Business Meetings

What is a Business Meeting?

A **business meeting** is a gathering of two or more people for the purpose of making decisions or discussing **company** objectives and operations. **Business meetings** are generally conducted in person in an office, however with the rise of video conferencing technologies, participants can join a **business meeting** from anywhere.

Before we talk about the kinds of meetings, let's start with some general vocabulary for meetings. Usually a meeting has an agenda. This is the plan for the order of things to talk about at that meeting. Each part of the agenda is called an item. If someone needs to do something after the meeting it's often called an action item. The person who is in charge of a meeting is called the Leader, the Lead or sometimes the Chair. The Leader runs or leads the meeting. We can also use chair like this, as a verb, and say someone chairs a meeting. In most meetings someone will write down a summary of what was discussed and what was decided. These notes are called minutes. We use the verb phrase take minutes to describe writing these notes. After the meeting this person will distribute the minutes to the other participants or attendees. In more formal situations the participants will approve the minutes at their next meeting. That means they say that the summary was correct. So now we know some basic meeting vocabulary, let's think about different types of meetings.

Types of Meetings

In business there are many kinds of meetings, for example, social get-togethers networking meetings, and negotiations with people from different companies. In this course however, will be mainly talking about internal meetings, meetings with people you work with. Even so there are still several types of internal meetings. So let's talk briefly about what they are. Basically the type of meeting often depends on what the purpose of the meeting is. Look at this list of different meetings that might happen in a company. How many have you participated in? Lets talk about each of these different meetings.

The purpose of an information meeting is to explain something. In an information meeting there might be just one or two speakers and an audience. Participants usually listen and may sometimes ask questions. A team meeting is when members of a particular team meet, for example a management team or a finance team. Usually these meetings are scheduled regularly, weekly, or monthly. At these meetings people usually share information and give updates. They may also make announcements and make decisions. If people from different departments are working on a specific project, there will usually be a kick off meeting. When the project begins and then regular progress report meetings take place afterwards where people working on the project give updates. At the end there may be a debrief meeting where participants can discuss what was successful or not so successful about the project. At decision-making meetings, the purpose is to reach agreement on one or more issues. Attendees are expected to participate fully, giving their opinions and coming to agreement. Often the leader will ask for a vote. At brainstorming meetings, the purpose is to think of and share new ideas about a topic or try to solve a problem. These meetings are often informal and participants are expected to be creative.

Usually we think meetings are where people are together discussing things. But we can also describe a training and a team-building as types of meetings. The goal in these kinds of meetings is to improve the work situation. For example, by helping employees use the new software program or by encouraging employees to work together as a team. We also usually think of meetings as a group of people sitting around a table in a meeting room. However, these days there are also meetings where some or all of the participants are in different locations. These kinds of meetings, teleconferences or video conferences can have the same purposes that we've just talked about but they also have their own special guidelines and you'll learn about these guidelines later in the course. To review the general kinds of meeting there are let's look at a few examples and decide what kind of meeting would be appropriate.

You work for a small coffee shop company with a few coffee shops in town. You would like to add some food. You want to get some ideas from your team. That's right, you would want to hold a brainstorming meeting. You've just reorganized the management team in your organization and you want to explain it to your department. That's right. You would want to hold an information meeting. How about this situation? You want to select a new software program for your design team. Because you need to make a decision, this would be a decision-making meeting. Finally, your international sales team needs to have its monthly meeting. Many of the team members are out of the office. Because they are in different places, a teleconference would be the best way to hold the meeting. Now that we know about the different kinds of meetings we can think about what makes a successful meeting. If participants understand what the purpose of a meeting is and what is expected of them then it's more likely to be successful, right?

Types of meeting

1. **Board meeting:** A meeting of a company's board of directors to discuss strategic decisions and governance issues.
2. **Brainstorming session:** A meeting to generate ideas and creative solutions for a particular problem or challenge.
3. **Client meeting:** A meeting with clients to discuss their needs and expectations, provide updates on projects, and resolve any issues.
4. **Performance review:** A meeting between a manager and an employee to discuss the employee's performance and set goals for future performance.
5. **Project meeting:** A meeting to discuss progress and issues related to a specific project.
6. **Sales meeting:** A meeting between sales team members to discuss strategies, goals, and potential deals.
7. **Staff meeting:** A meeting for employees to discuss issues related to their department or the company as a whole.
8. **Team meeting:** A meeting for a specific group of employees to discuss project progress, goals, and roadblocks.

9. **Town hall meeting:** A meeting for employees to discuss company-wide issues, share ideas, and receive updates from upper management.
10. **Training session:** A meeting for employees to learn new skills or receive training on new technologies, processes, or tools.

Exercise: Identify the type of the meeting of the given scenarios:

1. Your company is holding a meeting to brainstorm new product ideas for the upcoming year. What type of meeting is this?
2. Your team is meeting to review the agenda and goals for the upcoming conference. What type of meeting is this?
3. Your company is holding a meeting to announce the acquisition of a new company and discuss its impact. What type of meeting is this?
4. Your team is meeting to discuss the progress of the project and make necessary adjustments to meet quality standards. What type of meeting is this?
5. Your company is holding a meeting to discuss the company's social responsibility initiatives and how they align with the company's mission. What type of meeting is this?
6. Your team is meeting to discuss the performance of a team member and provide feedback. What type of meeting is this?
7. Your company is holding a meeting to review the company's mission, vision, and values and make necessary updates. What type of meeting is this?
8. Your team is meeting to discuss the progress of the project and identify any potential risks that could impact the project. What type of meeting is this?
9. Your company is holding a meeting to introduce a new software tool to the employees and provide training on how to use it. What type of meeting is this?
10. Your team is meeting to review the results of a recent marketing campaign and make necessary adjustments. What type of meeting is this?

Purposes of Meetings

There are four primary purposes for meetings. Understanding where each meeting you hold fits within this typology can help you set appropriate goals for a meeting and its content and methods (Bens, 2012). The four types of meetings are:

- **Information sharing.** During information-sharing meetings, groups get together to give updates, share research, and brainstorm for new ideas. Typically, no decisions are made in an information-sharing meeting.
- **Planning.** Planning meetings involve taking ideas to the next step. Participants can collaborate on goals, visions, priorities, and needs, and define next steps.
- **Problem-solving**. During problem-solving meetings, teams collaborate on developing solutions to problems within the practice. Participants gather data, identify problems, analyze the situation, and plan for action.
- **Relationship building**. This type of meeting serves as a time for people to get to know and build relationships with one another.

Manager Roles in Meetings

Typical roles that managers play include: convener, leader, facilitator, trainer, participant, and observer. Being clear on your role in each meeting will enable you to play the role effectively and let the practice know what to expect from you and how to engage you as a resource. It can also help you determine how to prepare for the meeting. Below we discuss these roles.

Convener.

A meeting convener typically calls the meeting or session and is in charge of engaging initial participants. A manager often serves as the convener for early meetings with a practice to determine improvement needs and goals and to plan the creation of quality improvement infrastructure in practices where this is lacking. As a manager, you are also likely to be the convener for meetings to report back on the results of performance data. As an outsider to the practice, you will want to coordinate any convening with your primary point of contact in the practice to ensure that you are working in partnership with the practice and working toward building capacity within the practice rather than simply taking on these tasks yourself.

Leader.

A meeting leader or chair typically oversees the focus and content of the meeting. The leader shepherds creation of the agenda—even if it is created collaboratively with other members—and guides the group through desired content during the course of the meeting. Although leaders have primary responsibility for the content of the meeting, in many instances, they also serve as facilitators for the meeting process. Combining these functions can be difficult, but is often necessary when no one is available to facilitate. A meeting facilitator focuses on the process of meetings. The facilitator works closely with the leader and ensures that all attendees have an opportunity to participate, helps "unstick" meetings when they get bogged down, and prevents meetings from going off on tangents.

Facilitator.

Chairs often assume the role of facilitator for meetings. To be an effective facilitator for meetings, you will want to become an expert in observing the process rather than the content of a meeting. Typically, in this role, you should not contribute to the content of the meeting, as this can interfere with your ability to observe and guide the process of the meeting. You will want to become skilled in reflecting on meeting process. For example, you will want to know how to identify and reflect on group processes that are occurring during the meeting and bring them to participants' awareness. Examples of reflective comments include statements like:

- "It seems like the group is hesitant to talk about this issue. Do you see this, too? What do you think is creating this hesitation?"
- "I notice that the developers have been doing most of the talking today so far. For meetings to be the most effective, we want to hear from everybody. Sally (the quality Assurance in the group) what are your thoughts about the ideas being discussed?"
- "Tom, I hear how concerned you are about the patient wait times. This is a very important issue that the group needs to discuss and I am glad you are bringing it forward. The agenda today is focused on improving the reports we are generating from the EHR. Can we put patient wait times in the parking lot for today, and the QI chair and I will touch base with you after the meeting to set up a different meeting time to discuss it?"

You should be skilled in managing individuals who may dominate a session, and encouraging participation from quiet members or those with lower professional status who may be afraid to offer their opinion. You will also want to become adept at summarizing the content of discussions to encourage and clarify input and move the discussion forward. ("So, Tom, it sounds like you are saying that staff do not have enough time to process paperwork. Is this what the rest of the group is hearing?")

