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Who is Robert? Why Do We Still Follow His Meeting Rules, Anyway?

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Who Is Robert? Why do we still follow his meeting rules, anyway?

IGNITE™ – Novato Chamber of Commerce- Leadership Novato

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Author of *Roberta's Rules of Order*, Jossey-Bass.com,

and *QuickStart Guide to Roberta's Rules of Order*

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- **How many of you plan or attend nonprofit meetings?**
- **Have you ever been unclear what was meant by a motion - or why people are “seconding” it?**
- **When someone says “we follow Robert’s Rules” have you ever wondered, who IS Robert?**

A motion has been made that we dispense with the pompous formalities of parliamentary procedure & communicate like human beings. Does anyone second the motion?



What's parliamentary procedure?

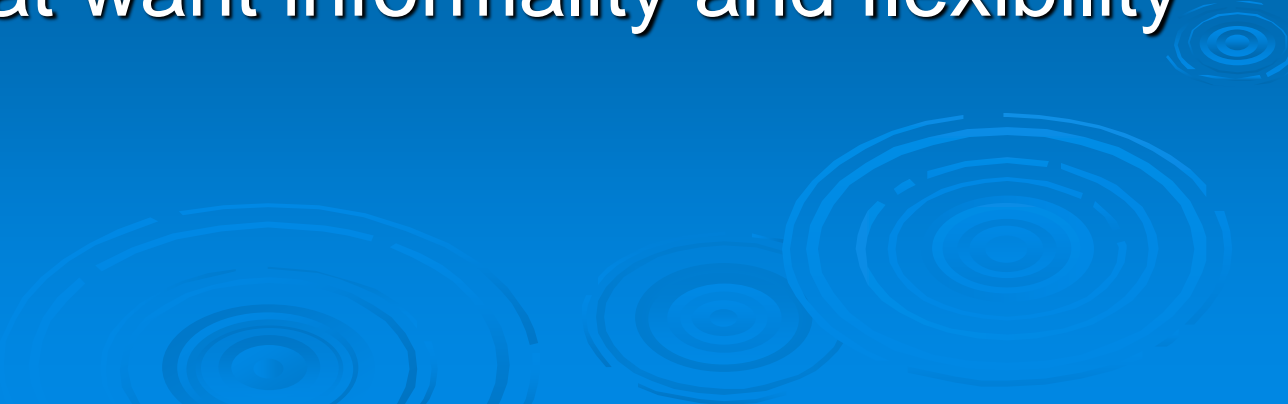
- Method of control for “deliberative assemblies”
- Formal (no individual first names)
- Motions (solutions) are presented
- Debate is encouraged

When is this useful?

Large groups of unruly people trying to make decisions

- Parliament
- Congress
- Congregations
- Annual meetings
- Neighbors, in large numbers

When is this method NOT advised?

- Small groups of “about a dozen” people
 - Decision making groups wanting to reach consensus - or strive for it
 - Groups that want informality and flexibility
- 

