



# Candidate Resource and Assessment

## BSBADM405B

# Organise Meetings



**Whether as an individual, or as part of a group, real progress depends on entering whole-heartedly into the process and being motivated to make you a more deeply satisfied human being.**

*Focusing on your training needs*



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BSBADM405B Organise meetings  
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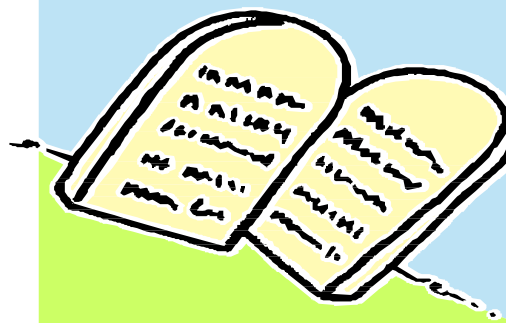
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**Eldridge Cleaver**

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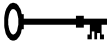
SAMPLE

## Focus on

# Your Area of Influence

Use considered risk taking in your 'grey' area

## And others will follow you!

<b>Legend</b>	This course is divided into several sections of learning. Each section begins with the title of the element of the unit being taught, a quotation and a graphic related to content across the top of the page.
	This symbol indicates the beginning of new content. The bold title matches the content of the competency and they will help you to find the section to reference for your assessment activities.
	<b>Activity:</b> Whenever you see this symbol, there is an activity to carry out which has been designed to help reinforce the learning about the topic and take some action.
	This symbol is used at the end of a section to indicate the summary key points of the previous section.

## Qualification Pathways



**A goal without a plan is just a wish.**

**Antoine de Saint-Exupery**

### Qualification Pathways

This unit of competency is provided to meet the requirements of BSB07 Business Services Training Package although can be used in a range of different qualifications. The BSB07 Business Services Training Package does not state how a qualification is to be achieved. Rather, Registered Training Organisations are required to use the qualification rules to ensure the needs of the learner and business customer are met. This is to be achieved through the development of effective learning programs delivered in an order that meets the stated needs of nominated candidates and business customers.

### Qualification Rules

Qualification requirements include core and elective units. Specific unit of competency requirements that are stated in the qualification description determines the unit mix. Registered Training Organisations then work with learners and business customers to select elective units relevant to the work outcome, local industry requirements and the qualification level.

All vocational education qualifications must lead to a work outcome. BSB07 Business Services Training Package qualifications allow for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to vary programmes to meet:

- Specific needs of a business or group of businesses.
- Skill needs of a locality or a particular industry application of business skills.
- Maximum employability of a group of students or an individual.

When packaging a qualification elective units are to be selected from an equivalent level qualification unless otherwise stated.

## ***Introduction***



**"If learning comes through experience, it follows that the more one participates in guided experiences, the more one learns. Therefore venturing into uncharted waters - and experiencing the failures that may occur - is an important part of organisational learning."**

**Gould, DiBella, Nevis**

### **Introduction**

This unit of competency is about being able to organise meetings including making arrangements, liaising with participants, and developing and distributing meeting related documentation. It will help you with the skills you need to demonstrate competency for the unit *BSBADM405B Organise Meetings*. This is one of the units that make up Certificates in Business.

This manual is broken up into three distinct sections. They are:

- 1. Make Meeting Arrangements**
- 2. Prepare Documentation for Meetings**
- 3. Record and Produce Minutes of Meeting**

At the conclusion of this training you will be asked to complete an assessment pack for this unit of competency. The information contained in this resource will assist you to complete this task.

On competent completion of the assessment, you will have demonstrated your ability to organise meetings.

SAMPLE

**BSBADM405B/01**  
**Make Meeting Arrangements**



**The only thing that saves us from the bureaucracy is inefficiency. An efficient bureaucracy is the greatest threat to liberty.**

**Eugene McCarthy (1916 - 2005)**



**Identify type of meeting and its purpose**

**Identify and comply with any legal or ethical requirements**

**Identify requirements of meeting and participants**

**Make meeting arrangements in accordance with requirements of meeting**

**Advise participants of meeting details**

**Planning Your Meeting**

We should all be concerned about inefficient meetings that waste both your time and your organisation's money. If they're conducted properly, meetings can and will make you (and your organisation) function more efficiently. So the next time you're asked about why you bother holding meetings, think of all the time and money-wasting activities that could be minimised or eliminated with a meeting.