In some instances, you may find yourself being pulled into facilitating a meeting that is floundering when you have not been explicitly assigned this role. If this occurs, it can be helpful to reflect on this with the group and check in with them about what type of support they need to have more effective meetings. You can briefly summarize the elements of effective meetings, and if appropriate, suggest that you facilitate a few meetings for them so they can observe the facilitation process and make progress on meeting content.

Trainer.

Another role that you can assume in meetings is that of trainer. As a trainer, your goal is primarily educational. You are focused on building attendees' skills and competencies on a certain topic. You may fill this role through a presentation of interactive educational methods and modeling.

Participant.

You can also take part in meetings as a participant. In these instances, you contribute to the discussions along with other participants.

Observer.

Finally, you may serve as outside observers. This role can be particularly useful when you are beginning work with a practice as a way to learn about its culture, how staff members work together as a team, and the issues that are concerning them. Be aware that observing a meeting may change meeting dynamics somewhat, but will still enable you to observe how meetings are run, whether participation is diverse, the dynamics of the meetings, and the content of the sessions. When you attend as an observer, you will want to make sure the leader or facilitator introduces you briefly and explains your purpose for observing in order to put participants at ease.

At times, you may assume several different roles in the same meeting. For example, you may help facilitate a session for the medical director and also provide a brief training to the group on a practice-specific topic such as meaningful use criteria or ways to use meetings to change culture. Think about which roles you will fill during the meeting and check with the leader, facilitator, and other participants about the roles they would like you to assume. One easy way to do this is to ask the meeting convener what role he or she would like you to assume in the session. For example: "Dr. Jones, I'm looking forward to the meeting tomorrow. Tell me briefly what you are hoping to get out of the meeting and what you would like me to do during the meeting. Would you like me to observe, facilitate, or fill some other role?" Then, clarify your role to the group at the beginning of the meeting.

Effective Meetings

These are the answers of some professionals about one of the meetings they attended:

>> We didn't start for 20 minutes because people were just chatting and then the meeting went on for an extra hour. One of the participants wouldn't shut up. No-one else was able to speak. I didn't really know what we were supposed to be talking about, and at the end I didn't know what we had

decided. I felt it was a complete waste of time. I came prepared because I had read the documents that we were supposed to discuss, but it was really clear that a lot of other people at the meeting hadn't read them. Some of them didn't even bring the documents at the meeting. I felt so frustrated. >>I wanted to contribute because I thought I had a few good ideas, but I didn't feel comfortable giving my opinion, so I just kept quiet. The meeting room was small so we were all sitting really close together. There was also construction work going on outside so it was hard to hear.>>

Were any of those comments familiar? They probably were because those are very typical complaints about meetings. However, if we think about it we can solve most of those problems fairly easily. By following a few basic guidelines, we can make sure most of the meetings we attend are successful. Perhaps the most important guideline is to be prepared. Make sure that there is an agenda and that everyone receives the agenda at least 24 hours before the meeting. If you are a participant in the meeting, make sure that you read the agenda and prepare any documents that are necessary. It's a good idea to print out the agenda or at least have an electronic copy available. If you are running the meeting you could also print out an agenda for people in case, they don't have one. If you want to save paper, project it on a screen if one is available. To help participants be prepared for a meeting, it should be clear what each item on the agenda means. For example, an item with just the phrase Next Year's Budget, doesn't give you a lot of information about what you'll be required to do. For example, Vote on Approval of Next Year's Budget tells you that you will decide what will be in the budget. This means you should know what is in the budget before coming to the meeting, that you should be prepared to ask questions and give your opinion. And that you will be asked to vote.

The second most important guideline is that the meeting should be well run, and often that is the responsibility of the chair, or leader, or team leader. The meeting should start on time. It's okay to have a little small talk before starting. But the chair should make sure that it doesn't go on for more than just a few minutes. The meeting should also finish on time or better several minutes before. The chair might postpone the discussion of any remaining items to the next meeting if you run out of time. In fact, when planning a meeting, it is better to ask ourselves the question, how much time will we need to reach the objective, instead of, how many things can we discuss in the time that we have?

Another important role of the chair or leader is to make sure everyone has an opportunity to speak. That one person doesn't talk all the time and that the discussion stays on topic, meaning people don't start talking about things not related to the topic of the meeting. This can be a little difficult and you'll find out more about this when we focus on leading meetings in week two.

Another important guideline is to think about when and where a meeting will be held. For example, scheduling a meeting late on a Friday afternoon is maybe not the best idea in the US. A cold or noisy meeting room would make it uncomfortable or difficult for people to participate successfully. Deciding to have a brain storming meeting at a local restaurant wouldn't be a good idea either because ordering food and eating could be distracting.

Meetings are so common and frankly, many people find them so boring that some organizations are trying to be more creative about the location of meetings. A recent interesting idea is to hold meetings outside while walking. Even in Seattle it might catch on despite the rain.

When the meeting is over, a summary or the minutes of the discussion, including any decisions that were made and any action items, should be sent to all participants as soon as possible. This reminds people what the meeting achieved. Finally, when we are meetings with people who are from different cultures and who speak different languages, we should always be considerate of those differences and do our best to make the other participants feel comfortable participating in and speaking in English. So here's what we've done so far.

One key to effective meetings is for facilitators and leaders to give as much attention to the process of the meeting as its content. There are many excellent online resources and training programs that you can use to improve your skill in facilitating meetings and training practices in the same processes. The information provided below is a summary of basic information about effective meetings and meeting facilitation.

1. **Preparing for the meeting.**

Effective meetings don't just happen. They require a considerable amount of preparation and thought. This includes clearly defining the purpose and goals of the meeting, inviting the appropriate people, and selecting a location that is comfortable, accessible, and conducive to meaningful exchanges among participants. It also includes determining the appropriate duration for the meeting; creating the agenda; selecting process tools to help participants engage in meaningful analysis, discussion, and decision making; and preparing the meeting materials and meeting room.

2. ***Define the purpose of the meeting.*** An important first step in planning for a meeting is to clearly define its purpose to avoid confusion among participants. Work with the group leader to determine whether the meeting is for information sharing, planning, problem solving, or relationship building. You will also want to define expectations for participants' involvement. Are participants simply helping to inform decisions that will ultimately be made by someone else, or will they help make actionable decisions during the meeting? Based on this information, you can then define the specific goals and desired outcomes for the meeting. For example:

Sample Meeting Purpose and Goals

Purpose: To share information about the complaint registration process. Information will inform decision making by the QI director.

Goals: To identify problems in the registration process, gather ideas from staff about how to improve this process, and inform the QI director's decision about whether to embark on a formal LEAN process for improving registration.

3. ***Select participants***. Meeting participants should be determined by the purpose of the meeting. When changes are being planned, it is important to include individuals from all areas of the practice that will be affected—from administrative clerks to medical assistants, clinicians, practice leaders, and even patients. When convening a group for a meeting, you will want to work with your practice champion to develop the invitation list. This will

ensure that (1) you invite everyone who should be included, and (2) you do not overstep any boundaries. It will also provide an opportunity for you to model skills in creating effective meetings. When you invite individuals to participate, make sure that they understand the goals of the meeting, the time commitment, and the reason they have been invited.

4. ***Determine the best modality for the meeting.*** Meetings can be held in-person, virtually, or through a combination of both. In-person meetings are preferable for making difficult decisions, planning complex changes, or relationship building. Virtual meetings work for check-ins and to keep projects moving along when it is not easy for a team to get together. Meetings that combine in-person and virtual modes are more difficult to facilitate but are quite common in health care because staff are often located at different practices, and attending meetings at another site can be difficult and costly for them. Combined in-person and virtual meetings are also useful when you are engaging an outside expert.

Meetings that combine in-person and virtual modes are the most difficult to run effectively. It can be difficult to keep the virtual attendees engaged as in-person attendees discuss issues. In addition, virtual attendees can pull the focus of the meeting away from the in-person participants. You will want to monitor these meetings carefully, to balance the need to include virtual participants but not disrupt the in-person interactions and discussions.

When using virtual methods, use video conferencing if possible. Participants in virtual meetings are often hesitant to turn on their cameras. When feasible, encourage them to do so, as the visual feed can help improve interactions and connections with other meeting participants. Be sure to test connectivity and the platform you will be using before the meeting.

5. ***Set the meeting location***. Select a location that is easily accessible to participants. Choose a room that has enough space for participants to sit comfortably, usually in a circle or semi-circle, and that provides a table or other surface for participants to write on. Pay attention to issues such as glare from windows, room temperature, ambient noise, availability of restrooms, and places for participants to step out to take calls if necessary. Make sure that participants have easy access to power outlets when needed.
6. ***Determine the meeting duration***. Meeting length in primary care environments is often determined by external realities such as the need to be present for patient care. Duration should also be determined by the purpose of the meeting.

Check-in meetings for work already underway can be short. For example, a team working on a Plan Do Study Act cycle might only need to do a PDSA Huddle of 15 minutes, with each individual briefly reporting on the progress on the cycle.