Debate Destroys Dialogue

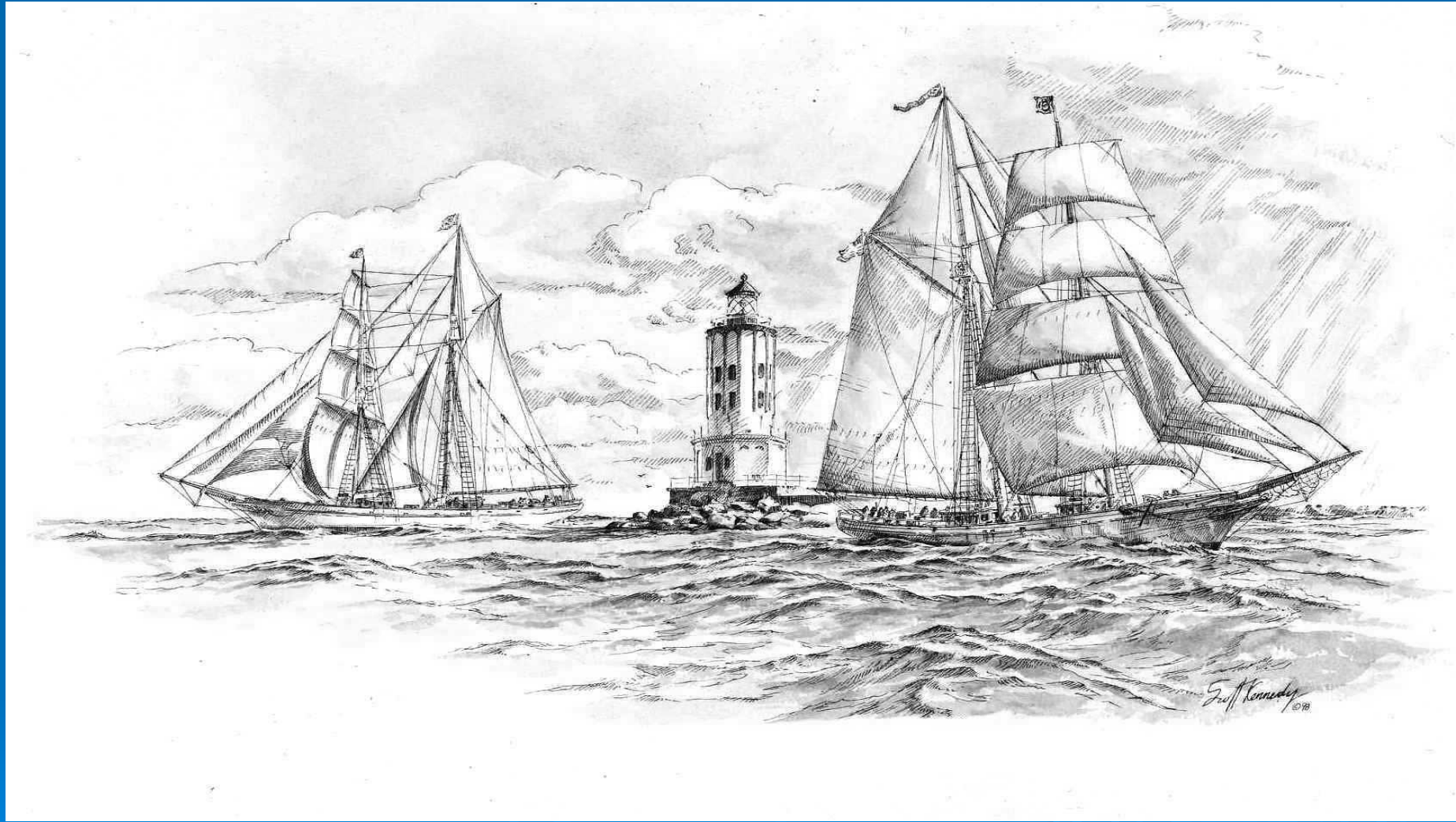
- Robert's Rules encourage debate (win/lose)
- Debate is on a "motion" - a proposed solution or direction
- There is often no agreement on the problem

Problem before Solution

- When groups make decisions, agreement on the problem is the first step...
- *If you can't get agreement on the problem, it will be _____ to get agreement on the solution. (Interaction Associates)*

Beware of “rogue motions”, like rogue waves they can catch you off guard and be dangerous.





TACKING TO SHIFT SHORES

From Robert's Shore

- Formality
- Strict Rules
- One Method Fits All
- For English/European Males

To Roberta's Shore

- Informality
- Guidelines and Agreements
- Flexible by Culture
- For A Pluralistic Society