Voice mail has become a familiar game for most of us. We all know how frustrating it is to call someone, leave a message, move away from your desk momentarily, and return to find a message from that person. Phone tag can last for several rounds, leaving both players immensely frustrated. If you're trying to reach someone, it can save time and headaches to simply schedule a quick in-person or audio meeting at a time appropriate for both of you.

Love it or hate it, we've all come to rely on e-mail for the majority of our communications. How many times have you found yourself e-mailing a question out of sheer habit to someone working 3 metres away? Obviously, e-mail is invaluable when you're communicating over long distances, or if you need to send information to more than one person, or if you need a request in writing. But there are plenty of other situations in which we use e-mail when a face-to-face meeting would be much more effective.

Have you ever spent 15 minutes writing an e-mail on a topic that would have taken you two minutes to discuss in person? Or sent an e-mail on an urgent issue and stared impatiently at your monitor waiting for a response? In these instances, wouldn't it be quicker and easier to schedule a meeting to discuss the issue? That way you can clarify any murky points, receive instant feedback, and engage all relevant parties at once.

Generally, e-mails will summarise issues rather than discuss them in depth. In many instances, a summary is all that's required, but if you need to discuss an issue in depth, a meeting is usually the best alternative.

Because e-mails are written, it can be hard to pick up on the intended tone. Without vocal intonations and physical gestures, the underlying meaning of a message can be lost or misinterpreted. And while many people use e-mail "emoticons" to compensate, they're not really a substitute for the real thing. If you are discussing a sensitive issue, it's always better to do so face-to-face.

We've all heard the myth of the "paperless office," but looking at the mountain of paper that's engulfing your workspace, how many of us actually believe it? In fact, studies have shown that the volume of paper produced by businesses has increased rather than diminished in recent years.

Have you ever written a memo or report, then printed off 10 copies to give to your colleagues for feedback? You end up with 10 edited copies that you have to try and integrate into one cohesive document. Wouldn't it save everyone time (and paper) if you called a meeting with your team, collaborated with the live document, and made your changes then and there?

### **Remember...**

It's important to keep in mind that calling a meeting doesn't always have to be a major production. Keep it brief, focus on the issue at hand, and concentrate on reaching a workable conclusion. Remember, scheduling a 15-minute meeting can be a lot more effective than three e-mails, two missed phone calls, and a paper report!

The first step is to determine the purpose of your meeting.

### **Why Are We Meeting?**

Before you call for any meeting, push yourself to deeply examine why you need the meeting. Has the purpose of the meeting been identified? When you have decided what the purpose of the meeting is, write a "Meeting Purpose" heading. "The meeting purpose is ..."

Then consider carefully the desired outcomes. These are a description of the specific accomplishments of the meeting - tangible things that you want to have in your hand at the end of the meeting. The outcomes must be *nouns*, not verbs. The final outcome is a "list," not "discussing." At the end of the meeting, you want to have a clear accomplishment - a *tangible thing* in your hand.

## Meeting Types

There are different types of meetings. Each type requires a different structure and supports a different number of participants. For instance, a status (feed forward) meeting has no limit to the number of participants while a decision-making meeting produces results faster with a small number of participants.

Again, if you want to help your teams have more effective meetings, set the participants expectations about the meeting by stating in the agenda:

- The purpose of the meeting
- The type of meeting.

The typical meeting types are:

- **Annual General Meetings** – The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is a central part of an incorporated association's governance structure, as it holds an association accountable to its members, and in some cases, the public.
- **Board Meetings** – Management committees need to hold regular meetings in order to manage the affairs of the organisation. General meeting procedures apply to committee meetings. The management committee is also responsible for convening the AGM within four months of the end of the association's financial year.
- **Face-to-Face Meetings** – These are often used for performance management or training.
- **Staff Meetings** – The team is informed of the performance of the previous period, coming events, organisational goals and their responsibilities to contribute to meeting the goals.
- **Teleconferences** – These can be used for many purposes linking remote staff to the head office.
- **Videoconferences** – Similar to teleconferences, except that the participants are able to see as well as hear each other.

