

## 12

## What do you mean by ... ?

## AIMS

- Asking for and giving clarification
- Delaying decisions
- Ending the meeting

## 1 Asking for and giving clarification

- 1 Listen to part of a meeting in which Victoria Lenning, a director of an Anglo-American company, is talking to colleagues about a possible site for locating a factory in the Basque Country in northern Spain. She is explaining the historical background to industry in the region. Listen once and identify the following:
- two historically important industries in the region
  - the status of these industries now.
- 2 Victoria is twice interrupted by requests for clarification. Listen to the extract again and follow the structure for the first part of the exchange. Then write in the phrases used for the same functions in the second part.



## Victoria Lenning

The main industries were ...

(states idea or opinion)

Yes, of course. In fact ...

(clarifies information)

So ... is that clear?

(checks that everything is now clear)

Now, to get back ...

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

(c) \_\_\_\_\_

## Other participants

Er, sorry, can I add something?

(request for clarification)

Yes, thanks. (confirmation)

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

(d) \_\_\_\_\_

## Practice 1

Work in pairs to complete the following mini-dialogues.

*Extract 1*

A: Brunei has a tropical climate.

B: Excuse me, \_\_\_\_\_ by 'tropical'?

A: \_\_\_\_\_, it's hot almost all the year, with heavy rainfall in the rainy season. \_\_\_\_\_?

B: \_\_\_\_\_, I understand.

*Extract 2*

A: Every new product needs a USP.

B: \_\_\_\_\_ USP?

A: Unique Selling Proposition.

B: Er, can you \_\_\_\_\_ what that is?

A: USP \_\_\_\_\_ the special characteristics of a product which make it different and desirable – so consumers will want it. Er, \_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_ now?

B: Yes \_\_\_\_\_. Thanks.

  Now listen to a recording of these dialogues.

## 2 Delaying decisions

Listen to another extract from the meeting about a possible site for locating a factory in the Basque Country. The speaker, Victoria Lenning, is giving more details about the infrastructure of the region.

  1 Listen once. Choose the correct answer from the alternatives given.

a) Infrastructure for the region is:

- mostly good
- excellent
- not very good

b) The main improvements in infrastructure are in:

- Vitoria in the south
- Bilbao
- San Sebastian

c) Between these cities there is:

- a complex road system
- a fast train link
- an airport

d) The airport in Bilbao

- has been:
- rebuilt
- closed down
- made bigger

Infrastructure	Links
• Roads	• International
• Railways	• Inter-urban
• Motorways	• Local
• Airport	
• Sea port	
• Dry port	

- 2 Below is part of the tapescript that you have heard. Use your own words to complete the sentences, all of which suggest that a decision needs to be delayed, or more time is needed.

VICTORIA: (a) Well, let's not \_\_\_\_\_. I think it would be a bad idea to assume we're going to choose a city. (b) It \_\_\_\_\_ to think about locating to one of the smaller towns.

FRED: ... smaller places, yes. So, should we get details on the possible places?

VICTORIA: (c) We could do that, but we \_\_\_\_\_, I think, \_\_\_\_\_ a few things. For example, tax benefits, grants and anything like that – for locating to a smaller place, not one of the main cities. Then we could make a better decision.

JOHN: (d) Yes, I agree, but also, \_\_\_\_\_. (pause) Er ... you've talked about the improved transport links, the trains, the airport, the port in Bilbao. What about the rail links, to these er ... the smaller towns? If it's a mountainous or hilly region, it could take an hour – or more – for a truck to get to a main road. (e) So \_\_\_\_\_ at this stage. I think we need to look specifically at the train and road links for smaller towns ...

  Now listen to the recording again and compare your answers.

## Practice 2

You are at an internal meeting to discuss increases in the price of your products. With a partner, use these prompts to make a dialogue. Try to use new language from this unit.

### Participant A

Ask if the meeting can reach a decision on this.

Ask for clarification.

Suggest doing market research.

Suggest first looking at previous experience of price rises – then later going to a marketing consultancy.

Ask for general agreement.

Move to next item for discussion.

