

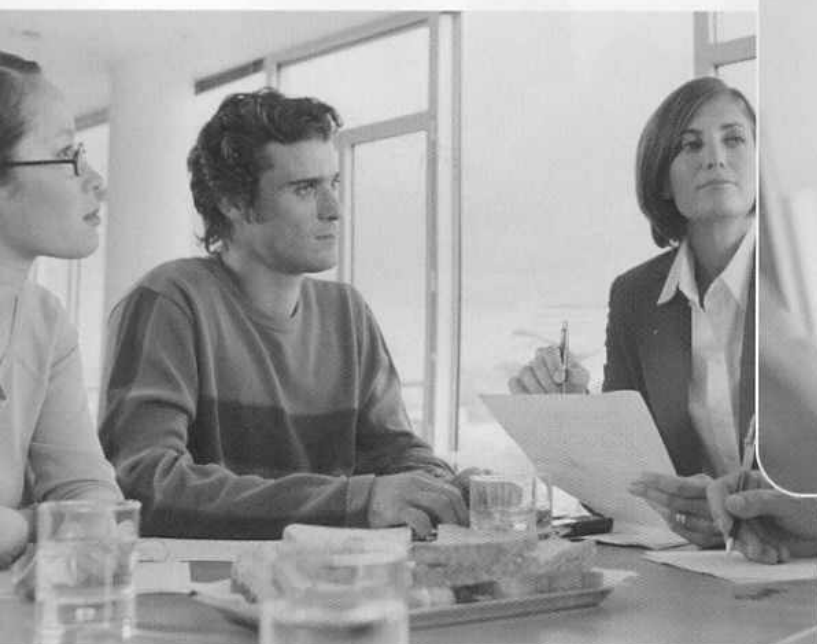
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Making meetings effective

AIMS

- What makes a good meeting?
- Chairing a meeting
- Establishing the purpose of a meeting

1 What makes a good meeting?



Some comments on business meetings:

'Two or more people getting together for a specific business purpose.'

Gower Publishing Ltd., 1988. Extracted from The Gower Handbook of Management, p. 1185.

'The fewer the merrier.'

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- 1 What makes a good meeting? Suggest what you think are the characteristics of a successful meeting.

- 2 Listen to the recording of Allan Case, an engineer, talking about the characteristics of successful business meetings. He makes five of the eight points below. Identify the correct order of these points.

There is a written agenda.

Clear objectives – known to everyone.

Respect for the time available / time-planning.

Good chair – effective control.

Emotions are kept under control.

Good preparation.

Everyone gets to say what they need to say.

Reaching objectives.

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2 Chairing a meeting



'Mr. Skelton, can I go out and play now?'

What do you think the functions of the chairperson are during a meeting?

- 1 Listen to a recording of a meeting at Hilo Co., a small subsidiary of a multinational company. The meeting is to discuss the decline in profits. Listen once. Say which of the following are given as reasons for the fall.

Prices are too high.

Yes / No

The company has wasted money on research and development.

Yes / No

Sales are down.

Yes / No

The sales budget is too low.

Yes / No

No one likes the Chief Sales Executive.

Yes / No

The products are old.

Yes / No

- 2 Listen again, paying attention to the role of the chair in the discussion.

Tick (✓) which of the following functions the chair performs at this meeting.

Thanks people for coming.

☐

Prevents interruptions.

☐

Starts the meeting on time.

☐

Makes people stick to the subject.

☐

States the objective.

☐

Gives a personal opinion.

☐

Refers to the agenda.

☐

Summarises.

☐

Changes the agenda.

☐

Asks for comments.

☐

Talks about a previous meeting.

☐

Decides when to have a break.

☐

Introduces the first speaker.

☐

Closes the meeting.

☐

3 Suggest phrases which could be used by a chairperson in the following situations in a meeting.

- a) To welcome the participants to a meeting.
- b) To state the objectives of the meeting.
- c) To introduce the agenda.
- d) To introduce the first speaker.
- e) To prevent an interruption.
- f) To thank a speaker for his / her contribution.
- g) To introduce another speaker.
- h) To keep discussion to the relevant issues.
- i) To summarise discussion.
- j) To ask if anyone has anything to add.
- k) To suggest moving to the next topic on the agenda.
- l) To summarise certain actions that must be done following the meeting (for example, do research, write a report, meet again, write a letter, etc.).
- m) To close the meeting.

Practice 1

Work in groups of four. Decide on a chair and have a brief meeting using one of the situations below.

