

UNIT 4



Chairing meetings

Getting started

Discuss these questions in small groups.

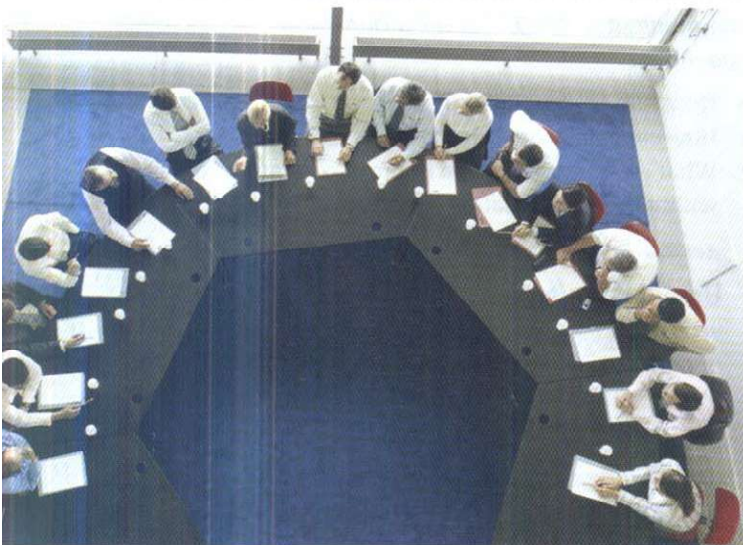
- What is the function of the chair (or chairperson) at a meeting?
- What personal qualities should a good chair have?
- What things should a chair do to make sure a meeting achieves its aims?
- Does every meeting need a chair?

Advice for chairs

Reading

You will read some advice for people chairing meetings. The advice comes under four headings: *impartiality*, *assertiveness*, *staying on course* and *summarising*.

- 1 Before you read, discuss in small groups: what advice would you give about these four aspects of being a chair?
- 2 Read this advice for chairing meetings (ignore the gaps for the moment). Was the advice the same as yours or different?



Chairing a meeting means ensuring that a meeting 1 its aims. The meeting should have been 2 for a specific purpose, and all discussion at the meeting must be conducted to this end. These are some of the skills required:

Impartiality

A chairman should ensure that all participants have an opportunity to express their point of view.

Assertiveness

Ensuring that everyone gets a(n) 3 will almost certainly involve stopping someone from dominating the 4 The more 5 the issue, the more likely you are to require firmness, although phrases such as 'I think we should hear from Ms. Smith on this' or 'Can we have some comments from the engineering department on this?' should be sufficient in most cases. Once you provide this opening, however, you need to ensure that there are no interruptions while the next speaker has their 6

Staying on course

A chair must 7 the importance of each item on the agenda, and 8 time to each topic as required. If one issue begins to dominate, the chair must take control. You might 9 a further meeting to discuss the issue at a later date, or that the main parties concerned could continue the discussion at the end of the meeting.

Summarising

Summarising can be used at the end of a meeting to ensure that everyone has a clear 10 of what took place or what action is now required. It is a skill which is 11 for a chair and which requires active 12 You have to state concisely what was said and end with a clear statement about what is expected to happen next and what each participant has agreed to do.

From <http://www.meetingwizard.org>

3 Read the text again and choose the best alternative, A, B, C or D, for each gap. This will help you to study a number of useful collocations connected with meetings.

- | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1 A meets | B achieves | C arrives | D manages |
| 2 A summoned | B required | C called | D gathered |
| 3 A listening | B attention | C notice | D hearing |
| 4 A procedure | B proceedings | C dealings | D undertakings |
| 5 A contentious | B argumentative | C disagreeable | D quarrelsome |
| 6 A speak | B say | C state | D opinion |
| 7 A assess | B advise | C weigh | D appraise |
| 8 A share | B set | C budget | D allot |
| 9 A suggest | B advise | C indicate | D move |
| 10 A insight | B preview | C hindsight | D overview |
| 11 A valueless | B invaluable | C valued | D priceless |
| 12 A hearing | B audition | C attention | D listening |

4 Compare your answers with a partner and discuss the following.

- Which do you think is the best advice? Is there anything you disagree with?
- What training could you give someone to become a good chair?

Key phrases for chairs

Listening

You will hear five different extracts from business meetings where people are discussing problems.

1 Listen and for each meeting (1–5), decide which problem (A–H) is being discussed.

Meeting 1: Meeting 2:
Meeting 3: Meeting 4:
Meeting 5:

- A How to deal with a late payer
- B How to improve timekeeping
- C Whether a product is suitable
- D Who would be the best person for the job
- E Which would be the best hotel to use
- F How to treat a potential customer
- G When to hold an event
- H Why a deadline can't be met

2 Complete these sentences (1–14), used by the chairs of the meetings, with the words from the box.

about break copy ~~get~~ have look
minutes other purpose sum summary
to views what

- OK, let's ~~get~~ started.
- Has everyone got a of the agenda?
- Would anyone like to take, or shall we just keep a list of action points?
- Thank you all for coming. The of this meeting's to ...

- Jane, could you give us your on this?
- So, if I could just up, what you think is that ...
- Thanks very much for that. Now can we hear what other people to say?
- Look that's all very interesting, but can we keep the issue in hand?
- So, in a nutshell, you think is that ...
- Well, we don't have to decide on this today. Let's think it a bit more and come back to it next week.
- Now, let's take a five-minute and then start on point number 6.
- So we need more information on this issue. Sandra, can you into it for the next meeting?
- So, in, we've agreed about where we're going to stay ...
- Well, thanks all of you for your time. I think this has been very profitable, and we'll meet again to talk about the points on Wednesday 4th at the same time. See you all then.