## Keeping it Legal and Ethical

Early in the planning stages, but after you have decided your purpose and type of meeting, thought must be given to the legal and ethical requirements. These include:

- **Codes of Practice**

Industry codes of practice provide practical guidance and advice on how to achieve the standard required by Acts and regulations. Codes of practice are developed through consultation with representatives from industry, workers and employers, special interest groups and government agencies.

A code of practice is not law, but it should be followed unless there is an alternative course of action that achieves the same or better standards. Employers, workers, designers, manufacturers and suppliers should use the code of practice in conjunction with the Act and regulations.

Evidence of failure to observe an industry code of practice may be used as evidence in proceedings for an offence under the Act. However, a person is not liable simply because of a failure to observe the code.

Many Codes will stipulate communication agreements and these must be adhered to in all cases. All meetings must ensure the requirements of Acts such as Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Act, Occupational Health and Safety Act, and Privacy and any other Acts not mentioned here, are strictly observed.

- **Legislation Relating to Companies or Associations**

Ensure that whatever you do is legal and give serious consideration to ensuring that you meet the requirements of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Act, Occupational Health and Safety Act, Privacy Act and many others that may impact on your meeting behaviours or topics.

- **Public Meetings**

These meetings are held to inform the community at large and may be in a group, by videoconference or teleconference. Often they are held in response to proposed changes in government or community services or property which will affect the community or a great number of people. Many of these meetings can be confrontational and the large numbers may pose a new set of concerns.

**Meetings have special issues to address which include:**

- **Health and Safety** – Is the venue safe, of appropriate size? Will security be needed to keep order or provide security for attendees and speakers?
- **Discrimination** - Is the access, seating and visibility appropriate for all or will large screens be necessary?
- **Ability to hear and be heard** – Is the equipment appropriate to project to the outer reaches of the attendees, and how will their questions be heard?
- **Dissemination of related paperwork** – If there are notes or written information, how will this be provided to all? Is a record of names required? If so, how will this be obtained? Are there any restrictions to any people i.e. media etc? How will this be managed?
- **Taking of clear and true minutes accurately reflecting the content of the meeting** – After the issues surrounding hearing and being heard are dealt with, ensure that the minute-taker has the skill to accurately record accurate minutes quickly.
- **All meetings must meet the requirements of Acts such as Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Act, Occupational Health and Safety Act and Privacy and any other Acts not mentioned here but relating to the type of meeting.**

In terms of all meetings the general best procedure is to:

**Analyse the Risk**

If you're planning a meeting that includes team-building activities, choose wisely. While rock climbing may help your team bond, it could cause physical injury. And if something does happen to go wrong, you could be held liable. Make sure the benefits of any activity outweigh the risks and then take all the necessary precautions to minimise those risks.

## Be Prepared

One way to reduce risk is to be prepared. Considering potential risks is an important part of the planning process. It may seem overly cautious, but make sure attendees are familiar with fire exit locations, emergency phone numbers and any other pertinent information. This can often be accomplished in a brief announcement at the start of your meeting.

## Confidentiality Is Key

Many organisations require their employees to sign confidentiality agreements, which stipulate that company information cannot be shared with the outside world. If you discuss confidential information with someone outside the company, you can be held liable. Remind others that everything you hear in meetings is confidential, even if no one explicitly states that it is. Depending on the circumstances you could pay damages, especially if it means lost revenue for your company. If you're speaking at a meeting where an outside guest is present, make sure any topics you discuss are already public information.

## Permission Granted

Whether you're speaking in a meeting or there's an outside speaker, you need to make sure that you have permission from the copyright owner before reproducing or including any material from outside sources. And if you're the owner, you should also ensure that your materials are copyrighted. While this is not a legal requirement, it does put your audience on notice.

## Read the Fine Print

If you're planning an off-site meeting and it requires hotel accommodation, make sure you read the contract's fine print. Some hotels may include a clause requiring you to pay attrition fees for any lost revenues that the hotel would've received had the room been used. Pay a set fee or, better yet, negotiate a sliding fee. Also, if any of the language in the contract is vague, or if you're unsure about a clause, make sure you address it before you sign.

By carefully planning your meeting and avoiding the risks, you'll easily step around the legal minefields and come out unscathed!