Meetings that involve decision making and in-depth planning require more time. You should plan on 60 to 90 minutes for these types of meetings. Meetings longer than two hours can be less productive, as participants typically are unable to focus for more than 90 minutes.

When longer meetings are scheduled (for example, for a practice retreat), you can manage them by breaking the time into a series of shorter meetings, with breaks in between. You should be sure to include a number of interactive processes to keep individuals engaged and actively participating.

A few tips to keep in mind:

- Meetings that are too short can be wasted time. Little gets accomplished, especially when you have to catch up latecomers on what they missed. It may be a while before you can get this group together again and you do not want to be unable to make project progress between meetings.

- Meetings that are too long also can be wasted time. If your meeting is too long, participants can get distracted as their attention threshold approaches. Group members may begin to feel that they are neglecting other tasks, and they may be hesitant to attend your next meeting.
- Meetings have a cost. Be sure to consider the cost of meetings that you and others schedule from a payroll perspective. How many hours each day, week, or month has the director allocated for staff or clinicians to participate in this project, and how much of that time do you want to use for meetings? How much time are clinicians being asked to be out of clinic and what is the revenue lost during this period as well as the impact on patient access? On the other hand, there are also costs to not meeting. What is the impact on teamwork, organizational planning, and quality of care if the group does not meet, communicate, and solve problems? Thinking about these costs can help motivate groups to make optimal use of meeting time.

7. ***Create the meeting agenda.*** Agendas are an essential part of effective meetings. They alert participants to the purpose and topics of the meeting as well as its goals. They also provide a structure and can help the chair or facilitator keep the meeting on track.

Ideally, agendas should be developed well in advance of the meeting and distributed to participants with sufficient time before the meeting to enable them to come prepared. This said, you should assume that participants will not necessarily have prepared and incorporate this into your meeting plan.

For established working groups that already have a solid idea of their scope of work and the related issues, the meeting convener can set the agenda alone or use a more participatory approach. In a participatory approach to agenda setting, you circulate a tentative agenda and ask group members to react to it and submit changes and additional items they would like to discuss. This approach will give you a good idea of issues that participants are thinking about and want to discuss and allow you to prepare to address them during the meeting or defer them to another time.

Organizing Meetings and Writing the Agenda

Have you ever had to set up a meeting? How was it? Did you like having to do it? Actually, I think a lot of people don't really look forward to organizing meetings. Probably the main reason is that we have to try and find a time when everybody is available to meet and that is often the most difficult part. But, once we've agreed on a time, we can just follow some guidelines to make sure that people come to the meeting prepared and ready to participate. So, let's talk about what we need to do. First, let's take an example from a company. Karen is the Chief Marketing Officer at Ranier Chocolates. She calls Eric, a member of her team and leaves a voicemail. Karen wants Eric to arrange a meeting. What does Eric need to do? Listen to the message for details about when, what and who. Write notes.

>> Hey Erik. Karin here. I just wanted to let you know that I'm going to be out of the office for about ten days and wanted to ask if you could organize a team meeting for the first week of next

month. As well as our regular updates I'd like us to discuss the remodel of the Northlake store. We need to give input on which design we prefer. I'd also like us to decide if we need more money in our budget, so it would be good if you could invite Lauren to join us too. Thanks and let me know if you have any questions. You can call me on my cell. See you in two weeks. >>

So Eric has to organize a team meeting for next month. They will have short updates and then discussions about the remodel of the Northlake store and the budget. Lauren will also be invited. Now let's talk about what he needs to do to set up the meeting. First, we need to know what kind of meeting it is, and what the purpose is. Then we should decide who the attendees, or participants, are. In addition to the members of the team, Karen also told Eric to invite Lauren. So, the next step is to find a date and time for the meeting. In some organizations, meetings are often set up through scheduling software such as Google Calendar or Microsoft Outlook. Employees are required to post their schedules on a calendar so that the organizer of a meeting can easily see when people are available. But sometimes this might not be possible. Some people might not be good keeping the schedule up to date. And if you're inviting someone from outside the organisation or team, they might not use the same software.

A good meeting email must have a clear subject line such as scheduling next month's team meeting. The subject line should be a noun phrase, that tells the reader what the email will be about. Next, there should be an appropriate greeting for an email to a group of people. The purpose of the email is then in the first line. Here are some examples of how we can do this. >> I need to schedule next month's team meeting. I'd like to set up a meeting for next week. I'm trying to arrange a meeting for sometime next week. I want to find a time for us to meet. >> Notice the verbs we can use with the word meeting. Schedule, set up, and arrange. Then we need to try to organize the time. You can choose a date and time, and asked if this would be okay. Here are some phrases you could use to suggest a time and then check. >> I'd like to propose Monday, May 2nd at 10 a.m. How about Thursday afternoon at 2:00? Would Wednesday at 9:00 work for everyone? >> Sometimes you might want to give some choices and ask which one people prefer. >> Here are some options, let me know what you think. Which of these days and times work for you? Let me know which of these dates you prefer. >> Also you could ask people to give you suggestions of the best time. >> Please let me know when you are available. When is a good time for you? Can you give me sometimes when you are free? >>

Of course, asking for suggestions is more complicated, because all of you need to agree on the best time. It's also a good idea to give people a deadline for letting you know about the date. >> Could you let me know by tomorrow if that doesn't work for you? >> We use, by a time, to say that we want something done before that time. Once the time has been arranged, we need to decide on the location. You'll need to think about how many people will be there and also what equipment will be needed. You should also decide what handouts are necessary.

So now we know the kind of meeting, the time, the location, the attendees, and what equipment is needed. The next step is to prepare the agenda. As we learned in our previous lesson, having an agenda can help a meeting be successful. So let's see how to create one. First, an agenda should include the title of the meeting at the top. This lets people know what kind of meeting it will be. Sometimes, in more formal meetings, you would also include the name of the company. Then, you should write the details of the meeting, the date, time, and location. The people who have been invited to attend the meeting will be listed next as attendees. Below this, in more formal meetings, there might be a space to list anyone who will not be attending the meeting. They will have told the meeting organizer before that they will not be able to attend. This can be listed as excused or apologies.

Next, we list the items to be covered in the meeting. In a more formal decision making meeting, for example a board meeting, the minutes of the previous meeting will often need to be approved and that usually happens at the start of a meeting. However, this is not common in normal business meetings. In regularly scheduled meetings there is often time for people to give updates or make announcements. This is usually listed as reports, or simply, updates. Next, we continue with the main items. Remember, as we learned in the previous lesson, each item should be clear so that the participants will know what they're going to be talking about. Usually the headings for items on the agenda start with nouns like discussion, update or vote. Having a single noun like discussion won't give you much information. You need to add details like, discussion on something, or, vote on something. You can add how much time you think will be needed for each item to help the organizer run the meeting efficiently.

If a particular person will be responsible for talking about an item, you can list his or her name, too. This means the person won't be surprised when he or she is asked to lead the discussion at the actual meeting. Sometimes you can include a question to help focus people's attention on what outcome of the discussion will be. For example, which design do we prefer? Instead of a question, you could use a statement of the outcome of the discussion. For example, decide whether to request an increase in our marketing budget. However, you should be consistent. Either use all questions or all statements if you decide to do this. At the end of a meeting there is often some time for participants to talk about anything that wasn't listed on the agenda at the start. This is often listed as new business. Sometimes instead we can list it as announcements. At the end of the agenda, you can leave space for action items. Remember, these will be things that people will do after the meeting based on what was decided. If you have several items on the agenda to

discuss, you could also include space for the action item after each one. So let's review what is necessary for planning a meeting. We decide what kind of meeting it will be and the goal of the meeting. We identify the people to invite, then based on their schedules we decide on a time and location. We might have to find out what time is best by emailing the people involved. We prepare any necessary equipment, and then we write up an agenda.

Writing Announcement

So you've organized the meeting and written the agenda. The next thing you should do before the meeting takes place is send an email to everybody with details and include the agenda. At the end of this part of the lesson, you will be able to identify what to include in this kind of email. As we saw in the first part of this lesson, we should begin an email by writing a subject line. The subject line should tell the reader what the email will be about.

