

- How each issue affects the group you're inviting to the meeting. This will give you the additional perspective you need in order to: see what will get the group's attention; what has greatest relevance in their eyes; to what will they respond, and how.

In order to motivate them to stay with the subjects and give their best thinking to each, you need to think about what effect an issue will have on your group—negative, dangerous, challenging, helpful—and balance your agenda.

Placement on Agenda

To create the order of your agenda items, think about whether you start by getting the small items out of the way and then concentrate on the biggies, or get to the most important issue right at the top, when everyone is fresh, and deal with the less important issues afterwards, or maybe not at this meeting.

- *Small items*

We need to understand the concept of building to a climax. // the other items on the agenda are truly small and unimportant, and *if* you're well disciplined about organizing what the essentials are, and *if you* can move them out of the way efficiently, hewing to the time allotted like a tenacious bulldog, *then*—and only then—is it okay to put them first so you can spend the rest of the meeting dealing with the major problem. However, the tendency is to get into the second layer on each of the smaller issues and thus use too much time, wearing out the interest span and creative energies of the participants.

It's useful when you have an important brainstorming session to be economical about how you use the time. Look at those little items and see if they need to be brought up to the whole group, or whether you can dispose of them by memos or phone calls.

- *Important issues*

Consider the idea of starting with the main agenda item and putting the little detail items last, if you must put them in at all. This is particularly important if it's a meeting called on short notice where everyone hasn't blocked out enough time and may have to leave early.

Another thought is to call a meeting to discuss one item only. This emphasizes its importance and the amount of time you wish everyone to concentrate on it. We often clutter meetings with such disparate material—some vital, some unimportant, some not relevant to the whole