## Who Will Attend

We have discussed the purpose of your meeting and this will determine who will attend. In the case of *"Tail-gate Meetings"*, the team of a supervisor will informally meet, perhaps on site on a regular basis to get work instructions and progress reports. In this case, the participants would include the team and supervisor, perhaps occasionally another manager or someone from a higher level in the organisation. Primarily though, it would consist of the team and supervisor.

When an Annual General Meeting is scheduled, invitations are likely to be given to the company executives, Heads of Departments, possibly any consultants currently involved in future planning initiatives, and shareholders or other vested interest parties.

Board Meetings would generally be attended by the Board itself, the CEO, the Chief Financial Officer and other top ranking executives who manage the teams. Guests may be invited to attend to provide additional information or explanation if required for forward, contingency or review functions.

The decision about who is to attend depends on what you want to accomplish in the meeting. This may seem too obvious to state, but it's surprising how many meetings occur without the right people there. Don't depend on your own judgment about who should come. Ask several other people for their opinion as well.

Stop for a minute to consider the hourly cost to your organisation of the people attending your meeting. You'll realise that calling a meeting is expensive, so it's important to ensure that every person attending and every minute of your meeting adds value. So don't invite people who won't participate but will simply report back to their boss or team (sending a copy of the minutes will be a more effective way of achieving this). Equally, don't use meetings to tell people things that could be communicated just as effectively by email or memo.

Invite only those directly involved in the issues being discussed. Meetings can fail because too many or too few participants attend. If a meeting is too large, for example, discussion may be superficial and it may take twice as long to make a decision than you originally thought. If all attendees will be affected by decisions, they'll be more task-oriented and less distracted by trivial issues.

As a general rule, planning can be accomplished by a sub-group within an organisation, not everyone has to participate. In addition to diversity of experience, planning teams should encompass diversity of thinking styles. The world sometimes seems to be sharply divided into two types of people: big picture visionaries, and practical nuts-and-bolts people. Planning teams require both types. The big picture folks have difficulty reaching closure and won't be able to convert a vision to an action plan. Developing step-by-step procedures is what the nuts-and-bolts types like doing best.

The planning group, at some point along the way, will need to perform tasks best left to individuals i.e., one person is generally charged with a writing project. Allowing two or three individuals to take information from the group, work out an idea on paper, and bring it back to the group for feedback saves meeting time. For example, when a complex issue surfaces, a subgroup may want to meet, and bring back their recommendations to the whole planning group or organisation.

The planning group might decide to elicit public participation for a specific aspect of the planning process. There are a variety of meeting formats to enhance information exchange with the public: focus groups, Charettes, open house, workshops. A "talking head" format is the least effective. Make the information flow as interactive as possible.

Occasionally, either because the organisation is small or because trust has disintegrated all members of the organisation may need to take part in the planning process. The answer to the question, "Why are we meeting?" should help determine who needs to be there. No one who needs to be at a meeting should be left out, and no one should have to attend an unnecessary meeting.

### Appropriate Structure

#### Meeting Structure

The meeting structure may take one of many forms:

- **Formal:** A formal meeting is a pre-planned meeting. It has a predetermined set of topics that one wishes to discuss along with a set of objectives that one wishes to achieve at the end of the meeting. At a formal meeting, generally it is a senior executive who presides over the affair. The members of the meeting are often given a considerable period of notice before the meeting, preferably through formal means such as memos. As the title suggest, the atmosphere in such meetings is generally sombre, formal.
  - **Self-managed:** The self-managed team meeting is used in the Team Based Organisation (TBO) where their style is supported and in line with the culture and values of the organisation. However, a staff member, supervisor or manager in a traditional organisation can learn to become a self-managed team leader if their supervisor, the organisation's culture and paradigms of the organisation will permit them to do so.
  - **Semi-formal:** Semi-formal meetings are generally not planned well in advance. The members are not notified through formal means. They generally take place in neutral surroundings, for example in a restaurant rather than a boardroom. They may or may not have an agenda and minutes may or may not be kept.
  - **Structured:** Traditional boardroom meeting held for many people. This is often the format for Public Meetings. It is where technological systems as well as delegate audio microphone intercommunication systems, are often used.
- Electronic:** These meetings may be held by teleconference or videoconference in situations where the meeting participants are geographical disparate.

