

# Effective meetings

# Preliminary Thoughts

Who likes a meeting...

- Without a clearly defined agenda
- That seems to drag-on forever
- That rambles from topic-to-topic
- That ends without any apparent result?

These types of meetings are

- Frustrating
- A waste one of the most valuable resources of any organization – ***time***.

# Before the Meeting

- Define the purpose of the meeting.
- Identify the participants.
  - Every invitee should have a role.
  - Identify a recorder or secretary.
- Prepare an agenda in advance of the meeting.
  - Communicate the intent of each agenda item using labels such as (A) Action, (I) Information, (V) Vote.
  - Identify estimate of time allocated to the agenda item.

# Before the Meeting, cont'd

- Prepare or identify background information.
- Assign responsibilities for agenda items and communicate to those responsible.
- Publish the agenda and identify background information to be reviewed.
- Plan for breaks – lunch, coffee, etc.

# Before the Meeting, cont'd

- Think through the conduct of the meeting
  - Use a trusted member of your staff or deputy.
- Consider logistics
  - Room – layout, seating, distractions, etc.
  - Support items – projector, white board, pens, etc.

# The Bell Shaped Agenda

**Item 1: Welcome**

**Item 2: Minutes**

**Item 3: Announcements**

- non-controversial
- short
- example: upcoming events

**Item 4: Easy Item**

- More than one item may be included in this section, but should not be controversial

Purpose of the **Bell Shaped Agenda** is to structure events around the group's energy and attention. The first few items help the meeting participants to work as a group on easy items before they tackle more difficult items.

# The Bell Shaped Agenda, cont'd

## Item 5: Hardest Item

- Why in the middle?
  - Attendance: late comers have arrived and early-leavers have not left.
  - Attention: focused on meeting by this time, not yet concerned with next appointment.

## Item 6: For Discussion Only

- Will often be presented as Item 5: Hardest Item at subsequent meeting for vote or decision.

# The Bell Shaped Agenda, cont'd

## Item 7: Easiest Item

- End of this meeting is the beginning of next meeting.
- End on positive note of agreement and encouragement.
- Good time for member recognition.

# During the Meeting

- Arrive early
  - Arrange the room if necessary
  - Know how to control the lighting and temperature in the room.
  - Distribute handouts.
- Begin on time.
- Introduce members if not familiar; introduce visitors.
- Establish basic rules, if necessary.
- *Run the meeting.*

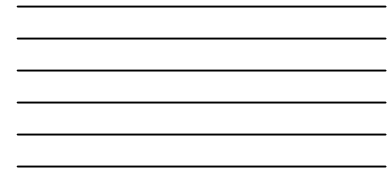
# During the Meeting, cont'd

- Control interruptions – ask that cell phones and pagers be turned-off.
- Identify and record results.
- Assign responsibilities for follow-up – Action Registry.
- End on time.
- Thank participants for their input and reinforce the importance of outcomes on the organization.

# Meeting Room Arrangements

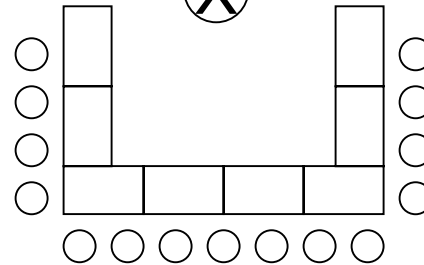
- Theater Style

- Leader has great power by position.
- Participation and interruption by audience is limited.



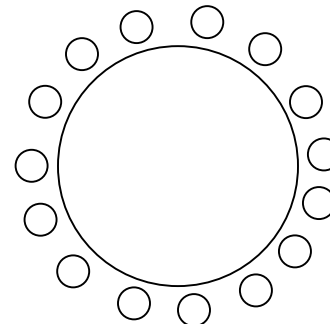
- U-Shaped Style

- Equality of membership.
- No doubt of who the leader is.
- Good visibility for visual aids.



- Circle Style

- Democratic: equality is stressed.
- Great visibility by participants.
- Obvious body language.
- Excellent participation.



# Member Roles – The Chair

- Prepare for the meeting.
- Appoint secretary/minute taker if there is not a regular.
- Conduct and control the meeting.
  - watch timing or assign someone to this responsibility
  - ensure all have an equal opportunity to speak
  - adjudicate as and when necessary
  - effect compromise on occasion

# The Chair, cont'd

- Close each item
  - Ensure action is clear
  - By whom and by when
- Check that the minutes are produced accurately and in timely manner

# How to Deal with Disruptive Members

- Make sure that all meeting participants understand their responsibilities.
  - All members were invited to the meeting for a reason
  - All members should feel free to contribute
- Members who are silent
  - Begin meetings by engaging every member of the group
    - "Bill, haven't you done this in your work? What was your experience?"
    - "Janet, you've been rather quiet to this point, do you have an opinion or an idea?"
  - Consider breaking larger group into smaller groups to develop input

# How to Deal with Disruptive Members

- Members who are vocally dominant
  - Redirect discussion to other members
    - "We all recognize your expertise in this area, but let's hear from some others in case some new ideas emerge."
    - "John has made his opinion clear; does anyone else have something they would like to add?"
- Members who are negative
  - Probe the negativity to validate concerns
  - Redirect discussion to other members
  - If behavior persists, consider speaking off-line or excluding them from future meetings
    - "Let's not shoot down this idea prematurely; let's give it some time for evaluation."

# After the Meeting

- Publish the minutes promptly.
- Identify responsibilities for action items.
- Assess the meeting.

# Source:

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