

## A Meeting Checklist for Managers/Leaders/Facilitators

### Before the meeting:

- ⊕ Make a plan. Think about how to approach each agenda item. Are there any specific agenda items that may need a special format for discussion or resolution? Are there issues that will evoke strong feelings or emotions? Plan some what if scenarios - What if we split on this issue what process will I use, What if Susan gets loud again?
- ⊕ Check the environment. Enough chairs, is there food or snacks available, does the lighting set the right mood, is it stuffy, warm enough, is there space to do what I want to do?
- ⊕ Write the agenda for all to see on a Flipchart using action words to describe outcomes.
- ⊕ Review outstanding old decisions or discussions from the last two meetings minutes. Is there a follow-up needed?
- ⊕ Set a goal for the meeting and write it down so all can see.
- ⊕ Assign volunteers for meeting tasks such as scribe, timekeeper, etc.

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### At the beginning of the meeting:

- ⊕ As people first come into the room do a check of the body language of each person. Is there tension in the room? Does someone have an obvious vibe that you might need to tap before the meeting starts?

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### As the meeting begins

- ⊕ Check in yourself to the group. Explain how you are feeling, any special things happening today, the tone. Share your goal(s) for the meeting with the group.
- ⊕ Check in with the agenda.
- ⊕ Review the agenda and prioritise. Ask for any additions or deletions.
- ⊕ Set times for discussions and assign each item an owner.

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### As the meeting runs

- ⊕ For each item on the agenda summarize previous discussions or decisions about the agenda item to bring everyone up to date.
- ⊕ Watch for dominance of speaking time and ask those who are quiet for ideas and thoughts. Ask: " I'd like to ask those who have not yet spoken to contribute."
- ⊕ Summarise points and clarify discussion. If an agreement is being sought, grab elements as they emerge in discussion and trial test them. It helps to write down the topic or issue under discussion so everyone can see and refer to it.
- ⊕ Catch any items that have not been resolved, or come up in a discussion and ask the group what to do with them.
- ⊕ Note digressions and remind members to stay on task. Write related digressions up on the board and ask the group to delay consideration of this

until later - then after the current issue is finished, ask the group what to do with it.

- ⊕ Make sure you have eye contact with the people you speak to.
- ⊕ Listen for and watch body language to catch any unexpressed issues or feelings.
- ⊕ Guide members who speak much to be briefer, use time as a boundary.
- ⊕ Watch for restlessness and take breaks when you sense the need for one.
- ⊕ Be sure any tasks generated are assigned to specific individuals or groups.

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### **As the meeting ends**

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- ⊕ Run through all task assignments and list any decisions made so any misunderstandings can be cleared before people leave.
- ⊕ Debrief the meeting with yourself at least, or with the group. What went well, what could be improved?

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### **Handling confrontation**

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Confrontation within meetings can be extremely difficult to handle. The most effective technique to help diffuse the situation is negotiation. The alternative approach of aggression usually has negative results!

Where the issue is handled in an aggressive manner the result is often stalemate with no agreed solutions or at worst aggressive physical behaviour and/or punishment. In effect one or both parties refuse to accept the needs of the other as legitimate.

Negotiation strategies present opportunities for Win/win outcomes.

Negotiation of acceptable outcomes is more likely where you believe that:

- ⊕ Your needs are as important as the other persons  
and
- ⊕ Lose/win situations are unnecessary.

Successful **negotiation** requires skills that must be learned and practised. These include:

- ⊕ The ability to recognise and diagnose the issue
- ⊕ Effectiveness in initiating confrontation
- ⊕ Good listening/communication skills
- ⊕ Problem solving techniques.