### Participant B

Respond that we need more information.

Say we need to know more about the effects of a price increase.

Agree. Suggest contacting Hamid (a friend) who knows about market consultancy firms.

  Now listen to a recording of a model dialogue.

3 Ending the meeting




- 1 Read the following text and identify:
- a) three recommendations on how a meeting should end
  - b) what should happen *after* a meeting.

Regardless of the type of meeting (information or decision-making), it is important to close with a restatement of objective, a summary of what was accomplished, and a list of agreed action that needs to be taken.

After the meeting, it is essential to follow up with action. A brief memorandum of conclusions should be written and distributed. Inform appropriate people who did not attend the meeting about essential decisions made.

Finally, each meeting should be viewed as a learning experience. Future meetings should be improved by soliciting evaluations and deciding what action is required to conduct better meetings.

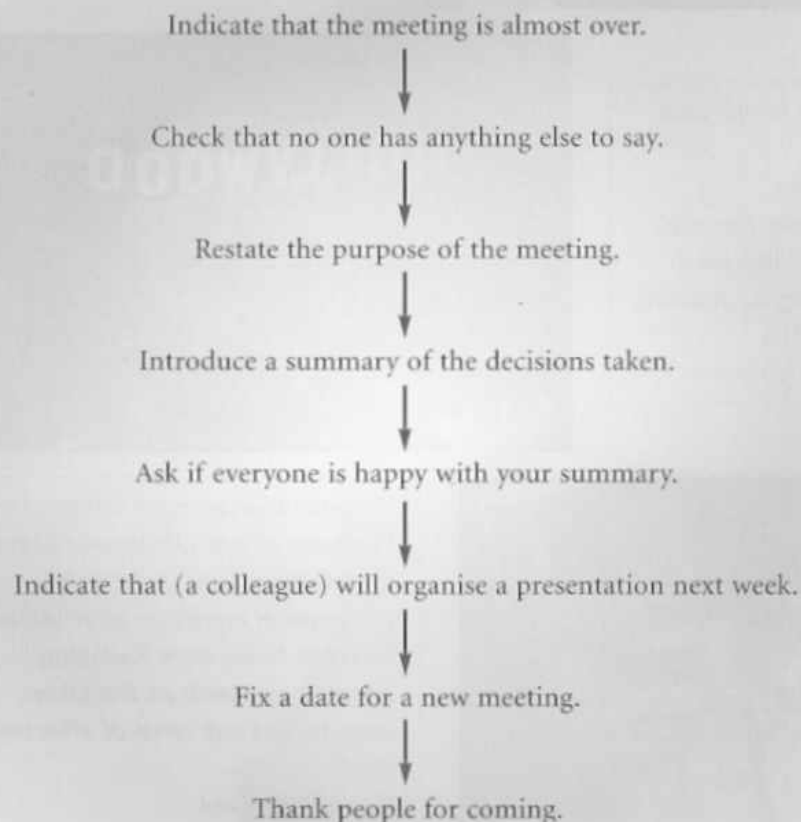
From Marion Haynes, *Effective Meeting Skills* (London: Kogan Page Ltd., 1988).

-  2 a) You are going to hear a recording of the end of the meeting about a possible decision to locate a factory in the Basque Country. Before listening, briefly discuss what you have already heard from this meeting. Then suggest what the end of the meeting will include.
- b) Now listen to the recording. Choose which of the following, A, B or C, is the best summary of the meeting.
- A The meeting agreed to locate a new plant in the Basque Country in Spain as infrastructure is very good.
  - B Concerning possible location of a plant in the Basque Country in Spain, infrastructure is good, but more work is required on financial implications of choosing a city or a small town location.
  - C Discussion of possible location of a plant in the Basque Country, good infrastructure, no decision yet on where to locate new plant.

- 3 Think about the recording you have just heard. Do you think this ending follows the rules suggested by Haynes above? Suggest ways that this ending could be improved.

### Practice 3

In pairs use the outline below to create a Chair's closing remarks for a meeting. To make this more realistic, add names and other details as required. Practise your closing remarks together.



Now listen to a recording of model closing remarks.

### Practice 4

Work in groups of four. Each group should close one of the situations below. Groups should prepare closing remarks, including a summary based on one of the sets of notes presented here. Be sure to mention any follow-up action that needs to be taken. After five minutes' preparation, form fresh groups so that everyone presents his / her closing remarks to learners who have worked on a different set of notes.

## UNIT 12 What do you mean by ... ?

The Chairs of four different meetings made these notes during discussions:



*New training courses for telesales staff  
Allow £10,000 budget  
Peter to identify three possible training companies  
Next meeting: 14th March 2 p.m.*

*Merger of Atlas North with Dransfield  
No decision taken  
More financial info. needed  
Depends on local markets  
Detroit subsidiary to present report in 3 months  
Meeting in L.A. December*



*Hospital Management Committee  
Purchase of new ultrasound scanner for Intensive Care Unit (ICU)  
Commission report on alternatives  
Redirect funds from Radiography Unit  
Decision by March at the latest  
Joan to find out views of affected staff  
No meeting fixed*

*Lawsuit against company for wrongful dismissal of Jane Kee  
Accept blame  
Offer compensation of \$50,000  
Personnel Dept. to produce confidential internal report on new guidelines for employees' contracts  
Three weeks to complete report*



## Role play


**SOLA**  
*Holidays*


Take a family break in any one of our 200 Sola Hotels  
 and have a FREE once-in-a-lifetime balloon trip!!!



Any family booking a Sola Holiday weekend getaway (two nights, meals included) will qualify for a trip in a hot-air balloon – normally worth over \$300!!! Sola Holidays will send you an application form for your balloon trip. All you have to do is visit your local travel agents and book a Sola Hotel weekend getaway for any time between now and the end of December, or fill out the coupon below!



Please send me further details on the Sola Holidays Balloon Offer.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Send to:

Sola Holidays Balloon Offer, PO Box 1090, Miami, FL

*Don't delay! No need to use a stamp! We'll pay the postage.*

This role play is an opportunity to cover work from the entire Meetings module, including this unit. During preparation, look again at the Skills and Language Checklists for all three Meetings units.

Work in groups of three or four. Read the flyer for Sola Holidays above, then decide on your roles from the alternatives given. Study your File card information, the background information below and the agenda which follows. Spend ten minutes preparing for the meeting.

Decide who has which role:

Jan Lubitsch (Managing Director and Chair).

See File card 30.

Andrew / Andrea Eastman (Marketing Director)

See File card 31.

Fred / Freda Cavani (Director)

See File card 32.

Eric / Erica Whitehead (Director)


See File card 33.

## Background

Sola Holidays is a holiday company specialising in short domestic holidays (not abroad). The company owns a string of luxury hotels.

Sola ran a summer promotion in which any family booking a weekend break in a Sola Hotel automatically qualified for a free balloon trip. (See the promotion leaflet on page 119.) The balloon trips normally cost around £200 and Sola had an arrangement with a balloon company, Blue Balloon, to buy 1,000 trips at £80. Unfortunately, the promotion was incredibly successful and instead of the forecast 1,000 balloon trips, over 4,000 customers applied and qualified for their free trips.

Here is the agenda for the meeting:

**SOLA**  
Holidays

**Memo:** To Marketing  
**Meeting:** Wednesday June 25th 20— 10.00 a.m. – 11.00 a.m.  
**Place:** Sola Holidays Head Office  
**Participants:** JL, AE, FC, EW

**AGENDA**

1. Report on Promotion for Sola Weekend Getaways
2. Insurance position
3. Action required
4. Any other business

## TRANSFER

Evaluate the Sola Holidays meeting and in particular how it ended. Consider what you have learned from this unit and how it links in with the rest of the module. Reflect on what you have learned from the entire Meetings module. Identify areas where you think you have made progress and where you think more improvement is needed.



## Language Checklist

### Ending the meeting

#### *Asking for clarification*

Could you be more specific?

Can you explain that (in more detail)?

What do you mean by ... ?

#### *Clarifying*

This means ...

What I mean is ...

