



100+ Ideas for Conducting a More Effective Meeting

Getting Started Promptly

- Set a specific starting time (highlighted on an agenda sent out in advance)
- Work around transportation issues
- Don't start at the beginning of a work day – give people a chance to get on track
- Offer an incentive
- Start within 5 minutes (this is the typical differential among watches), whether everyone is there or not
- Don't repeat what latecomers missed
- Give an on-time award
- Shut the door once the meeting has started
- Establish fines or humorous punishments for tardy participants
- Send reminder memos before the meeting
- Make reminder calls before the meeting
- Leave reminder voice-mail messages before the meeting
- Start at an odd time (e.g., 9:10 am) – it is more likely to be remembered
- Assign a partner to pick up the habitually late person
- Distribute location directions with the agenda
- Give habitually tardy people an earlier start time than is true
- Leave only the front seats empty for latecomers
- Cover the "best stuff" first
- Put the habitually late people early on the agenda – if they're late, they miss out on presenting their stuff
- Make showing up on time a ground rule
- In the case of coming back from a break, set up an award or punishment system for first back or last back

Establishing and Gaining Acceptance of Objectives

- Solicit input from others in establishing the objectives
- Print them on the agenda
- Get participants to agree on objectives
- State objectives verbally at the start of the meeting
- Re-emphasize objectives to stop drifting
- Make them realistic (short and sweet)
- Review them at meeting's end
- Post objectives on a flip chart
- Explain why they are relevant



Sticking To The Agenda

- Send it out ahead of time so participants have a chance to preview it
- Clearly show allotted times for each item
- Bring extra copies to the meeting
- Establish a separate sheet for newly raised items – with an agreement that they will be addressed later
- Refer to the agenda repeatedly
- Post it for all to see
- If an item is not being resolved, don't beat a dead horse, move on
- Limit the length of the agenda – be realistic
- Note any changes at the beginning of the meeting
- Don't return to finished items

Managing The Time

- Keep a clock in full view
- Stick to the agenda and the times allotted
- Assign a timekeeper
- Use a facilitator
- Discuss the most creative subjects first, when the participants' energy is highest
- Set starting and ending times
- Allow sufficient time for agenda items – be reasonable
- Be flexible
- Give materials out ahead of time
- Defer nonrelevant issues until later
- Set odd times for the start and length of agenda items
- Discourage interruptions
- Set egg timer for each speaker
- Limit breaks



Facilitating Discussion and Eliciting Participation

- Don't allow put-downs – make it a ground rule
- Provide conducive seating arrangements (no head table)
- Break into smaller groups
- Give everyone a responsibility
- Put assigned roles on the agenda
- Assign the role of facilitator
- Go around the table soliciting input – allowing the option to pass
- Use name tents for quick familiarization
- Shuffle the seating in order to mix people
- Use open-ended questions
- Give everyone time to speak
- When in position of leader, speak last
- Announce that all ideas are welcome
- Include a question & answer period on the agenda
- Be sensitive to cultural differences
- Set a confidentiality ground rule
- Set a “no side bar conversations” ground rule
- Call on participants for their input
- Encourage informal brainstorming
- Invite the “right” people
- Turn off projection equipment when a discussion is desired
- Compliment participation
- Avoid negative, discouraging body language
- Stress on the meeting notice (agenda): “come prepared to participate”

Resolving Conflict

- Listen impartially and objectively to all sides
- Invite opponents to satisfactorily restate each other's position
- Agree to disagree
- Act as a mediator, encouraging opponents to work it out between themselves
- Table the issue
- Call a break
- Refer the issue to a subcommittee
- Pull in and involve the rest of group if appropriate
- Don't sit opponents across from each other
- Look for common ground
- Offer both parties an opportunity to discuss the matter later
- Stay neutral – be slow to take sides
- Seek compromise
- If issue cannot be resolved, move on
- Make sure the point of conflict is clearly defined



Dealing With Difficult Participants

- Don't sit troublemakers together (arrange name tents)
- Assign responsibilities to them
- Establish ground rules and restate when necessary
- Insist on adherence to time frames
- Assure complainers that matter will be discussed later
- Involve them in the planning meeting
- Probe: "Why do you feel that way?"
- Open up to the group: "Does everyone feel this way?"
- Compliment his or her zeal while asking for input from everyone
- Acknowledge and shift to the other person
- Ask rambler to summarize
- Cut in when rambler breathes
- Side conversations: ask for questions, change tone/eye contact, move towards the offending parties if doing a stand-up presentation
- Address nonparticipants and ask for input or questions
- If possible, don't invite the difficult person
- Be straight-up and firm
- "Plant" support person/people
- Utilize peer pressure
- Assign the person a place on the agenda
- Emphasize anything they are saying or doing that is positive

Clarifying Action and Responsibility For It

- Include accountable person with each action listed on the agenda
- At meeting close, review and restate action items for final agreement
- Have accountable parties leave meeting with an action item list
- Send action item list to managers of those who attended meeting
- Agree on the form any action will take
- Set deadlines with interim check point(s) – i.e., timetable
- Go around the table and ask accountable people to verbally state their responsibilities



Summarizing

- Assign the role of scribe and have this person review, at meeting's end, what was decided
- Distribute minutes with assignments and timelines noted
- Schedule the next meeting if one will be necessary
- Leave time at the end of the meeting for summarization
- Review flip chart list of decisions made
- Ask if there are any questions or if anyone is confused on a matter

Evaluating The Meeting

- Question whether objectives were met
- Ask participants what areas of meeting could be approved
- Send out questionnaire/evaluation form
- Have outside party observe and evaluate
- Note if meeting overran set time limit
- Track goals and objectives

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