Then for our greeting we can use one of these for a group email as appropriate. >> Hi Folks, Hi Everyone, Team. >> Next we need to give the details of the meeting including the time and location. This is usually done in the first line. >> Our next team meeting will be held on Monday, May 2nd at 10:00 AM in the 4th floor conference room. This is to remind you that the SoftPoint training will take place on Wednesday afternoon at 2:00 PM in 301A. >> If necessary, say whether it is a required meeting. For example, if it's a required training or an optional information meeting. Software like Microsoft Outlook allows you to show whether it is required for you to attend a meeting or whether it is optional. >> This is a required meeting. Although attendance is optional, I hope to see most of you there. >> You can also give some more details about the meeting, for example the objective. >> You'll need to choose the design team for our remodel at this meeting. >> If the participants need to prepare something for the meeting, also include as sentence about this. >> Please read the proposal before the meeting. In preparation, please look at last year's financial report. Please bring copies of the report. Handouts will be available at the meeting. >> Next, you should refer to the agenda. You can either attach the agenda to the email. >> The agenda is attached. I've attached a copy of the agenda. >> Or if there's not much on the agenda, you can also include it in the body of the email. >> The agenda is as follows. The agenda is below. >>

Sometimes you can also ask if anyone would like to add an item to the agenda. But the organizer can also do this at the start of the actual meeting. >> Please let me know if you want to add anything to the agenda. >> However, if you think you won't have a lot of time, you can say something like this. >> We have a pretty full agenda. >> You can then include a sentence to let everyone know what to do if they cannot attend the meeting. It's a good idea to also include a deadline. >> Please let me know by tomorrow if you can't attend. >> Sometimes people use the word apologies to describe not being able to attend the meeting. Although this is more common outside of the US. >> Please send apologies by the end of the week. >> Finally, finish with a friendly closing sentence. Here are some examples. >> I look forward to seeing you next week. Please let me know if you have any questions. See you all tomorrow. >> And then the closing. >> Best regards, Erik. Best, Erik. Erik. >> So now you know what to include in an email announcing a meeting. And remember you should send this kind of email with the agenda at least 24 hours before the meeting. [MUSIC]

<u>Your Agenda may include:</u>

- Meeting title: A clear and concise title that indicates the purpose of the meeting.
- Date, time, and location: The date, time, and location of the meeting.
- Attendees: A list of attendees who are expected to attend the meeting.
- Call to order: The time that the meeting will begin.
- Approval of minutes: If applicable, a review and approval of the minutes from the previous meeting.
- Old business: A discussion of any unfinished business from the previous meeting.
- New business: An overview of the topics that will be discussed during the meeting.
- Presentations: A list of presenters and the topics they will be presenting on.
- Discussion items: A list of discussion topics and the individuals responsible for leading each discussion.

- Action items: A list of action items and the individuals responsible for completing them.
- Next meeting: The date, time, and location of the next meeting.
- Adjournment: The time that the meeting will end.

It is important to note that the agenda should be distributed to all attendees prior to the meeting, giving them ample time to review the topics to be discussed and prepare for the meeting.

Before a meeting takes place, an agenda should be written out and distributed. Agendas are a powerful form of writing because they:

- help groups structure communication activity.
- help people stay focused and on task.
- provide a checklist of what exactly needs to be accomplished.
- ensure that meeting activities run according to time constraints.
- generally make meetings more organized and productive.

Good agenda items are

- specific.
- results-oriented.
- timed.
- realistic.

The sample agenda items on this slide meet our criteria. All of them are timed, specific, realistic, and results-oriented.

Brainstorm news items for bulletin (10 min)
Choose the logo for the website (15 min)
Identify pros and cons of using Twitter (12 min)
Update team members on budget (6 min)

Exercise: Revise the following bad agenda:

Grad school applications
Talk about financial aid
Discuss marketing
Create political campaign

Format for writing a formal invitation email for a meeting

When writing a formal invitation email for a meeting, it is important to include the following information:

1. The purpose of the meeting: Clearly state the reason for the meeting in the opening sentence of the email.
2. Date, time, and location: Include the date, time, and location of the meeting. Specify the time zone if it is a virtual meeting.
3. Attendees: Mention the attendees who are expected to attend the meeting.

4. Meeting agenda: Provide an overview of the meeting agenda to give the attendees an idea of what will be discussed.
5. RSVP: Ask the attendees to confirm their attendance or decline the invitation. Specify the deadline for RSVPs.
6. Contact information: Provide your contact information so attendees can reach out to you with any questions or concerns.
7. Formal language: Use formal language and tone throughout the email.

Example:

Subject: Invitation to attend the quarterly sales review meeting

Dear [Name],

I am writing to formally invite you to attend the quarterly sales review meeting, scheduled for [date] at [time] at our company headquarters located at [address]. The purpose of this meeting is to review our sales performance over the last quarter and discuss strategies for improving our sales numbers in the upcoming quarter.

We would like to request your presence at the meeting as you play a critical role in our sales team. The meeting will include a review of our sales targets, an analysis of our sales numbers, and a discussion of strategies to improve our sales performance. The meeting agenda is attached for your review.

Please confirm your attendance by [date], and let us know if you will not be able to attend. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at [contact information].

We look forward to seeing you at the meeting.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

Exercise: Writing an Agenda

Write the agenda for a meeting you have to conduct as a class group leader. Invent all necessary details.

Review criteria

Review three other people's agendas. Use the following to review:

1. Does the agenda have a title?
2. Is the correct time and date included? (example: Wednesday, June 8th at 9:00.)
3. Was Reports/Updates listed as an item?

4. Was closing the Eastside Store listed as the next item?
5. Was deciding if they are going to hire Creative Build the next item?
6. Was increasing the marketing budget the next item?
7. Was discussing the location of the newest store the next item?
8. Was space for action items included?
9. Optional: Was a sentence or question focusing on the objective included under any of the agenda items?
10. Optional: Was New Business/Announcements listed at the end?
11. Optional: Was a time listed next to each item?
12. Optional: Is Karin listed as attending?
13. What additional feedback do you have? Comment on anything that your peer asked about.

Assignment

Group 1: Scenario: You are a project manager leading a meeting with a development team to discuss the implementation of a new feature in a software application. The goal of the meeting is to ensure that the team understands the requirements of the feature and to develop a plan for implementation. You will need to create an agenda for the meeting that addresses the following:

- The team needs to review the requirements of the new feature, including the expected user behavior and system performance.
- The team needs to discuss the technical feasibility of the new feature and identify any potential challenges or roadblocks that could affect its implementation.
- The team needs to identify the resources required for the implementation, including software development tools and personnel.
- The team needs to establish a timeline for the implementation of the new feature, taking into account other ongoing development efforts.
- The team needs to develop a testing and quality assurance plan for the new feature to ensure that it meets user expectations and performs as expected.

Your task is to create an agenda for this meeting that addresses these points and helps the team develop a clear plan for implementing the new feature. The agenda should be structured in a way that facilitates productive discussion and collaboration between team members and stakeholders.

Question: You are part of a committee organizing a charity event and need to hold a meeting to discuss the progress and plan the next steps. Write a formal invitation email to the committee members.

Group 2: Scenario: You are the CEO of a startup, and you are leading a meeting with potential investors to discuss funding opportunities. The goal of the meeting is to provide investors with a clear understanding of the company's financial projections, business plan, and funding needs. You will need to create an agenda for the meeting that addresses the following:

- The meeting should start with an introduction of the company, its mission, and its unique value proposition.
- The team needs to present a review of the company's business plan, including market research, competitive landscape, and growth strategies.
- The team needs to present a review of the company's financial projections, including revenue projections, cost projections, and profit margins.
- The team needs to outline the company's funding needs, including how the funds will be used and the expected return on investment.
- The team should allow time for a Q&A session to address any questions or concerns that investors may have.

Your task is to create an agenda for this meeting that addresses these points and helps investors gain a clear understanding of the company's financial position and funding needs. The agenda should be structured in a way that provides a clear and concise overview of the company's business plan and financial projections and allows for productive discussion and collaboration between investors and the company's management team.

Question: You are the manager of a sales team and need to organize a meeting to discuss the performance of the team over the past quarter. Write a formal invitation email to your team members.

Group 3: Scenario: You are a project manager leading a meeting with stakeholders from multiple departments to discuss the launch of a new product. The goal of the meeting is to ensure that everyone is on the same page regarding the product launch and to address any issues or concerns that could affect the launch. You will need to create an agenda for the meeting that addresses the following:

- The team needs to review the project timeline to ensure that the launch date is feasible and all milestones are on track.
- The team needs to review the budget to ensure that there are no oversights or gaps that could affect the success of the product launch.
- The team needs to identify and discuss any potential risks or concerns that could affect the launch, such as technical issues, market saturation, or legal concerns.
- The team needs to discuss communication strategies for keeping stakeholders informed of the project's progress and any changes that may arise.
- The team needs to develop action items for addressing any issues or concerns raised in the meeting and ensure that everyone is clear on their responsibilities and timelines.

Your task is to create an agenda for this meeting that addresses these points and helps the team ensure that the product launch is successful. The agenda should be structured in a way that facilitates productive discussion and collaboration between team members and stakeholders.

Question: You are the project manager for a software development project and need to organize a meeting to discuss the progress and any issues that have arisen. Write a formal invitation email to the project team members.

Group 4: Scenario: You are the team leader of a software development team that is working on a new project. The project is behind schedule, and you need to hold a meeting with the team to discuss progress and identify any roadblocks that are preventing the team from meeting its goals. You will need to create an agenda for the meeting that addresses the following:

- The team needs to provide an update on the status of the project, including what has been completed and what still needs to be done.
- The team needs to identify any roadblocks or challenges that are preventing them from meeting their goals. These may include technical issues, communication breakdowns, or lack of resources.
- The team needs to develop action items to address the roadblocks and challenges identified in the meeting. These action items should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.
- The team needs to review the project timeline and ensure that they are still on track to meet the project deadlines.
- The team needs to discuss what needs to be done next and who will be responsible for each action item.

Your task is to create an agenda for this meeting that addresses these points and facilitates a productive discussion.

