

- *Get everyone to talk*

It's a good idea to get everyone involved at the beginning, making them all get used to participating.

For general connectedness (after vacation; with a disparate group; moving into a new position) you might go around the room and ask each person to give a minute or a minute and a half about what's the most important, interesting, or challenging thing happening in their job right now. No great strain since it's short and impromptu, this opens people up to each other for a moment and offers each one a chance to be important and informative, giving them equal validity and a sense of equal responsibility in sharing and participating. It also orients the group a little to what's going on and to each other's work, extending those informal opening charts.

For specific input you might structure this around a task at hand and ask for a similar round-the-table report on where everyone is at the moment.

Openings

Explain Goals and Agenda

The next step is to develop further group connectedness by focusing on the meeting at hand. Using the original objectives you wrote, describe what the meeting is about in general terms before you discuss the detailed agenda. List your goals for the meeting and what results you want to achieve by writing on the board or a flip chart. Then—go to the agenda.

Make Agenda Visible

If you have already sent them the agenda and asked for their additional input, your final agenda may be changed. Even if it's the same, it should be made visible to all for discussion. Rather than handing out private printed agendas, prepare one on a board or flip chart complete with your time allotments. This focuses everyone on one common piece of information. It underscores the order and process and keeps the agenda visible to all throughout the meeting. It avoids having people diverted by checking out their own printed agendas, and also makes last-minute changes available and visible to all at once.