TACKLING TO SHIFT SHORES

From Robert's Shore

To Roberta's Shore

Win/Lose Voting - Encourage Win/Win

Debate

Dialogue and
Conversation

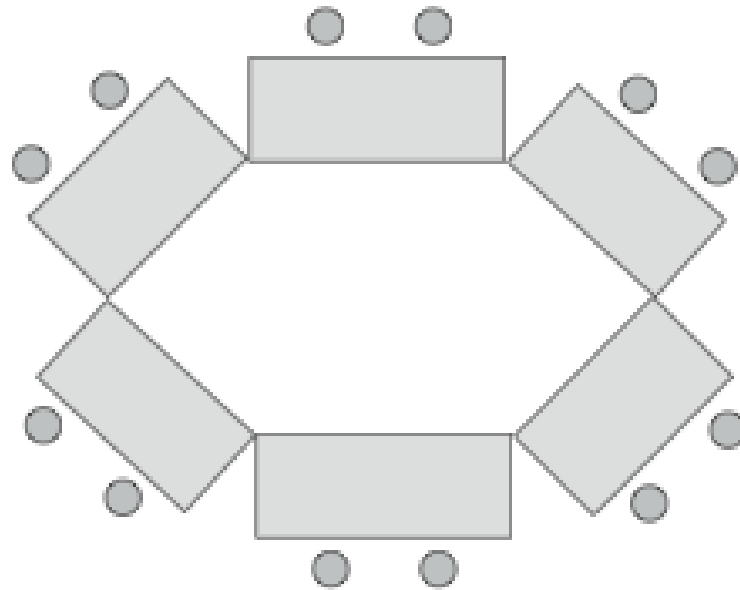
Motions

Preceding Motions
with Proposals that
include "the problem"

Elements of Roberta's Rules

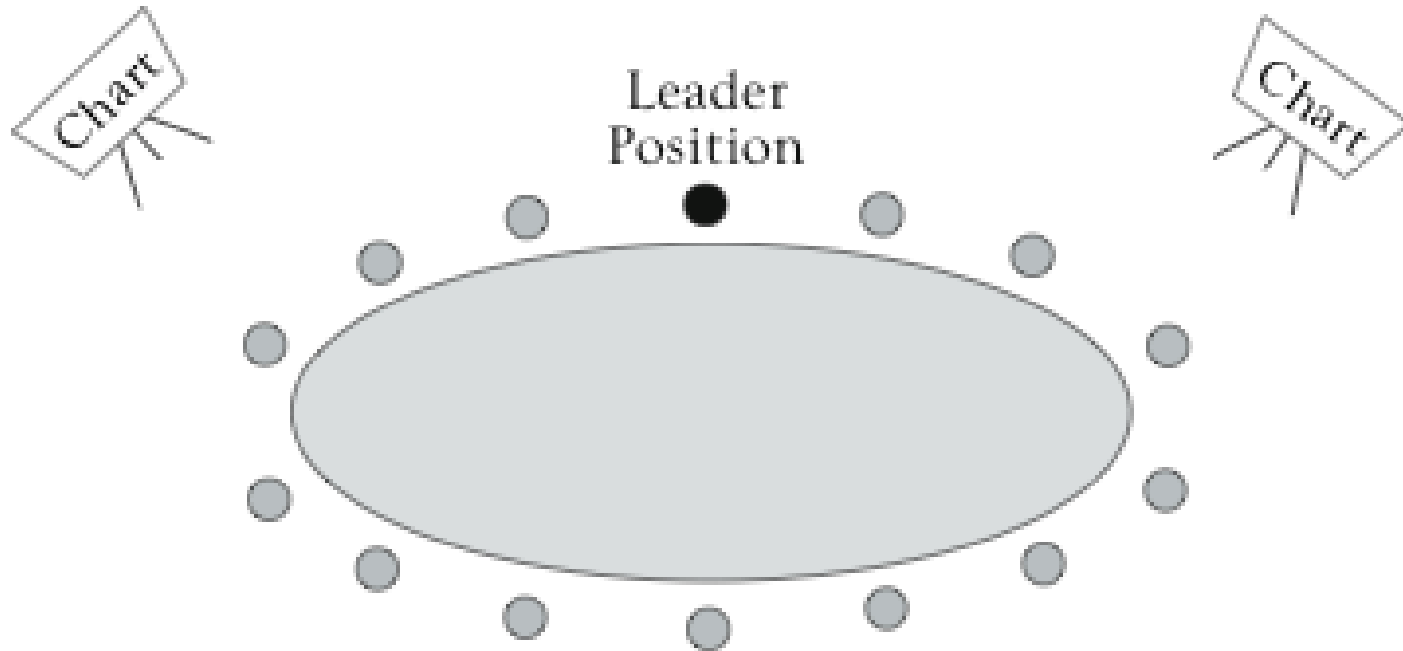
- Make it simple and relaxed (food)
- Use an agenda with outcomes and times (min.)
- Help people get to know each other (trust)
- Encourage conversation (dialogue)
- Provide maximum eye contact (seating)