3 Listen to the conversations again to check your answers.

4 Classify each of the sentences from Exercise 2 by writing a number in the table below.

Starting and managing a meeting	Asking for other opinions	Keeping the meeting focused	Summarising
1			

Holding meetings

Speaking

4

Work in groups of four or five and take turns to chair the meetings below. Each meeting should take about five or six minutes.

The chair should:

- start and administer the meeting
- get everyone's opinions and give everyone a chance to speak
- keep the meeting focused
- make sure the meeting finishes on time
- summarise discussion points or decisions when necessary.

The other attendees should:

- study the agenda of the meeting beforehand
- quickly prepare a few ideas or opinions.

Meeting 1

You work for a large company. Your meeting is to consider the regional sales conference to be held next autumn. You have the following points on the agenda:

- conference location (somewhere attractive and enjoyable)
- length of conference
- suggestions for entertainment of delegates during conference.



Meeting 2

You work for a medium-sized company. Each of you is from a different department. The chair is the training manager. The meeting is to discuss training needs for next year. The points on the agenda are:

- training needs for managers
- training needs for other staff
- training budget (the company has a turnover of \$7m and gross profits of \$2m p.a.).

Meeting 3

Your company is thinking of moving its head office. You are meeting to discuss this. Points on the agenda are:

- where the new head office should be located (city centre / near the airport, etc.)
- design of the offices (open plan, individual offices, etc.)
- facilities for staff which should be provided.

Meeting 4

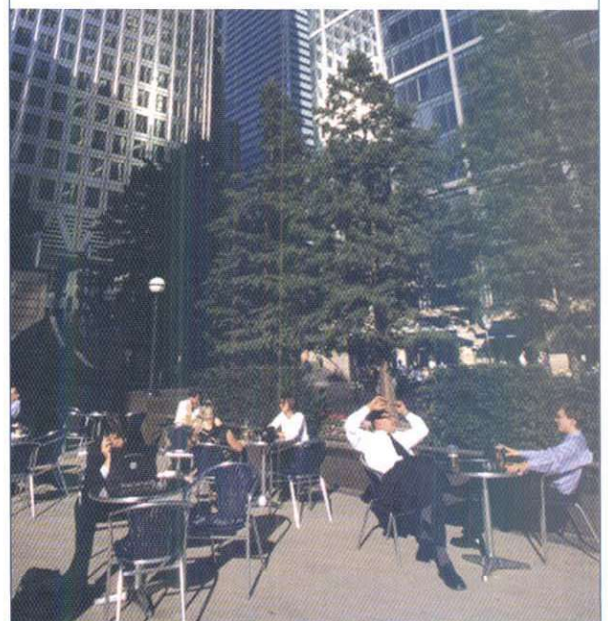
You are all senior sales personnel. Your company is expanding rapidly, and you are going to take on new sales staff. Your meeting has the following agenda:

- whether to recruit experienced sales people or train up relatively inexperienced sales people
- the most suitable incentives for new sales staff.

Meeting 5

You work for the sales department. An important customer is visiting the company next week. Your meeting is to decide:

- where she should stay
- how to entertain her
- who she should meet when she visits the company.



Vocabulary

1 Study these common words and expressions used in connection with meetings (1–8) and match the words in bold with their explanations (a–h).

- 1 Which meeting was the most **productive**?
- 2 Were any of the meetings **totally unproductive**?
- 3 Which chair was most successful in making people **stick to the point**?
- 4 Was anyone guilty of **wandering off the point**?
- 5 Did anyone **miss the point**?
- 6 Did any of the chairs let the meeting **run over time**?
- 7 Did all the participants get a chance to **make their point**?
- 8 Did all the meetings have satisfactory **outcomes**?

- a a complete waste of time
- b digressing
- c misunderstand what someone was trying to say
- d results
- e express their opinion
- f take longer than scheduled
- g talk about the matter in hand
- h useful

2 Work with a partner. Discuss the meetings you have just held by asking the questions above.

Summarising action points

Reading

Checking writing for mistakes is an important business skill. Read this memo from a chair to participants in a meeting. In most lines, there is one word which should not be there. Write the extra word in the space on the right. If you think a line is correct, write *correct* in the space.

Task tip

Although you have to find extra words in lines, the mistakes are at sentence level, so you should read the text *sentence by sentence*, rather than line by line.

MEMO

To: Departmental Heads
From: Human Resources Director
Subject: Meeting to discuss new recruitment procedures

Dear colleagues,

Many thanks for attending ~~to~~ the highly productive meeting held yesterday and apologies also for letting it run somewhat over time. I hope this did not cause any of you too much more inconvenience. As promised at the end of the meeting, here is the list of action points and decisions which we were agreed on during the meeting:

- 1 The HR Director will look into the suitability of doing psychometric tests for all of applicants to management positions within the organisation and report you back at the next meeting in a month's time.
- 2 In future time, when interviews for posts in the company are held, a trained interviewer from the HR department will chair the interview panel and the head of the department concerned will also be at present.
- 3 The HR Department will design a standard application form intending to be used by candidates for all posts at all levels in the company.
- 4 The HR Director will propose in writing down to the Board of Directors that there should be made a change in company policy to the effect that all vacancies should, if possible, be filled up internally and that external applications should only be sought for if no suitable internal candidate can be found.

Many thanks for your contributions on these subjects.

Amalia Fayed

Human Resources Director

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Writing

Write a memo to your colleagues summarising the action points and decisions taken during the meeting you chaired. Use the corrected memo as a model if you wish.