What I want to say is ...

To explain this in more detail ...

#### *Checking that the clarification is sufficient*

Is that okay? / Is that clearer now?

#### *Referring to other speakers*

As Peter has already told us ...

I'm sure Mr Kowski knows about this ...

Later we'll hear a report from Neil on ...

Professor Gilberto is certainly aware of ...

#### *Delaying decisions*

I think we need more time to consider this.

I think we should postpone a decision ...

Can we leave this until another date?

It would be wrong to make a final decision ...

#### *Ending the meeting*

##### • *Summarising*

I think we should end there. Just to summarise ...

We've covered everything, so I'd like to go over the decisions we've taken ...

So, to conclude ... we've agreed ...

##### • *Confirming action*

We'll contact ...

John will ...

We've got to ...

We need to look at ...

##### • *Referring to next contact*

We'll meet again next month ...

We look forward to hearing from you ...

It's been a pleasure to see you today and I look forward to our next meeting ...

## Skills Checklist

### Ending meetings

#### *Two general rules*

Meeting should end on time!

Decision-making meetings should end with decisions!

#### *The Chair should close the meeting with:*

a restatement of the objectives

a summary of decisions taken

a summary of the action now required

reference to any individual responsibilities.

#### *After the meeting*

- A memorandum should be sent to all participants summarising the decisions taken and the action required.
- The memorandum should be sent to any interested individuals who were unable to attend.
- The Chair should seek feedback on the meetings to try to improve future meetings.

#### *Improving meetings*

Motivation to change

Gather information on present situation

Identify specific areas needing improvement

Identify alternative courses of action

Practise new techniques

Improvement model.

Adapted from Marion Haynes, *Effective Meeting Skills* (London: Kogan Page Ltd., 1988).

## Quick Communication Check

### 1 Asking for and giving clarification

Complete the dialogue with words from the box.

understand	exactly	instance
example	specific	want

- A What (a) \_\_\_\_\_ do you mean?  
 B What I (b) \_\_\_\_\_ to say is all the costs are too high.  
 A Could you give an (c) \_\_\_\_\_?  
 B Yes, the advertising for (d) \_\_\_\_\_.  
 A I'm not sure I (e) \_\_\_\_\_.  
 B The figures show the costs are too high.  
 A Can you be more (f) \_\_\_\_\_?  
 B Yes, I think we pay about €5,000 too much for magazine advertising every month.

### 2 Delaying decisions

Suggest answers to the following questions using the prompts.

- |                                                |                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Can we reach a decision today?               | (No / think / need / more time)                       |
| 2 Have we finished this discussion?            | (No / think / need / fix / another meeting)           |
| 3 Can you give us the information we need?     | (No / need / prepare / more details)                  |
| 4 Have we finished?                            | (No / have / other important issues / talk about)     |
| 5 Can we move to the next item for discussion? | (Yes / but / not take decision yet; need / more time) |

### 3 Ending a meeting

Finish the following sentences with the correct ending from the right-hand side.

- |                                    |                                              |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1 I'd like to _____                | a) happy with what we have talked about?     |
| 2 Can we fix _____                 | b) summarising the meeting.                  |
| 3 Does anyone _____                | c) summarise what we have agreed.            |
| 4 We'll contact _____              | d) from you again soon.                      |
| 5 We'll produce a report _____     | e) has been a good one. Thank you, everyone. |
| 6 We look forward to hearing _____ | f) another meeting soon?                     |
| 7 Is everyone _____                | g) all for today.                            |
| 8 So I think the meeting _____     | h) have anything else to say?                |
| 9 That's _____                     | i) you again next week.                      |

**Key**  
 1 (a) exactly, (b) want, (c) example, (d) instance, (e) understand, (f) specific  
 2 No, I think we need to fix another meeting.  
 3 No, I think we need to prepare more details.  
 4 No, we have other important issues to talk about.  
 5 Yes, but we cannot reach a decision yet. We need more time.  
 3  
 1 (c), 2 (f), 3 (h), 4 (i), 5 (b), 6 (d), 7 (a), 8 (e), 9 (g)