMBERS
Of course you want the best possible solution to your organization's problems or concerns. That is why it is important to select a representative group. Choose committee members who hold different points of views and concerns. Allow for new ideas and input while maintaining group cohesiveness. It is also important for each member to assess the importance of the committee's functions. Each member should have basic knowledge and access to the necessary resources to be an active participant in the success of the committee.

ORGANIZATION OF A COMMITTEE
When you begin forming your committee, it is imperative to consider the structure and membership. As the organization's leader, it is necessary to clearly define the committee's purpose, limitations and jurisdiction. Have your committee members determine what commitment each can give; then schedule a meeting which accommodates everyone.

For a committee to function successfully, the members must feel they can express themselves both honestly and openly. Should this atmosphere not be provided, the committee's problem-solving ability will be inadequate and it will not operate to capacity. It is often helpful to spend time identifying everyone's concerns to create a positive environment.

Ask the members for their perceptions of the group's needs and problems. Then, the group should form a plan of action which adheres to those goals and objectives. A helpful problem-solving process is to

- See the difficulty
- Recognize and define the problem at hand
- Consider all the positive solutions
- Gather all the information
- Get assistance from additional people and resources when appropriate
- Select and provide the solution

Furthermore, groups need to have operating procedures. Defining roles and selecting a good chairperson helps guarantee group success while reducing ambiguity. Be sure to include guidelines on how the committee will function. Provisions may be necessary if the original structure proves to be dysfunctional or inappropriate. When setting your guidelines, keep these things in mind:

- Will members work as individuals or in a group?
- When differences arise, how will they be solved?
- How can you encourage maximum participation?
- What will be the decision-making process?
- How will meetings be run?
- How will changes be made if the appropriate results are not produced?
- How will assignments be made and who will do the delegating?

In conclusion, if you follow these guidelines, it is likely you will have a committee which works effectively. The successful committee will:

- Understand its purpose and effectively work toward its goals
- Have open communication among members; participants will feel comfortable articulating their feelings and attitudes
- Listen to both majority and minority points of view and then make decisions acceptable to all members, thus ensuring commitment
- Strike a balance between group productivity and satisfaction of individual needs
- Implement a review process which identifies group problems and suggests appropriate solutions
- Provide an opportunity for members, who are from differing factions, to work cooperatively; give opinions; collaborate on solutions and share the responsibility of working together.