Question: You are the CEO of a large company and need to hold a meeting with the senior executives to discuss the company's financial performance. Write a formal invitation email to the executive team.

Responding to Meeting Announcements

When you receive an email informing you about a meeting that you should attend, most of the time you don't need to do much. Except, if you're using meeting scheduling software, you would accept the meeting request. However, sometimes you might want to respond by asking a question. Here are some situations when you might need to send an email to the person organizing the meeting. If there was no agenda sent, you might want to ask about that. Imagine you are writing back to a colleague. Which of these would you probably not choose? Where's the agenda is very direct and could sound rude if you don't know the person very well. The other two are good, let's see how we can use them. You can write something like this. >> Hi, Karin, thanks for the email. Do we have an agenda? >> If the writer forgot to attach the agenda, you could write something like this. >> Hi Karin, I think you forgot to attach the agenda. >> Sometimes the meeting email will ask if anyone wants to add anything to the agenda.

So, if you want to talk about something that is not on the agenda, send a quick email. Here are examples of how to do it. >> Hi Karen, I'd like to add some time to talk about the new store. We probably need about 15 minutes. >> Hi Karin, Can we have some time to talk about next week's training? 10 minutes is enough. >> And this example is a little more formal >> Hi, Karen. I would like to add an item to the agenda. I think we need to discuss next month's advertising campaign. I'm not sure how long we need, but I think it's important. >> Finally, this example is a little more indirect. >> Hi, Karen, would we have enough time to talk about last month's sales report?

Here are some guidelines for writing an email where you can say that you cannot attend. After the greeting, you'll first need to write, that you cannot attend the meeting. Here are certain examples of what to write in the first line. >> Hi Karen, I wanted to let you know that I can't come to next week's meeting. >> Here is an example that is a little more informal. >> Hi Karin, just to let you know that I can’t make it to next week's meeting. >> And here's an example that is a little more formal. >> Dear Lauren, I am writing to let you know that I am unable to attend next week's meeting. >> Remember you might want to soften your message to make it sound less direct. In this case, you can use words like, I'm afraid, I'm sorry but or unfortunately. Let's see how we can add these phrases to our first sentence. >> Hi Karin, I wanted to let you know that I'm afraid I can't come to next week's meeting. >> Hi Karin, just to let you know that I'm sorry, but I can't make it to next week's meeting. >> Dear Lauren, I'm writing to inform you that unfortunately, I am unable to attend next week's meeting. >> When you say that you can't do something, you usually have to give a reason.

So, let's look at some different reasons we might have. First, we'll look at some reasons when it is impossible for you to attend. >> I'm going to be out of the office on Monday. I'm on vacation all next week. I have a previously scheduled appointment on that day. >> This is more formal language. Sometimes there are other reasons why you can't attend. Maybe you are just too busy. However, it's not a good idea to just write, I'm busy. You should give more details about what you are doing. >> I have to finish the sales report by Tuesday. >> I have the deadline for the website redesign coming up >> The reorganization of the Northlake store is currently taking up a lot of my time. >>

When you are busy, you should really give details but sometimes we don't have to be clear. It's acceptable to give vague reasons when something unexpected happens or there are personal reasons. >> Something has just come up. >> This means that something unexpected has happened. >> Due to a family commitment. >> This means, that you have to go to something like a wedding, family celebration or attend a meeting at your child's school. >> Due to a personal matter. >> Due to a personal matter is very vague, because it's personal and so, that means it's private. You're not going to say exactly what the reason is and other people are not going to ask what it is either. However, when you use this phrase, it means that it's probably something important, not that you just don't feel like coming to work. Another expression that is more serious is "due to a family emergency". This could mean someone in your family is very sick. After giving your reason, you might also want to add another sentence apologizing for not being able to attend the meeting. Of course, this depends on your relationship with the reader.

If you're writing to your boss, you probably would want to be clear and give an apology. >> Sorry to let you know on such short notice. >> On short notice means, that you are letting the reader know that you cannot come a short time before the actual meeting. >> My apologies. I'm sorry for any inconvenience. >> This is a little more formal. Next, you'll want to end by adding a closing sentence, so that it doesn't sound too abrupt or sudden. Here are some examples. >> Please let me know what was decided. >> Anyway, I look forward to hearing what was discussed. >> I look forward to reading the minutes. >>

What about if you really want to or need to attend? Well, you could ask that the meeting time be changed. Again, you would probably ask a colleague this question, not usually your boss. As this is a special request, you'll want to make the language indirect. Let's see some examples. Notice how the request is a yes no question. >> Would it be possible to move it to Tuesday? >> Is there any chance we could push it back to the following week? >> Push back means to postpone something. >> Could we maybe reschedule it for later in the week? So to review, we've covered how to write an email asking a question about the agenda and saying you can't attend. We've seen how to give a reason and how to end with a closing sentence. >>

Exercise

In this assignment, you will write an email announcing a meeting and then respond to another person's email saying that you cannot attend.

1. Read these notes.

Company: Eagletop Outdoors

Meeting: Weekly Management Meeting (including decision about the location of the new flagship store)

Preparation: Read/bring reports on the 3 locations.

Time: 1hr 30 minutes.

Write an email to the management team announcing the meeting. Decide on a time and location. Mention the agenda. Ask for any questions or if the team would like to talk about anything else. Also tell the team to inform you if they won't attend the meeting. Give a deadline. Remember to include a subject line.

3. Review three of your peers' email. Use the following to review.

1. Is the subject line a clear noun phrase?
2. Is the greeting appropriate?
3. Does the writer mention the meeting in the first line?
4. Is the objective or the type of meeting included in the email?
5. Does the writer include the time and the location of the meeting?
6. Is there a reference to the agenda?

7. Does the writer invite the readers to respond if they want to add anything to the agenda and/or cannot attend?
8. Does the writer ask the readers to prepare by reading and/or bringing the reports?
9. Is there a closing sentence?
10. Is there a closing like Best regards, and the name?
11. What additional feedback do you have? Comment on anything that your peer asked about.

Running the meeting.

Distribute the agenda. Provide everyone with a copy of the agenda at the start of the meeting.

Welcome participants. Welcome participants to the meeting to signal the start of the session. Quickly review the purpose, goals, and timeline of the meeting, and the role assignments for the meeting. Reassign if necessary.

Check-in with participants. When running a relationship-centered meeting, the next step is a quick “check-in” with participants. In this phase, you ask each individual to share how they are doing that morning or afternoon and whether there are any issues in their life that may distract them from the meeting. The purpose of the check-in is to build relationships among participants, and also recognize that individuals have a variety of issues in their lives that may affect their ability to be present or participate in the session. This helps members better interpret each other’s statements, actions, and participation.

Define the ground rules. When a group of individuals is meeting for the first time, or new members have joined the group, it is helpful to define “ground rules” for the meetings. These rules create consistency and predictability for meeting participants, and help create the safety that is needed for members to participate fully in the sessions.

There are many recommended meeting rules. Typically, they address issues such as the use of technology during meetings, the ways individuals address each other and deal with conflict, and general rules such as arriving and ending on time. You should aim to establish enough rules to provide guidance and safety, but not so many that the group becomes bogged down in procedural issues. One of the best ways to create these rules is to define them collaboratively with participants. To begin the definition process, you could provide participants with a list of rules other groups have used and ask them to react to these to form their own.

If you are working with an existing team or standing meeting, you will want to ask the meeting chair if the group has already established ground rules for their meetings. If they have not and the group is experiencing difficulty during the meetings or in moving forward, you might suggest that they use your joining the group as an opportunity to take a step back and create some rules and guidelines. This will allow you to model good meeting practices and can help the team enhance the effectiveness of their meetings.

Some meetings may require a special set of norms to ensure that time is spent effectively. This can be particularly true if difficult issues are being discussed during a meeting. In these instances, you or the meeting facilitator can ask the group to identify the rules needed to ensure solid participation. For example, the facilitator might say to the group, “The agenda today includes some difficult topics. What, if any, rules or norms do we need to put in place today to ensure that we have productive discussions rather than unproductive arguments?”

An example of meeting rules is provided:

Sample of meeting ground rules

1. Arrive on time, end on time.
2. Everyone has something to contribute and participates.
3. Avoid making assumptions.
4. Explain your reasoning.
5. Discuss un-discussable items.
6. Leave cell phones and other distractors at the door.
7. Focus on progress toward the overall goal, not individual positions.
8. Embrace positive conflict and dissent as a way of improving decision making.
9. Adopt a mindset of curiosity and exploration, not fault finding.

Assign roles. Assigning roles to meeting attendees can build capacity in the practice for running effective meetings, encourage more participation by attendees, and help make meetings run more smoothly. It also helps engage participants in the meeting.

The roles include:

Timekeeper. The timekeeper is responsible for alerting the leader, facilitator, and participant of the time, and helping to keep the meeting running on track. The timekeeper should provide cues to the group when there are 5 minutes left and 2 minutes left to keep an item from running over time. When a particular agenda item is running over time, the meeting leader and facilitator can work with the group to decide whether to extend the time allotted for the particular discussion or activity and amend the rest of the agenda for the meeting, or stick with the original agenda.