After a few minutes' preparation, the chair starts the meeting, introduces the agenda, invites the first speaker to make his / her proposal, prevents interruptions, brings in other speakers, summarises, etc.

Situation 1

Meeting

To identify ways to advertise clothes and lifestyle products to youth markets in Europe

Time:

Finish:

Place:

Participants:

Agenda

1. Budget to be decided at a later meeting.
2. Preferred markets: Suggestion: Eurozone, especially France, Germany, Italy and Spain.
3. Advertising media: Lifestyle magazines / television / Internet / sports sponsorship / others? *Note: TV advertising is the most expensive.*

Situation 2

Meeting

To decide on training needs and how to spend \$100,000 on training.

Time:

Finish:


Place:

Participants:

Agenda

1. Decide priorities: marketing / information technology / languages.
2. Allocate costs.
3. Decide outline programme.

3 Establishing the purpose of a meeting

-  1 Below is an incomplete agenda for a meeting of an environmental research unit. Listen to the recording of the start of the meeting. You will hear the opening remarks from the chair, Victor Allen. Note the objectives of the meeting by filling in the spaces in the agenda.

Environmental Research Unit

Quarterly Meeting

24th May 20—

Room A 32, South Side Science Park

Participants: Victor Allen (Chair), Sonia Sandman,
Vince Camden, Russell James.

Time: 10.00 Finish: 12.00

Agenda

1. (a) _____ present projects
 - 1.1 Hydroclear
 - 1.2 PCB reduction
2. (b) _____
3. (c) _____
 - Government
 - United Nations / World Health Organization
 - Industry

Practice 2

- 1 In groups, work out a brief agenda, with an appropriate order, for a meeting of the marketing department of Axis Finance Ltd., a medium-sized financial services company. Your agenda should include the points listed here:
 - any other business
 - minutes of previous meeting
 - date of next meeting
 - personnel changes
 - chair's opening address
 - new products
 - marketing plans for next year
 - review of marketing performance in the current year
 - apologies for absence.
- 2 In pairs, prepare a brief opening statement by the chair to introduce the meeting above:
 - think about what the opening statement from the Chair needs to say
 - use your agenda as a guide
 - refer to the Language Checklist
 - practise in pairs.

Role play

Work in groups of four.

Ash & Whitebeam is a manufacturing company. The Board has decided to set up a subcommittee to examine the four problems contained in File cards 20–23.

Your group is that subcommittee and you are meeting to discuss these problems and to make recommendations to the Board. Read through the information on the File cards. Decide in groups who should lead discussion on each of the four topics. Each group member should prepare his / her introduction. When everyone is ready, begin the meeting. If possible, also choose an overall Chair for the meeting.

TRANSFER 1

Think about the role play meeting that you have worked on in this unit and your role in it. Evaluate the meeting by considering the following:

- What were the objectives?
- What was your role in the meeting?
- Did you use any visual supports?
- What was the result of the meeting?
- How did you feel about this result?
- What action or follow-up was agreed?

TRANSFER 2

If you were the Chair of the meeting, again think about your role. Consider all the above questions but also the following:

- What were the objectives?
- How long did it take – was this too long or too short?
- Were you an effective Chair?
- Did you summarise the meeting?
- How could you have chaired the meeting better?

TRANSFER 3

If you know of any meeting that you are going to participate in, think about your preparation for that meeting. What do you need to consider?

Language Checklist

Chairing and leading discussion

Opening the meeting

Thank you for coming ...
 (It's five o'clock). Let's start ...
 We've received apologies from ...
 Any comments on our previous meeting?

Introducing the agenda

You've all seen the agenda ...
 On the agenda, you'll see there are three items.
 There is one main item to discuss ...

Stating objectives

We're here today to hear about plans for ...
 Our objective is to discuss different ideas ...
 What we want to do today is to reach a decision ...

Introducing discussion

The background to the problem is ...
 This issue is about ...
 The point we have to understand is ...

Calling on a speaker

I'd like to ask Mary to tell us about ...
 Can we hear from Mr Passas on this?
 I know that you've prepared a statement on your Department's views ...

Controlling the meeting

Sorry Hans, can we let Magda finish?
 Er, Henry, we can't talk about that now.

Summarising

So, what you're saying is ...
 Can I summarise that? You mean ...
 So, the main point is ...

Moving the discussion on

Can we go on to think about ...
 Let's move on to the next point.

Closing the meeting

I think we've covered everything.
 So, we've decided ...
 I think we can close the meeting now.
 That's it. The next meeting will be ...