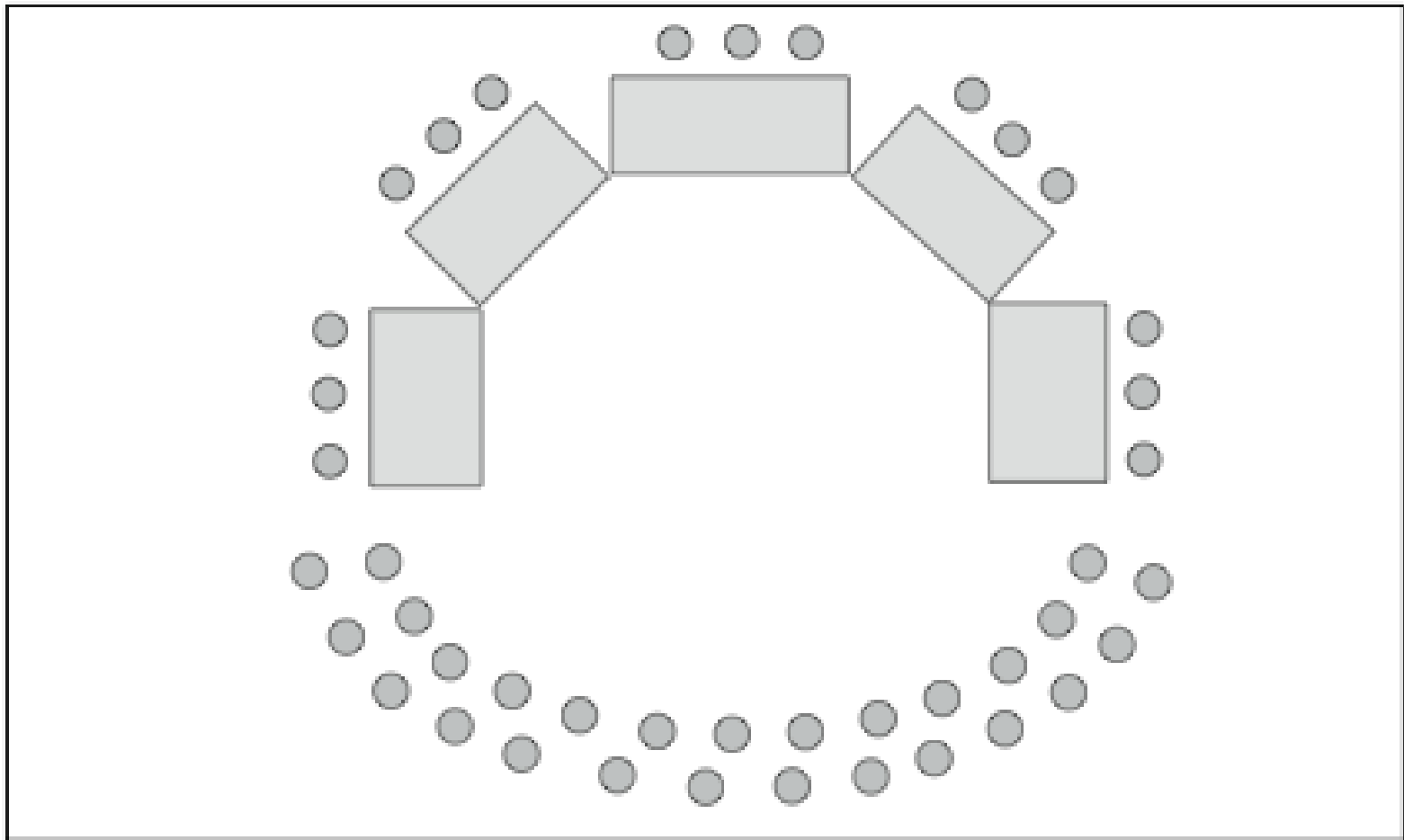
Seating in the Meeting



Seating with several tables for maximum eye contact

Leader in the Middle





Open Meeting with Visitors

Suggested Courtesy Guidelines

- Share the “airtime” by keeping remarks to ___ minutes at a time
- Limit the “volleys” to two between 2-3 people
- Stay focused on the agenda – create a list for other topics.

A Few More...



Summary

Henry Robert had good intentions

He was a product of his time and training

New, more modern methods can be used in most meetings

Roberta's Rules is only one way... find what works best for your group.

But For Goodness Sake, Dump the Gavel Overboard