Facilitator. The meeting facilitator does not offer opinions on meeting items or topics, but instead focuses on managing the group process. The facilitator observes who is participating and who is not, calls on quiet or silent members, and redirects individuals who may be dominating the discussion. The facilitator can suggest that items that are off topic be placed in a virtual “parking lot” for discussion at a later time. (A parking lot is a place you record important ideas, comments, and issues that need to be dealt with but are not appropriate to address during the meeting at hand because of time limitations or because they distract from the current topic. These are often written on a visible flipchart or its virtual counterpart.) The facilitator may also suggest putting topics that are generating unproductive conflict in the parking lot for consideration later when the group has time to consider them or emotions have calmed down. The facilitator can also alert group members when they are avoiding a topic or going off topic, and encourage them to reflect on what is happening to the meeting process and why.

Leader. The meeting leader sets the agenda, welcomes the group, defines the purpose and goals of the meeting, and leads the meeting through the agenda. The leader focuses on the content of the meeting, and monitors progress toward meeting goals. He or she calls on participants for their ideas and input and works to include all members of the meeting in the discussion. He or she calls on the facilitator for assistance when needed.

Participant. Meeting participants follow ground rules, participate in the meeting, provide ideas and input, and report on progress toward action items.

Recorder. The recorder documents the meeting discussion. This can be a challenging role as it is not always obvious what should be documented. You will want to provide recorders with guidance on what you want them to document before the meeting starts. You can also cue them to take down important points throughout the meeting. For example, “Sally can you be sure to include the group’s decision about Point of Care A1cs in the meeting minutes?” The recorder can use a structured form such as the one provided in Figure 22.1, or use a note pad, flip chart, white board, or computer. The recorder should also note items that are placed in the meeting parking lot and specific action items and to whom they are assigned. Whenever possible, parking lot items should be written up so the entire group can see them. This reassures members that their ideas are being taken seriously and not being dismissed, which builds trust and reduces anxiety among members.

Facilitate engagement of all participants. Effective meetings are the ones in which all members openly participate and contribute ideas without concern about being criticized or ignored. They also encourage a spirit of curiosity and teamwork. Facilitating this type of open participation can take some effort, but is one of the most valuable skills you can possess as a chair. Some people may find this type of open participation threatening because it requires more time, which practices almost always feel is in short supply; typically generates more discussion and, therefore, more conflict; and can lead to individuals’ sharing information that leadership may not want to hear or may have heard and dealt with already.

Useful techniques for facilitating participation of all members include: calling on quiet members directly, redirecting dominant participants and engaging them in encouraging participation of others, and honoring all contributions.

Call on quiet participants. You can engage the quiet members by asking them direct open-ended questions such as: “Mary, how does this affect the staff in your department?” or “Thomas, I’d be interested in hearing your thoughts about what is being discussed. What problems do you see?” Often, the quiet member is the one with a critical observation or important idea. Avoid asking quiet individuals questions that require deep technical knowledge unless you know they already know the answer, as these types of questions can put them on the spot and cause them to avoid participating in meetings in the future.

Appreciate and redirect dominant participants. It can be tempting to become frustrated with and even critical of individuals who dominate discussions in meetings. But you should avoid this temptation. These individuals bring energy and commitment to the meeting that, if properly managed, can be channeled to energize the group and produce better thinking and outcomes from the session. If not handled well, these same individuals can completely derail a meeting. The outcome depends on your skills in facilitating their involvement. A useful tool when working with dominant individuals is to reframe them as “passionate” and energetic participants rather than a problem. Your task is to channel their energy and passion to make the session more effective.

One technique for doing this can be to reflect on what the individual is saying, acknowledge his or her contribution, and then segue to another participant for input. For example: “Jim, so you are suggesting that we schedule patients for the women’s clinic on Saturdays as well as during the week? This is an interesting idea. Let’s hear what others have to say on this topic. Janet, what are your thoughts on operating hours for the women’s clinic?”

When this technique does not work, you can consider a more direct approach: “Jim, you’ve had a lot of interesting and helpful ideas about this today. I’m curious to hear what others are thinking about what you’ve said and the other issues raised. Let’s hear from them now.”

Finally, if despite your best efforts, you are having difficulty managing the meetings and ensuring they are productive because of this individual, you can consider meeting with the individual outside of the meeting time and asking for his or her help getting the meetings on track. "Jim, I appreciate your passion in the meetings. But I need your help. I've observed that others are not speaking up and this leaves you as one of the only contributors. Help me think through how we can get more people participating and sharing their thoughts in the meeting."

Honor each contribution. In all your interactions with meeting participants, it is important that you respond respectfully and acknowledge each of their contributions. Open criticism or dismissal of even one idea can shut the group down and discourage others from participating, afraid they may meet the same fate when they speak up.

Document the meeting. Be sure to document each meeting. This is traditionally done by taking meeting minutes. Documentation helps participants remember what took place during the meeting and gives them an opportunity to clarify any items that they feel are not accurately represented in the minutes. It can also provide a means for confirming and introducing accountability for action items assigned to various participants. Combining agenda and minutes can be an efficient way to document meetings, and to keep track of and monitor follow-through on action items.

Summarize meeting and confirm action items. At the end of each meeting, the leader should provide a quick summary of what occurred during the meeting, including decisions and proposed action items. The leader should also ask for corrections and input from the group, and facilitate assignment of action items and definition of next steps.

Evaluate the meeting. Consider conducting a quick evaluation of the meeting at the end of the session. Except in situations such as a retreat or training, the evaluation does not need to be formal. Simple is often the best in these instances. A tried-and-true method for collecting helpful information is to ask people to give a quick verbal rating of the session and then briefly explain about what would make the session more effective. For example, you might say, "With 1 being not at all effective, and 10 being extremely effective, how would you rate today's meeting?" (Go around room.) "If you rated it a 10, what made it a 10? If you rated it less than a 10, what needs to happen next time to make it a 10?" If you are concerned that individuals may censor their feedback in front of you or others in the room, you can ask them to jot down their answers to the questions on a sheet of paper and hand it in as they leave the meeting, or you can send them a brief online survey to complete after the meeting. Doing these types of simple evaluations every few sessions can provide you and the meeting leader with important feedback about improving the meeting process. It also models internal quality improvement and continuous performance monitoring

Managing conflict during meetings. Conflict is an important part of effective decisionmaking and effective meetings. Without it, groups can veer into a false consensus or harmony and make less-effective, even counterproductive, decisions. As a PF you should view conflict as your friend and grow concerned if you do not encounter it during meetings or in the course of your work with a practice.

That said, conflict can be distressing both to you and to others in the organization. One of the skills you bring is the knowledge of how to navigate conflict effectively. Conflict that takes place during meetings can offer you a window into what happens on the practice floor and in the organization.

Meetings

1. Planning Meetings

The following questions will guide you in arranging meetings:

- How many attendees will there be?
- Who are the attendees?
- What are their contact details?
- When should the meeting take place?
- What style of seating do you need (boardroom, lecture theatre, circle of chairs)?
- Is a seating plan needed?
- What equipment do you need for any presentations?
- Where is the best location?
- What refreshments are needed?

Agenda: An agenda is essentially a meeting plan that outlines what topics will be discussed and in what order. Agenda items depend on the meeting's purpose and the needs of your business or team. An agenda for a staff or board meeting may be very different from that for a conference or seminar, but the goals are the same: to inform meeting participants about what topics will be covered and to allow for easy facilitation of the meeting process. Having a well-planned agenda doesn't guarantee that a meeting will run smoothly, but if problems do arise, the agenda can help members identify and address the problems and get back on track. A clear agenda also makes it easier to record effective meeting minutes.

Skills required for taking minutes

Exercise: Rate your own abilities at the skills of a minute taker on a scale of 1 to 5. With 1 being very poor ability and 5 being an excellent command of this skill.

	1	2	3	4	5
Note taking	☹	○	😐	○	☺
English mastery	☹	○	😐	○	☺
Good vocabulary	☹	○	😐	○	☺
Word processing	☹	○	😐	○	☺
Summarising	☹	○	😐	○	☺
Listening	☹	○	😐	○	☺
Proofreading	☹	○	😐	○	☺
Reported speech	☹	○	😐	○	☺
Working with chair	☹	○	😐	○	☺
What to record	☹	○	😐	○	☺

MEETING MINUTES:

Clear, organized and well-structured. Those are the hallmarks of effective meeting minutes. Meetings can be a fantastic collaboration tool. Often, however, participants invest time and energy into a meeting only to disagree later on what occurred. Meeting minutes can prevent these disagreements by providing an accurate depiction of the essential information from the meeting. Taking effective meeting minutes does not have to be an exhausting and laborious process, however. Here are six quick tips for taking effective meeting minutes.

Writing minutes has two major aspects to it:

1. Observation and note taking while the meeting is in progress
2. Writing a report on the meeting with all details discussed with clarity and precision.

