

Conducting Productive Business and Professional Meetings

Mary Ellen Guffey, *Essentials of Business Communication*, 8e Chapter 11, Slide 30

Conducting Productive Business and Professional Meetings

- Determine your purpose.
- Decide how and where to meet.
- Organize an agenda. Include date and place, start and end times, topics in order of priority and names of people responsible, time for each topic, and meeting preparation expected of participants.
- Invite participants.

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- Start the meeting on time.
- Summarize the meeting goal, provide background, offer possible solutions, review the tentative agenda, and announce ground rules.
- Move the meeting along by encouraging all to participate, discouraging monopolizers, and avoiding digressions.

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- When the group reaches a consensus, summarize and ask for confirmation.
- If conflict develops, encourage each person to speak and let groups decide on a direction to follow.

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To control dysfunctional group members, lay down rules, seat potentially dysfunctional members strategically, avoid direct eye contact, assign them tasks, ask members to speak in a specific order, interrupt monopolizers, and encourage nontalkers.

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- Conclude the meeting at the agreed time.
- Summarize decisions.
- Review deadlines and responsibilities for action items.

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- For small groups, try "once around the table."
- Thank the group; establish a time for the next meeting.
- Return the room to a neat appearance; vacate promptly.

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- Distribute minutes.
- Check to see that all assigned tasks are completed by agreed-upon deadlines.

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FIGURE 11.5 Typical Meeting Agenda

AGENDA		
Atlantis Global Travel		
Staff Meeting		
October 13, 200x		
1 to 2 p.m.		
Conference Room, Fifth Floor		
I.	Call to order; roll call	
II.	Approval of agenda	
III.	Approval of minutes from previous meeting	
IV.	Committee reports	<u>Person</u>
	A. Web site update	Kelly
	B. Tour packages	John
		<u>Proposed Time</u>
		5 minutes
		10 minutes
V.	Old business	
	A. Equipment maintenance	Doris
	B. Client escrow accounts	Rolla
	C. Internal newsletter	Tasha
		5 minutes
		5 minutes
		5 minutes
VI.	New business	
	A. New accounts	Hung Wei
	B. Pricing policy for trips	Mark
		5 minutes
		15 minutes
VII.	Announcements	
VIII.	Chair's summary, adjournment	

FIGURE 11.6 Meeting Purpose and Number of Participants

Purpose	Ideal Size
Intensive problem solving	5 or fewer
Problem identification	10 or fewer
Information reviews and presentations	30 or fewer
Motivational	Unlimited

FIGURE 11.7 Etiquette Checklist for Meeting Leaders and Participants



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Meeting Leader

- ✓ Start and end the meeting on time.
- ✓ Introduce yourself and urge participants to introduce themselves.
- ✓ Make everyone feel welcome and valued.
- ✓ Maintain control of the group members and discussion.
- ✓ Make sure that everyone participates.
- ✓ Stick to the agenda.
- ✓ Encourage everyone to follow the ground rules.
- ✓ Schedule breaks for longer meetings.

Meeting Participants

- ✓ Arrive on time and stay until the meeting ends, unless you have made prior arrangements to arrive late or leave early.
- ✓ Leave the meeting only for breaks and emergencies.
- ✓ Come to the meeting prepared.
- ✓ Turn off cell phones and pagers.
- ✓ Follow the ground rules.
- ✓ If you are on the agenda as a presenter, do not go over your allotted time.
- ✓ Do not exhibit nonverbal behavior that suggests you are bored, frustrated, angry, or negative in any way.
- ✓ Do not interrupt others or cut anyone off.
- ✓ Make sure your comments, especially negative comments, are about ideas, not people.
- ✓ Listen carefully to what other meeting participants are saying.
- ✓ Participate fully.
- ✓ Do not go off on tangents; be sure that you stick to the topic being discussed.
- ✓ Do not engage in side conversations.
- ✓ Clean up after yourself when leaving the meeting.
- ✓ Complete in a timely manner any follow-up work that you are assigned.

Handling Difficult Group Members. When individuals are performing in a dysfunctional role (such as blocking discussion, monopolizing the conversation, attacking other speakers, joking excessively, not paying attention, or withdrawing), they should be handled with care and tact. The following specific techniques can help a meeting leader control some group members and draw others out.³⁷

- **Lay down the rules in an opening statement.** Give a specific overall summary of topics, time allotment, and expected behavior. Warn that speakers who digress will be interrupted.
- **Seat potentially dysfunctional members strategically.** Experts suggest seating a difficult group member immediately next to the leader. It is easier to control a person in this position. Make sure the person with dysfunctional behavior is not seated in a power point, such as at the end of the table or across from the leader.
- **Avoid direct eye contact.** In American society direct eye contact is a nonverbal signal that encourages talking. Thus, when asking a question of the group, look only at those whom you wish to answer.
- **Assign dysfunctional members specific tasks.** Ask a potentially disruptive person, for example, to be the group recorder.
- **Ask members to speak in a specific order.** Ordering comments creates an artificial, rigid climate and should be done only when absolutely necessary. But such a regimen ensures that everyone gets a chance to participate.
- **Interrupt monopolizers.** If a difficult member dominates a discussion, wait for a pause and then break in. Summarize briefly the previous comments or ask someone else for an opinion.
- **Encourage nontalkers.** Give only positive feedback to the comments of reticent members. Ask them direct questions about which you know they have information or opinions.
- **Give praise and encouragement** to those who seem to need it, including the distracters, the monopolizers, the blockers, and the withdrawn.