



## **ORGANISING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING AND TAKING MINUTE OF A MEETING**

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## **HOW TO HOLD AND PARTICIPATE IN EFFECTIVE MEETINGS**

Meetings are a fact of our everyday lives, whether in businesses, organizations, and/or clubs. How well we present our ideas and ourselves and how well we work with others during meetings will determine our success in all areas of



our careers and lives. Unfortunately, many meetings are boring, unproductive, and too long. As powerful presenters, how can we help to turn this around?

### **WHEN SHOULD WE HOLD A MEETING?**

Meetings held on a routine basis — weekly, bi-monthly, monthly — are often tedious and wasteful. A meeting should be held only when it is the best way to achieve an objective. Look for the goal, the purpose, the basic reason for holding the meeting. Ask yourself and others involved: Why should we hold this meeting? What do we want to achieve at this meeting? and What do we want to achieve after the meeting is over? A meeting without a specific objective is almost certain to achieve nothing specific and will be a waste of everyone's time.

### **PROPER PREPARATION BEFOREHAND ASSURES MEANINGFUL MEETINGS.**

Use an agenda as both a blueprint and a plan of action for every meeting. The properly put together agenda will focus the participants on the objective of the meeting and the means to achieve it. During the meeting it

can be used as a guide and reference and after the meeting it will serve as a reminder of what was accomplished and what follow-up actions need to be taken. The agenda should state the objective of the meeting, the issues to be discussed, the time the meeting will begin and end, the place, the participants involved, and what is expected of each of them in meeting preparation. Careful preparation is the best way to keep any meeting on target and on time.

By just answering other people's questions or keeping quiet, you will not be taking part in the opportunity afforded by attending a meeting. By having a concise message ready and finding a time to present it will give you a chance to command respect and understanding. Your brief message should include a "grabber" opening, a main idea, and a call for action. It shouldn't be memorized or read, but do have the facts ready (it is OK to have notes on a 3 X 5 card). It should be a subject you feel strongly about and you should find out in advance if there will be opposition to your objective. If so, you will need to consider what the opponent's main points will be and who your allies will be. Getting the right people on your side in advance will save endless time and lost causes.

**TELLING A PERSONAL STORY IS THE SINGLE MOST POWERFUL TECHNIQUE IN COMMUNICATING YOUR MESSAGE.**

Under pressure at a meeting it is sometimes hard to remember what you are going to say. Not, however, when you tell personal stories. It is hard to forget your own experiences and it is fun to talk about them. It is also easy for the others at the meeting to identify with your story. Remember, it must be

true — the more dramatic and humorous, the better. Again, keep it brief and to the point.

### **ADD VISUAL AIDS WHEN THEY WILL ENHANCE THE MEETING.**

Pictures and props can be instantly comprehended, where words are not. So decide first if the meeting room is conducive to visuals and what kind of visuals would be best to reinforce a particular point. When preparing visual aids, make sure they are truly visual — not just a lot of words — and that they will save time and hold the groups' attention. Use vivid images, careful preparation, a concise presentation, and silence during viewing and you will have made the meeting more productive for all those attending.

### **A SUCCESSFUL MEETING HAS FOUR ELEMENTS.**

- 1) They are firm time constraints — setting the beginning and ending times and sticking to them.
- 2) Preparation — of the agenda and what each participant will offer.
- 3) Proper presentation — viewpoints presented in a clear, concise manner within a prescribed amount of time.
- 4) Control — the leader or facilitator controls the meeting with set priorities and a firm, but polite attitude from all involved.

## **DO YOU ASK FOR WRITTEN EVALUATIONS TO DETERMINE THE SUCCESS OF YOUR MEETINGS?**

Because we want to avoid meetings that lack results, it is a good idea to have participants answer the following questions:

- Did we achieve the meeting objectives as stated in the agenda?
- If not, why not?
- What are three positive things can we do to improve the next meeting?
- What are three things we did that we should not do at the next meeting?
- What are the two most important things the leader can do to improve the meeting?
- What are the two most important things the participants can do to improve the meeting?
- Could we have done without this meeting?
- If so, how?

**Follow these tips and consider the answers to the above questions, and you will have people looking forward to your meetings! You will also achieve your objectives!**

## **PERSONALITY TYPES IN MEETINGS**

There are many reasons for people behaving in meetings in the way that they do - they might even behave differently in different meetings. It is useful, however, if you are chairing a meeting, to have some mental map of 'personality types' so that when you recognize them you will know how to handle them.

## **1) The Aggressive Type**

***"Look, the answer is ..."*** ***"As I've always said ..."***

The aggressive type has a tendency to be noisy and coercive, and is always full of the 'right' answers. As well as being too opinionated, the over-aggressive types are usually too quick to jump to conclusions and offer solutions, which are invariably wrong anyway. They fit everything to suit their own perceptions, constantly 'propose', and are too impatient.

## **2) The Silent Type**

***"Mmm". "Quite probably."***

The silent type is quiet and reserved. But you cannot be sure whether silence is caused by nervousness, diffidence, or even outright hostility. So be careful. Silence can cause disquiet amongst others.

## **3) The Abusive Type**

***"It'll never work." "Tried that once. Useless"***

The abusive type tends to be rude and abusive, and full of reasons why things won't work or can't be done. This type is the real demolition expert, a blocker, who will dispirit and demoralize the meeting if you are not careful. They tend to have closed minds and seldom listen.

## **4) The Rambling Type**

***"That reminds me of ..."*** ***"Guess what I heard..."***

The rambling type runs about like a rabbit all over the place, and whenever he or she speaks takes the meeting off at a tangent. They tell stories and jokes which go on too long, miss the point, turn up late and are full of gossip.

## **5) The Sniping Type**

***"Picture? More like a disaster movie."***

The sniping type can either say a little or a lot, but their specialty is the one-liner, the witty retort, which can be very funny but not very helpful - especially if it's directed at an individual rather than at an issue. This type seem to be experts on everything, but their facts can be suspect on closer probing.

## **TAKING MINUTE - AN IMPORTANT SKILL**

At some point your chairperson may ask you to take minutes at a meeting. This task isn't reserved for secretaries only. Any person who attends a meeting may be asked to do this. Since the minutes will serve as an official record of what took place during the meeting, you must be very accurate. Here are some pointers to help you master this skill.

### **Before the meeting**

- Choose your tool: Decide how you will take notes, i.e. pen and paper, laptop computer, or tape recorder.
- Make sure your tool of choice is in working order and have a backup just in case.
- Use the meeting agenda to formulate an outline.

### **During the meeting**

- Pass around an attendance sheet.
- Get a list of committee members and make sure you know who is who.
- Note the time the meeting begins.

- Don't try to write down every single comment -- just the main ideas.
- Write down motions, who made them, and the results of votes, if any; no need to write down who seconded a motion.
- Make note of any motions to be voted on at future meetings.
- Note the ending time of the meeting.

### **After the meeting**

- Type up the minutes as soon as possible after the meeting, while everything is still fresh in your mind.
- Include the name of organization, name of committee, type of meeting (daily, weekly, monthly, annual, or special), and purpose of meeting.
- Include the time the meeting began and ended.
- Proofread the minutes before submitting them.
- Submit minutes in 2 weeks after the meeting.
- Keep all Minutes of Meeting in a systematical order
- Create a File numbering system.
- Keep files in a safe, dry and organized.
- Keep minutes tidy and never over load file.
- Every end of Secretary Term, files must be hand over to the New Secretary.

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