

*Discuss Issues, Order, and Time Allotments*

Discuss each agenda item. Document the reason it's there and the results desired, for example, Solution, Information, Action Plan, etc. This helps focus everyone, getting further suggestions from the group and motivating people toward greater efficiency. It can also smoke out some extra dimensions or details to add to a topic. If yours is a one-task meeting, show an outline of the parameters of your discussion plan. Ask for input about other dimensions.

Ask if they feel the time allotted is adequate. Letting them participate in setting time limits for each discussion fosters self-discipline as each item comes up. Ask for input about the scope of your items. Discuss validity and priority. If you discover the suggestions are sizable, talk of a second meeting to cover them and set the time right then if possible.

If you haven't asked for their suggestions in advance, you can do it here.

*Negotiate*

Develop a little flexibility. Ask if anyone has to leave early. Negotiate the order or time allotments to accommodate everyone, if possible.

Negotiating the items and the time they'll take starts to give people the sense of participating. It shows that you, the meeting convener, are responsive to their input and aware of their needs. Helping design what the work of the meeting will be, they develop a vested interest in seeing that it gets done. This process also gives you an opportunity for a few public strokes, like:

"Glad you brought that up. That's an important aspect to think about," or,

"That's *your* specialty, Doris. Need some input from *you*, especially, on that. "

*The Body of the Meeting*

Now that the "housekeeping" is done and the meeting launched, the discussion and interplay begins. How to keep the ball rolling to avoid getting bogged down and to be sure everyone ends up on the same wavelength?

*Who Takes Notes and How*

I suggest that all your meeting notes (minutes) use these four organizational headings for each subject discussed: