

disagree with before you get into a random negative discussion. Select and focus on specifics.

- *Disagree non-judgmentally*

Beware of the adjectives you use. Try:

"Something's troubling me about this," not, "That's a pretty useless idea." Be careful *what* you criticize. Just the parts you disagree with, not the total concept or, most of all, the person who generated it. "How could you even think that . . . ?" is not the way. Remember you're talking about a thing, not a person. Keep all the heat out. And watch the tendency toward arrogance. You are not the final arbiter nor the only one privy to the truth.

- *Offer another solution*

Don't just carp. Be ready to add what you think is best. "How about changing that last part to include . . . ?" Tell why you disagree, and then fix it by showing another way or asking the speaker to address that problem and come up with another solution himself. Leaders can suggest: "I think you've taken it too far but let's stay with the first thought. Everyone think of how we could use it."

Personal Skills for Leaders

Leading a Meeting

Be clear about your role. You are a traffic manager, a referee, the producer of an event, and most of all, a host. Remember they're there because you invited them. Take care of them—their egos, their physical needs, their attention span, their ability to understand. Facilitate their desire to do a good job. Be a watchdog about the quality of any presentations—their clarity, their interest. Be honest and forthcoming about why you want this meeting. Start discussing an agenda item by asking for their help. Make them know that they're vital to the process and that you can't do it alone.

Staying Focused

Keep the group pointing toward solutions or the end product you want from a discussion on an issue. It's easy for a group discussion to deteriorate into nitpicking or a negative push-pull, or to generate other issues that only minimally connect with the one at hand.