Skills Checklist

Preparation for meetings

Chair

- Decide objectives.
- What type of meeting (formal or informal, short or long, regular or a 'one-off', internal / external information-giving / discussion / decision-making)?
- Is a social element required?
- Prepare an agenda.
- Decide time / place / participants / who must attend and who can be notified of decisions.
- Study subjects for discussion.
- Anticipate different opinions.
- Speak to participants.

Secretary

- Obtain agenda and list of participants.
- Inform participants and check:
 - room, equipment, paper, materials.
 - refreshments, meals, accommodation, travel.

Participants

- Study subjects on agenda, work out preliminary options.
- If necessary, find out team or department views.
- Prepare own contribution, ideas, visual supports, etc.

The role of the Chair

- Start and end on time.
- Introduce objectives, agenda.
- Introduce speakers.
- Define time limits for contributions.
- Control discussion, hear all views.
- Summarise discussion at key points.
- Ensure that key decisions are written down by the secretary.
- Ensure that conclusions and decisions are clear and understood.
- Define actions to be taken and individual responsibilities.

Quick Communication Check

1 Meetings vocabulary

Look at the word square below. Find seven words which match the given definitions.

- 1 A written report of what was said in a meeting.
- 2 People who attend a meeting.
- 3 The purpose or intention of the meeting.
- 4 List of items to discuss in a meeting.
- 5 Person who controls a meeting.
- 6 Change the date of a meeting to a later date.
- 7 To have a break in a meeting.

P	A	R	T	I	C	I	P	A	N	T	S
F	G	I	O	I	H	P	H	O	V	N	O
A	E	M	J	C	A	Y	S	B	D	N	M
N	N	O	A	Z	I	B	E	J	E	O	I
D	D	C	N	P	R	A	S	E	D	N	M
E	A	K	C	O	B	J	E	C	H	I	N
K	A	B	M	S	O	P	C	T	Y	X	Q
D	A	B	C	T	H	H	O	I	L	T	U
R	D	B	N	P	L	K	P	V	O	O	I
I	A	D	J	O	U	R	N	E	D	J	S
G	D	M	I	N	U	T	E	S	Z	M	T
T	U	N	B	E	A	R	T	S	A	P	P

2 Chairing a meeting

A Complete the following sentences with words from the box.

- 1 _____ to the meeting.
- 2 We have three _____ on the _____
- 3 The main _____ of the meeting is to reach a decision on the Abacus Project.
- 4 I'd like to hear John's _____ and then we can have a _____.
- 5 I hope we can _____ by 4 o'clock.
- 6 John, can you _____ your main points?
- 7 Does anyone have any _____?
- 8 Let's _____ to the next point.
- 9 There is not enough time to discuss this. Can we _____ this discussion to another meeting?
- 10 I think we should _____ the meeting now, as it's after 4 o'clock.

report
finish
agenda
purpose
move on
items
close
summarise
questions
postpone
discussion
welcome

B Choose the right ending to make the chair's remarks below.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 I'd like to welcome _____ | a) who is going to present a short report. |
| 2 There are three things _____ | b) comments on Marie's report? |
| 3 Can I introduce Marie Fischer, _____ | c) all the items on the agenda. |
| 4 Does anyone have any _____ | d) a date for our next meeting? |
| 5 Let's move _____ | e) for coming. |
| 6 So, that's completed _____ | f) to the next point. |
| 7 Can we fix _____ | g) all for today. |
| 8 I think that's _____ | h) on the agenda. |
| 9 Thanks _____ | i) everyone to the meeting. |

1 i), 2 h), 3 a), 4 b), 5 f), 6 c), 7 d), 8 g), 9 e)
B
7 questions, 8 move on, 9 postpone, 10 close
4 report, discussion, 5 finish, 6 summarise,
1 Welcome, 2 items, agenda, 3 purpose,

C	O	R	R	E	S	P	O	N	E	D	I	N	G
I	N	T	E	R	S	A	V	E	R	E	S		
O	P	I	N	I	S	S	Z	E	S				
I	G	O	I	R	E	S							
R	D	B	N	P	L	K	P	V	O	O	I		
D	A	B	C	T	H	H	O	I	L	T	U		
K	A	B	M	S	O	P	C	T	Y	X	Q		
E	A	K	C	O	B	J	E	C	H	I	N		
D	D	C	N	P	R	A	S	E	D	N	M		
N	N	O	A	Z	I	B	E	J	E	O	I		
A	E	M	J	C	A	Y	S	B	D	N	M		
F	G	I	O	I	H	P	H	O	V	N	O		
P	A	R	T	I	C	I	P	A	N	T	S		

Key
1