

*Be a Team Player*

Be careful not to see a meeting as a solo performance. Everyone's trying to be heard. Don't monopolize the conversation. If you have disagreed with a solution that finally gets group endorsement, be graceful and forthright, saying:

"Well, you know I wasn't for this, but I will surely support it now that everyone wants it. Since it was your idea, I'll want to come to you, Sue, to be sure I understand it well and can help."

*Sit in a Powerful Place*

Sounds a bit predatory, but you should know that placement around the table *does* affect people's response to you *and* also your incentive to participate.

Sit with the powerful movers. If not, sit opposite them. Always try to sit in the middle, where the general sense of action and involvement rubs off and affects you. Sitting at the end or in the back has a look of being outside the action. It can affect you that way, too.

*// You're Criticized*

*Don't* get defensive! This is a sign of weakness if not downright guilt! Don't do it, especially with your boss. If you're attacked or criticized, the big thing is to get it out of the public arena. Go for further information—both giving and getting.

Try lines like:

"I see what you're saying. There are some other issues you should know about. I don't want to waste the group's time with them. After the meeting, let me share them with you."

You maintain your dignity and promise a rethink, with an open mind, while giving the boss or co-worker more data to change his/her mind—in private.

Ask questions to make your critic be more specific:

"I appreciate your critique. It would really help me if you explained just what aspect didn't work. I'd like to come and see you after the meeting."

This shows you as reasonable, willing to learn, and eager to do a good job, as well as strong and unintimidated by criticism.

Now let's consider some functional issues—techniques for developing and managing meetings well.