



MEETINGS

2. How to conduct a successful meeting

Meetings, whether they are one-on-one discussions or gatherings of five or twenty people, are an important part of working life – but they are also time consuming. Many people often say they are unproductive, costly, boring and many times unnecessary. Are they always needed? And so many of them?

Outlined below are a series of pointers to assist you decide if the latest meeting you have organised or been invited to, is really going to lead to improved efficiencies, better communication and improved profitability.

- 1. How to prepare for a meeting**
- 2. How to conduct a successful meeting**
- 3. How to compile a meeting agenda that really works**
- 4. How to get the most out of meetings you chair**
- 5. How to make a valuable contribution to a meeting**
- 6. How to overcome problems at meetings**
- 7. How to deal with disruptive individuals at meetings**
- 8. How to reduce the number of time consuming meetings**

2. How to conduct a successful meeting

This is the second in a series of eight “How to” guides.

1. Start on time

- *by waiting for latecomers you penalise those who arrive on time, and reward the latecomer! Always start on time.*

2. Get the meeting off to a business-like start

- *welcome and introduce yourself and other participants, if necessary*
- *clarify objectives of the meeting, be brisk and business-like*
- *arrange who will keep the minutes or at least to record the action items*

3. Preview and confirm the agenda

- *check that each member publicly agrees with the stated objective of each listed agenda item*
- *indicate the criteria for a successful meeting, and in particular, how the group will decide, or know when the outcomes are achieved,*
- *other items may be suggested, and after listing these in ‘other business’ close off the agenda*



4. Focus continually on your objectives

- *Keep your meetings objectives and desired outcomes in mind at all times.*
- *Consider the following process:*
 - *Initiate discussion on each item by briefly setting the scene and ask for response*
 - *Reinforce each item - before moving on to a new agenda item, reiterate and clarify its purpose and objective*
 - *Clarify issues – if debate leads to confusion, its your task to unravel the strands so that a decision can be made*
 - *Summarise regularly, particularly during lengthy discussion of an item*
 - *Clarify the decision making process beforehand*
 - *Conclude discussion of an item by summarising*
 - *When a decision has been made, be clear just what that decision is and how it will be actioned – assign responsibilities and deadlines*
 - *If an issue can't be resolved, find out why and appoint a task group or individual to investigate and report back to the next meeting.*

5. End on a positive note – and on time

- *Aim to end on a positive note, maybe use an agenda item that you think everyone can agree on*
- *Respect those who planned that the meeting would end on time, by ending on time*
- *5 minutes before the scheduled finishing time – sum up the entire meeting, restate the outcomes, confirm allotted tasks and deadlines and thank participants*
- *Arrange the next meeting time with members*

6. Review and analyse the success of your meeting

- *While the meeting is still fresh in your mind it is important to assess the meeting's effectiveness and your own leadership style. Use that information to improve*

7. Follow-up promptly

- *Concise minutes, including a listing of decisions made, the tasks assigned and the deadlines for action and follow-up, should be completed and distributed promptly.*
- *In the period following the meeting, monitor progress of assignments if at all possible*
- *At the next meeting, uncompleted assignments should be considered first and unmet deadlines discussed.*
- *This sort of accountability helps ensure that the agreed outcomes of your meeting have some meaning next time.*

Success tip.

Essentially, there are 3 types of Chairs:

1. *The authoritarian, who conducts meetings like a military drill and wonders why nothing very original is ever said or achieved in them,*
2. *The permissive, who lets the members run the meetings and wonders why so many of them are in chaos, and*
3. *The majority, who are a little of both and who wonder why other people's meetings seem more effective than their own.*

This is because being an effective Chair does not come naturally. It requires certain skills, however the good news is that these skills can be learnt and they can be improved with practice.

Reference: Flanagan, N. & Finger, J. "Just about everything a Manager needs to know" Plum Press Brisbane, Australia 1998.