

## MEETINGS

Meetings take place every day within business and personal lives. Whether a simple discussion between neighbours, or a board of Directors, there are simple things that can be done to make meetings more successful. Whether you are organising meetings for your own company, or a professional meeting planner, there are many hints and tips that can be used to improve your meeting time.

### Meeting Venues

To get the most from your meetings, you should set them away from the normal work or home environment - even if this means using an empty office or a meeting room within your business. If you have to meet outside of the office there are many places that you can hire or borrow for meetings

#### Meeting Technology

To make the most of your meeting, it is important to be able to communicate effectively. The use of technology in meetings is increasing every day – you need to make sure that you and your business are not being left behind

#### Meeting Room Layout

There are a number of ways to lay out meeting and conference rooms, each of which will depend on the type of meeting you are holding:

### How to Chair a Meeting

You don't have to be on a stage to be a public speaker. Your platform may be a meeting room. How you present yourself when chairing a meeting determines whether or not you are perceived as a leader. Here are some tips to keep in mind when it's your turn to take charge.

Know why you are holding the meeting. What outcomes are you trying to achieve? This will keep you focused and purposeful.

Clarify your role as chair. How do the participants perceive you? Did you call the meeting? Do participants report to you? If you're the boss, people may be scared to speak their minds. If you're not the boss, what do people expect from you as the chair?

Set a positive tone early in the meeting. Greet people before you sit down. Break the ice with some light humour to relax the group. People are often tentative and guarded during the first few minutes.

Provide coffee if appropriate. People bond around food and drink.

Provide a written agenda on a handout or flip chart. The agenda keeps the meeting on track. Let the

group know the time frame and guidelines for working together. "We have only forty minutes today. I will update you on the customer service situation, and then I'd like us to brainstorm some solutions to the challenges we face."

Start on time. Don't wait for stragglers. If you begin and end on time, you'll condition people to be prompt.

Create interest with an enticing title. Instead of a management topic about "Business Etiquette" title it "What's Rudeness Costing You?"

Appoint a person to take minutes so that you can later review discussions that took place and the decisions that were made.

Manage the group dynamics. Don't let one person dominate. Ask for other opinions. If some people are silent, draw them out by asking for their thoughts.

Handle conflicts impartially. Encourage cooperation by clarifying what people have said and then asking the participants to propose solutions. Heated arguments may require a timeout in which group members take a short break and return when they've cooled off.

Assign a timekeeper if time is a major constraint.

Give a short summary or recap before going on to the next area. Be sure people understand what the group has agreed to.

End with an action step...Meetings fail because people aren't held accountable.

Summarize the action steps the group members are to take and attach a time frame to each action. The only way to get commitment is to assign a deadline.

By following these tips you'll run more effective meetings and gain respect as a confident leader.