For note taking, follow the guidelines below:

- Make sure that all of the essential elements are noted, such as type of meeting, name of the organization, date and time, name of the chair or facilitator, main topics and the time of adjournment. For formal and corporate meetings include approval of previous minutes, and all resolutions.
- Prepare an outline based on the agenda ahead of time, and leave plenty of white space for notes. By having the topics already written down, you can jump right on to a new topic without pause.
- Prepare a list of expected attendees and check off the names as people enter the room. Or, you can pass around an attendance sheet for everyone to sign as the meeting starts.
- To be sure about who said what, make a map of the seating arrangement, and make sure to ask for introductions of unfamiliar people.
- Don't make the mistake of recording every single comment, but concentrate on getting the gist of the discussion and taking enough notes to summarize it later. Remember that minutes are the official record of what happened, not what was said, at a meeting.
- Use whatever device is comfortable for you, a notepad, a laptop computer, a tape recorder, a steno pad, shorthand. Many people routinely record important meetings as a backup to their notes.
- Be prepared! Study the issues to be discussed and ask a lot of questions ahead of time. If you have to fumble for understanding while you are making your notes, they won't make any sense to you later.
- Don't wait too long to type up the minutes, and be sure to have them approved by the chair or facilitator before distributing them to the attendees.
- Don't be intimidated, you may be called upon many times to write meeting minutes, and the ability to produce concise, coherent minutes is widely admired and valued.

For writing the report, follow the guidelines below:

1. Begin with a succinct overview of meeting details. Document the meeting date and/or time and a description of the meeting's purpose. Also give the meeting minutes a brief title. Locate this information at the top of the document as this will provide the reader with the at-a-glance context required to understand the minutes

2. Capture participation. Keep in mind that the reader may not be familiar with all participants. Document a participant's name as well as some identifying information such as title or role in the discussion. In some instances it may be useful to list all invitees and mark attendance with a "Yes" or "No" value so there is a record of participants who were invited but were not present for the discussion. On a related note, it may be useful to distinguish participants who may have been able to participate for only part of the meeting; this can be done with something as simple as a third attendance value, for example: "Yes (partial)".

3. Structure information in a clear and readable format. A few quick tips to ensure clarity:

- Always spell out acronyms. While it may be obvious during the meeting that OFA stands for Our Favorite Acronym, chances are that this may not be clear to future readers.
- Do not capture the conversation verbatim. It may sound useful to capture the conversation in its entirety, but this is rarely the best way to document discussions. Often participants meander about a topic, jump between topics, think out loud, etc… Documenting all of this verbatim requires the reader to invest significant effort in following the thread of the conversation.
- Use visual cues to structure data and call out key elements. Bullets can be used to combine related points and bolding can be used to highlight decisions which were made. If a single meeting covered multiple topics, use underlined headers to separate these conversations. With these simple style guidelines, readers can scan the meeting minutes and find the portion that is of importance to them.
- Structure discussion points in a logical order, not in the sequence they occurred. For example, a topic may be introduced at the beginning of the meeting and later a second topic may be introduced. Participants may occasionally make comments related to the first topic – these comments can be grouped under the first topic header, so that the reader can see all related information in one section.
- Often visual aids or other materials are used as references for the discussion. Include these items in the minutes so that the reader has the appropriate information required to understand the conversation.

4. Capture next steps. Almost every meeting results in a set of action items. It's a common occurrence that participants will fully agree with action items during the meeting, but after the meeting will forget who owns a given item or what the expected completion date is. Capturing action items, the assigned owner or owners and the expected completion date (if relevant) ensures that there is no confusion after-the-fact.

5. Document meeting minutes as soon as possible. The longer you wait to document the meeting minutes, the less likely you are to capture information accurately.

WRITING MEETING MINUTES

The minutes, an organization's official record of a meeting, are distributed to all those who belong to the committee or any other unit represented at the meeting. In writing a set of minutes, your goal is to be clear, comprehensive, objective, and diplomatic. Your job is not to interpret what happened. You have three main goals:

1. to record the logistical details of the meeting
2. to provide an accurate record of the meeting
3. to ensure that minutes reflect positively on the participants and the organization

Recording the Logistical Details of the Meeting

According to Robert's Rules of Order (Robert & Patnode, 1994), the authoritative reference work on parliamentary procedure, you should record the following information:

1. the name of the group or committee that met
2. the location, date, and time of the meeting
3. the type of meeting (regular or special)
4. the presence of the chair and secretary, or their substitutes
5. the time at which the meeting was adjourned

Another respected source, the Gregg Reference Manual (Sabin, 1999), suggests that you include the names of those who attended and those who did not and a separate list of guests.

Also record what action was taken about the minutes of the previous meeting. For example, the minutes were read (or distributed) and approved (or amended and approved). You should record any changes to the previous minutes.

Providing an Accurate Record of the Meeting

Because meetings rarely follow the agenda perfectly, you might find it challenging to provide an accurate record of the meeting. Record the major topics discussed at the meeting as well as any actions taken. For example, write down the names of reports read or approved, motions made (and whether they were approved, defeated, or tabled), and resolutions adopted. Record the outcomes of discussions. Record the names of the people who made motions, read reports, and so forth; for example, "Barry Young presented a report on the June activities of the Safety Department." If the conversation is going too fast for you to keep an accurate record, interrupt the discussion to request a clarification.

Reflecting Positively on the Participants and the Organization

Your task in recording the minutes includes separating the substance of the meeting from the emotional exchanges of participants. Do not write: "The motion to add a new position in the QA Department was defeated 7 to 6 after a heated argument in which Bob Minor complained that 'Alice states that she-supports my department, but when it comes to action, she's all talk.' " Instead, write: "After considerable discussion, the motion to add a new position in the QA department was defeated by a vote of 7 to 6." Sometimes the smartest thing a recording secretary can do is choose not to record what was said.

Revision Checklist: Do the minutes:

a. provide the necessary housekeeping details about the meeting?

b. explain the events of the meeting accurately?
c. reflect positively on the participants and the organization?

Exercise: Select the correct spelling from the options given in these sentences:

1. He had been practising/practicing medicine for years.
2. It was a nice compliment/complement about my work.
3. The principal/principle reason why the project succeeded was the team management.
4. The chairperson was concerned about the affect/effect this would have on the practise/practice time.

Exercise: Add any missing apostrophes.

1. The clients rooms are nearby. (three clients)
2. The managers response was “no”. (one manager)
3. The secretaries attitude must improve.
4. The mens preference was to sit down.
5. The caretaker says that hes happy with this plan.
6. Youre not sure what your choice will be.
7. Its difficult to know if the company and its representatives are included.
8. The SATs were very difficult.

Exercise: Re-write the following paragraph to avoid repetition and to flow better.

It was agreed that there was a very good chance that the manager would tell the department what she was going to do. The chairperson said that the CEO had said that everyone should be told about the fact that there could well be redundancies. She also said that she thought this would happen.

Exercise: Think of ways to improve these phrases and avoid repetition.

1. Jon Smith (JS) brought the sales figures to the meeting. These were distributed to the members of the Committee and discussed and Jane Adams (JA) agreed they had improved. All other attendees agreed they had improved too. It was agreed that a bonus could be paid this year.

2. The repairs needed to the new offices were discussed. It was quite rightly agreed that the walls needed painting, the windows needed replacing and the doors needed replacing. Mr Jones agreed to contact the Board to get their permission to carry out
these repairs.

3. JS asked the Committee for their views on the proposed new pay system. JA said she thought it was good, HB said he thought there some issues which should be looked at in more detail. JS and JA agreed with this. These issues were then discussed and everyone then agreed that they would go ahead with this new system.

4. The Committee discussed the half year sales figures ending 30th June. It was noted that a profit of £13 million had been made in the first 6 months of the year.

Exercise: In an official meeting at his company, following were the words spoken by Mr. Smith regarding the agenda item "New Marketing Plan". Assuming that you are writing the minutes of this meeting, present Mr. Smith's input as you would in a formal minutes of the meeting. [3]

Mr. Smith: Well, we all agreed in the last meeting that we need to change our marketing strategy. So, I would suggest that this time we invest more in social media marketing. We need to study our competitors' techniques and outdo them. Our Facebook page should be very active. We need a team of people regularly updating our Facebook page, Twitter also. And this team should give quick response to customer comments and queries on our social media pages.

Exercise: Given below is the discussion about an agenda item that happened during an official meeting. Read the conversation between the chairperson, Bernard, and the Chief Sales Executive, Sam, and the write the minutes for the agenda item "Declining Sales". You do not have to write any other component of the minutes report.

BERNARD: Okay, I think we should now move to agenda item 3, that is, Declining Sales.
VOICES: Right.
BERNARD: Well, we're here today to look at some of the reasons for the decline in profits which has affected this subsidiary. Right, well, can I ask Sam Canning, Chief Sales Executive, to open up with his remarks.
SAM: Thank you, Bernard. Well I think we have to face up to several realities and what I have to say is in three parts and will take about 20 minutes.
BERNARD: Er, Sam ... we don't have much time - it's really your *main* points we're most interested in.
SAM: Well, the three points I want to make can be made in three sentences. First, sales are down but only by 5%. Secondly, our budget for sales has been kept static - it hasn't increased – not even with inflation - so we're trying to do better than last year on less money. Thirdly, the products are getting old, we need a new generation.
BERNARD: So let me summarise that. You say that sales are down but not bv so much, that you've had less money to promote sales and that the products are old? Is that right?
SAM: In a nutshell.

