

Administrative Associates Conference

Make Your Meetings Super Productive

By Mayla Clark



Questions to help you improve the effectiveness of meetings you plan, attend or run

LEADERSHIP

Prepare better (Agenda, check on follow-up items, distribute documents)? Help keep the meeting on track/focused? Get agreement on desired outcomes, time limits, procedures? Encourage participation and active listening? Provide final summary at end? Pay attention to those dialed in? Other?

"Let's get our ideas up here without judging or discussing them. We'll go over our list later to organize and evaluate it." *"I didn't receive any agenda items so let's take a minute to build our agenda for this meeting."* *"Will those of you who are dialed in please contribute your ideas freely and let us know if you can't hear."*

PARTICIPATION

Clarify your role and expectations before or at the start of the meeting? Consistently complete action items from last meeting? Arrive on time? Come prepared to make an informed, positive contribution? Stay problem centered? Know when it's time to take a breath, summarize and move on? Other? *"So I can prepare, please let me know the purpose of our meeting and what I should bring with me."* *"To clarify, what are we here to accomplish (desired outcomes)?"* *"Is this discussion relevant to our agenda or are we on another topic?"* *"We haven't heard from the dial-ins for a while. What are your thoughts on this topic?"*

"GROUP MEMORY" (Recorder)

Would it be helpful if someone else keeps a simple, running summary of your meeting? A brief log of upcoming dates and issues? Do you need a better method to distribute this information after the meeting and to those who dialed in or didn't attend? Other?

"How would you like me to write that up here?" *"Here's a quick summary of our list. Is everything there?"* *"How shall I distribute this summary after the meeting?"* *"For those of you who are dialed in, is there anything you want me to add?"*

Your ideas: _____

PLANNING

- **Purpose:** Why is this meeting being held? Do we need a meeting or is there a better way? Is the meeting important/worth the cost? Is the purpose clear?
- **Participants:** Who needs to be there? Can they make a solid contribution? Do they have enough influence, responsibility and motivation to be effective? What do they need from the meeting?
- **Desired Outcomes:** What's the payoff for holding this meeting? What key results do we plan to achieve (list of issues, decision, next steps, agreement on strategies, a plan, approval, etc.)?
- **Ground Rules:** What agreements do we want to make about how we work together in meetings? (e.g., start/stop on time; "tech toys" off; remember those who dialed in; one conversation at a time, etc.)
- **Logistics:** What room and equipment arrangements need to be made? Who will attend remotely? Do you need to schedule a conference call?
- **Agenda:** What items will be discussed? How will they be addressed/by whom? How much time will each item take? Capture: D-Decisions, O-Open Issues, A-Action Items.
- **Barriers:** What might prevent you from reaching your meeting goal(s)? What strategies can you suggest to overcome these barriers?

Your ideas: _____

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PREVENTIONS/INTERVENTIONS

1. **Check** – Rephrase to check understanding. Make eye contact. Show you've heard.
2. **Accept** – Legitimize concerns. Use active listening. Ask questions. Walk toward.
3. **Deal with** – Refer to ground rules. Shift focus to larger group. Look away. Problem solve.
4. **Defer** – Confront. Add to group memory. Get agreement to proceed or take a break.

DIFFICULT BEHAVIORS

Aggressive/ Argumentative

Don't get sidetracked or upset. Try to find merit in one or two points and then move on. If there is a misstatement of facts, toss it to the rest of the group and let them correct the person. *"I know this issue pushes a lot of buttons, but if we take our time and work our way through the problem, I'm confident we can find a solution we can live with."*

Talkative/ Showing Off

Wait until person takes a breath, say thanks, refocus attention on the subject and move on. Refer to agenda or write the point on a flip chart or board. *"I'm concerned that we might not get to all our agenda items or that we will run out of time. Let's move on and if we need to spend more time on this, let's address it in our next meeting."*

Pet Peeve/ Complainer

Refer to ground rules, *"Remember, we said that all ideas are welcome whether we agree with them or not."* *"We decided to present ideas first and evaluate them later."*
Let another member of the group address the complaint.

Quiet/ Non-participating

Ask for his/her views in a positive, encouraging way. Acknowledge value of the individual's experience and perspectives. *"Most of the ideas have come from half of the group. What ideas do the rest of you have?"* *"Are we all buying into this solution? Silence doesn't mean agreement. How do others of you feel?"*

Conflicting Views/ Goals

Refer to ground rule: *"All ideas are important."* *"I'm not sure we're all seeing the problem the same way. Would each of you define it as you see it. This will sharpen the issue for all of us."*

Personal Conversations

Ignore if it's not disruptive. If it is, pause and make eye contact with talkers. *"To respect the concentration of everyone in the meeting, let's have one conversation at a time."*

Your ideas: _____