



## **MEETINGS**

### **4. How to get the most out of meetings you chair**

*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**

#### **4. How to get the most out of meetings you chair**

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

#### **1. Create a participant-centred meeting**

- A dominant chairperson will stifle a meeting
- The chair’s primary role is to un-tap the expertise of the group
- Refrain from voicing your opinions until everyone has had an opportunity to be heard

#### **2. Encourage participation by all**

- Encourage different points of view, by making sure everyone has an equal chance to express their view/s
- Defend the weak against the strong, by tactfully drawing out the reticent members by asking for their opinions or comments

#### **3. Stimulate discussion and ideas**

- Good meetings should be an exchange of ideas and information, and the chair’s role is to encourage this through good open-ended questions, and therefore,
  - clarify issues,
  - to restate certain points,



- to confront issues,
- to question critically,
- to seek solutions

#### **4. Ban 'killer' comments**

- Crushing comments often kill good ideas and the enthusiasm of the group
- Monitor and discourage such put-downs as , "that won't work" or " experience will change your attitude"
- Supportive comments should be encouraged, such as "Would anyone care to build on that suggestion..."

#### **5. Keep the meeting on track**

- Some meetings wander off the track, or get bogged down with one issue or one person, and it is frequently necessary to bring the group back to the main topic
- Be alert for potential trouble, and deal with conflict before it gets out of hand
- Create harmony through mediation, and maybe use humour, or call a break at the right time to ease tension
- Be aware of time, by keeping the meeting on the move, and finishing on time

#### **6. Vary your style**

- The key to good leadership is flexibility and a good chair is able to quickly assess what the meeting requires and to adjust their style accordingly
- Be sensitive to the mood of the meeting, ie when to relax, when to be firm and when to use humour.

#### **7. Focus on the process**

- The agenda is your guide, so keep the discussion to time limits, while at the same time treating complex issues with sufficient time
- Stop and clarify issues if they become difficult to follow
- Summarise from time to time, and monitor participants attention, by watching for signs that an item has been discussed sufficiently
- Use small groups if that may achieve your desired outcome

#### **8. And Remember**

- Start and finish on time
- Ensure that the meeting is not interrupted unless in an emergency
- Be first in the room and use this time to establish rapport with the other participants
- Thank all participants for their contribution at the end of the meeting
- Model the behaviour you expect, be firm, polite, calm, supportive, fair-minded and confident.

### **Success tip.**

A meeting with no agenda will have no focus and very little in the way of constructive outcomes.

It is easy to be side-tracked, and with participants running in all directions future meetings will not be attended by enthusiastic members.

The more care and time you take with the preparation for any meeting, the more productive the meeting will be.

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