Exercise: Following is the tape script of a team meeting. The agenda of the meeting was as follows:

1. **Apologies**
2. **Minutes of the previous meeting**
3. **Review of progress on the Gala Night and Award Ceremony Preparation**
4. **Technician Issues**

Read the script and write the minutes of this meeting following the format taught in the class. You are supposed to use the information in the dialogues and not add anything new. [10]

Chairperson: I am glad to welcome you all to this fourth team meeting. Thank you for being present in this meeting. Can we call this meeting to order?

All: Yes

Chairperson: Are there any apologies for absence for today's meeting?

Thomas Brown: Yes, Mrs. Chairperson. Bella is on medical leave. She is admitted to St. Jude's Hospital because of her surgery. Furthermore, Tim is on a business trip for the joint venture meeting with our partner company in Korea.

Chairperson: Thank You, can we proceed to the next item. It is regarding the minutes of the previous meeting?

All: Yes.

Chairperson: Is everyone satisfied or does anyone propose any amendments?

Lily Green: Mrs. Chairperson. I would like to highlight an issue in item number 7. The amount allocated for showroom gallery was Rs. 45700, not Rs. 45400.

Chairperson: Thank You Lily. I'll make the necessary correction to the amount. Let's move on. I would like to ask about the progress on the Gala Night and Award Ceremony preparations. Have all the arrangements been made?

Chuck Newman: Yes, all the preparations are almost 90% complete. The remaining 10% will be finished in two days. We just have to send invitation cards to the guests and finalize the menu. Madam Chairman, I heard that we are having some difficulties with our current sponsor for our company trip to Korea.

Chairperson: Yes, it is true that we had slight problems with our sponsor, but the good news is that the problems are now settled as the company is ready to finance the trip without external aid. Let's move to the next agenda item "Technician Issues".

Michael Matt: I have observed that the maintenance of the building is really in a poor state. For example, the air-conditioners in level 3 were not working properly and the technician took for about one week to fix the issue.

Tom Brady: That's true. Our electrician isn't very active. Most of the energy savers that stop working don't get replaced for months.

Lily Green: Well, I suggest we should hire a better electrician.

Chairperson: Okay, Tom, could you please write a letter to the Human Resources Department asking them to find a new technician. So, let's end the meeting now.

Minutes of Meeting

Date: [insert date]
Time: [insert time]
Location: [insert location]

Attendees:

John, CEO
Sarah, CFO
David, CTO
Lisa, Head of Marketing
Peter, Head of Sales
Mark, Head of Operations

Agenda:

1. Financial update
2. Tech update
3. Marketing campaign update
4. Sales update
5. Operations update
6. Discussion of future direction of the company

Discussion:

- Sarah reported a 15% increase in revenue over the last quarter, but noted increased expenses due to unforeseen circumstances.
- David reported progress on new product development and plans to optimize processes.
- Lisa discussed the upcoming marketing campaign, which includes social media, email marketing, and targeted advertising.
- Peter reported seeing a lot of interest from potential clients but cautioned against overpromising and under delivering.
- Mark discussed plans to optimize the supply chain and production capacity to handle increased demand.
- The attendees engaged in a lively discussion about the company's goals, challenges, and strategies.

Action Items:

- Sarah to monitor spending closely in the coming months.
- David to continue optimizing processes and identifying areas for cost reduction.
- Lisa to finalize the marketing campaign plan and coordinate with the sales team.
- Peter to ensure that the sales team sets realistic expectations for potential clients.
- Mark to finalize plans to optimize the supply chain and production capacity.
- All attendees to review the discussion and prepare for the follow-up meeting.

Next Steps:

- Follow-up meeting to review progress and adjust plans as necessary.

- Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by John, who thanked everyone for their contributions.

Minutes prepared by: [insert name and title]

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Date: April 5, 2023
Time: 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Location: Boardroom

Attendees:

John Smith, Chairperson
Jane Doe, Vice Chair
Bob Johnson, Treasurer
Sarah Lee, Secretary
David Brown, Director
Karen Chen, Director
Tim Nguyen, Director

Agenda Items:

Approval of the Agenda
Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting
Treasurer's Report
Fundraising Update
New Business
Adjournment

Discussion Points:

- The Chairperson called the meeting to order and welcomed the attendees.
- The agenda was approved with no changes.
- The minutes of the previous meeting were approved with minor revisions.
- The Treasurer gave a report on the organization's financial status, including a breakdown of income and expenses for the past quarter.
- The Director of Fundraising gave an update on the progress of the upcoming charity event and discussed ideas for increasing donations.
- New business was discussed, including the need for more volunteers and potential collaborations with other nonprofits.
- The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 PM.

Action Items:

- Bob Johnson will submit a more detailed financial report at the next meeting.

- Sarah Lee will draft a volunteer recruitment plan and send it to the board members for review.
- David Brown will research potential partnerships with other nonprofits and report back at the next meeting.

Approved by:

John Smith, Chairperson
Jane Doe, Vice Chair
Bob Johnson, Treasurer
Sarah Lee, Secretary
David Brown, Director

Meeting Script

The meeting takes place in a conference room at a large company. There are six people in attendance: John, the CEO (Chief Executive Officer); Sarah, the CFO (Chief Financial Officer); David, the CTO (Chief Technology Officer); Lisa, the Head of Marketing; Peter, the Head of Sales; and Mark, the Head of Operations.

John: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for coming to this meeting. As you know, we're here to discuss the future direction of our company. I'd like to start by going over the financials. Sarah, can you give us an update?

Sarah: Sure, John. Our revenue has increased by 15% over the last quarter, which is great news. However, our expenses have also increased due to some unforeseen circumstances. We'll need to keep a close eye on our spending in the coming months to make sure we stay on track.

John: Thanks, Sarah. David, how are we doing on the tech side?

David: We're making good progress on the new product development. We've also identified some areas where we can optimize our processes to increase efficiency and reduce costs.

Lisa: Speaking of products, I wanted to bring up the new marketing campaign we're launching next month. We've put together a comprehensive plan that includes social media, email marketing, and targeted advertising.

Peter: That sounds great, Lisa. I think we can really make an impact with this campaign. On the sales side, we've been seeing a lot of interest from potential clients. However, we need to be careful not to overpromise and under deliver.

Mark: That's a good point, Peter. We need to make sure our operations can handle the increased demand. I'm working on a plan to optimize our supply chain and improve our production capacity.

John: Thank you all for your updates. It's clear that we have a lot of opportunities for growth, but we also need to be mindful of the challenges ahead. Let's take some time to discuss these issues and come up with a plan for the future.

[The meeting continues with a lively discussion about the company's goals, challenges, and strategies. After two hours, John concludes the meeting by thanking everyone for their contributions and setting a follow-up meeting to review progress.]

General meaning	**Strong verbs**	**Neutral verbs**	**Weak verbs**
Say	Assert that	Mention smth/that State that Point out smth/that Add smth/that Outline smth/that Describe smth/how	Note smth/that Comment on smth/that
Suggest	Warn that Affirm that	Propose smth/that Hypothesise that Theorise that	Imply that Put forward smth
Show	Prove smth/that Reveal smth/that Show smth/that	Demonstrate smth/that Establish smth/that	Hint at smth Allude to smth
Persuade	Convince smbd		

Explain		Identify smth Illustrate smth/how Clarify smth	
Examine	Scrutinise smth	Investigate smth Study smth	Inquire into smth/whether
Agree	Support smth Concur that	Acknowledge smth/that Recognise smth/that Echo smth	Concede smth
Disagree	Challenge smth Refute smth Reject smth Oppose smth Object to smth Deny smth Rebuff smth	Doubt smth/whether	Question smth/whether
Believe	Insist on smth/that Maintain that	Hold smth/that Profess that Subscribe to smth	Assume that

Function	**Reporting Verbs**
Agreement, Suggestions, and Persuasion	Accepts, acknowledges, agrees, concurs, confirms, recognizes, applauds, congratulates, extols, praises, supports, believes, claims, declares, expresses, feels, holds, knows, maintains, professes, subscribes to, thinks asserts, guarantees, insists, upholds
Discussion, Evaluation, and Presentation	Analyzes, appraises, assesses, compares considers, contrasts, critiques, evaluates, examines, investigates, understands blames, complains, ignores, scrutinizes, warns, comments, defines, describes, estimates, forgets, identifies, illustrates, implies, informs, instructs, lists, mentions, notes, observes, outlines, points out, presents, remarks, reminds, reports, restates, reveals, shows, states, studies, tells, uses, discusses, explores, reasons
Argument and Questioning	Challenges, debates, disagrees, questions, requests, wonders accuses, attacks, complains, contradicts, criticizes, denies, discards, disclaims, discounts, dismisses, disputes, disregards, negates, objects to, opposes, refutes, rejects
Concluding	Advises, advocates, hypothesizes, posits, postulates, proposes, suggests, theorizes, asserts, recommends, urges, concludes, discovers, finds, infers, realizes