## Meeting Arrangements

Having established the purpose and structure of your meeting, you must now make the arrangements to ensure that it flows smoothly and has the right well-prepared participants thereby increasing efficiency. There is a lot of responsibility on your shoulders.

- **Budget:** Before you do anything else, determine your budget. Pinning down limits early in the planning process helps other variables fall into place all of which depend on resources available.
- **Transport:** How will participants get there, where will they park, how will they get away after if there has been alcohol served. All travel costs including taxis or buses are usually included in meeting costs – your budget, so consider carefully.
- **Accommodation:** Will overnight accommodation be required. How far is it from the meeting venue and how will participants travel from airports, meeting venues etc. to accommodation?
- **Choosing a Date:** Have at least two dates in mind: a preferred date and a just-in-case alternate date. That way, when you start checking out available facilities, you'll be able to choose the best option based on the number of people who can attend. Alternate dates also mean you can negotiate for better prices if you are going off-site.
- **Location:** Off site or on site? Carefully weigh the options here. While holding a meeting on site may seem like the best cost-savings option, on-site meetings at offices come with productivity-reducing distractions. Meeting attendees are more likely to run back to their offices to check e-mail, voice mail and in-boxes. The flow of group thought is more easily disrupted. Subtle influences such as office politics and "organisational baggage" are often hanging in the air, affecting attendee attitude. People are refreshed at off site locations and able to truly focus on the agenda. Upfront facility expenses are frequently recovered in increased productivity.
- **Meeting Equipment:** Today's meeting-room requirements are more than four walls, a few chairs and a couple of flip charts. Meeting attendees will likely bring laptops to access and present computer-based information. You'll need a means of projecting that information for presenting. Group members will need a means to capture notes and ideas generated in the meeting. A speedy Internet connection is becoming standard. Will videoconferencing tools be required?
- **Catering:** When planning a meeting over a meal, think about the agenda and the timing. A business breakfast should be reserved for urgent topics and last no more than an hour. If you're dragging someone out of bed early, make sure you choose a convenient restaurant and keep the small talk to a minimum. A heavy meal will leave participants sluggish, but regular short breaks with fruit and juice will enervate.

It's not a bad idea to leave a little room in your budget for those inevitable unforeseen expenses that pop up along the way.

## Technology

Few of us would refute the old adage that in business, you have to spend money to make money. So it makes sense that if you want to hold more effective meetings, you have to invest in them. Over the last few decades, corporations have invested heavily in technology designed to increase individual employee efficiency. But fewer companies have extended this investment past the desktop and into the boardroom.

There are several meeting room tools that can be used to turn your meeting room into a highly productive collaborative environment. The choice you make will vary according to the room size, number of participants, whether it includes remote locations. Most larger venues will have for hire, or be able to act on your behalf to hire, most of the equipment. But here are the main options.

- Computers
- Data Show / Digital Projectors
- Copy Boards
- Interactive Whiteboards
- Plasma Display Panels
- Conferencing Equipment
- Videoconferencing equipment.

There are so many multimedia tools available today, that setting up your meeting room can often be more time consuming than the meeting itself.

## Contacting the Participants

1. Send an e-mail stating there will be a meeting, the goal of the meeting as well as the administrative details such as when and where it will be. Ask those invited to accept or decline the meeting. Make it clear that once they have accepted the meeting, they are expected to attend.
2. Ask participants requesting an agenda item to contact you no less than two days before the meeting with their request and the amount of time they will need to present it.
3. Once all of the agenda requests have been submitted to you, summarise them in a table format with the headings Agenda Item, Presenter and Time. It's your responsibility to ensure that each agenda item is directly related to the goals of this particular meeting. If an inappropriate request is made, suggest that person send an e-mail or memo instead or recommend that this agenda item be discussed in another meeting. Also, you must be realistic in the amount of time you allocate to each presenter. Don't cram an unrealistic number of agenda items into an hour meeting. When people accept an hour meeting, they expect to be finished in an hour. When meetings go over time, people generally tend to get uneasy. It's better to schedule 50 minutes of discussion into an hour time slot. This way you have 10 minutes to spare and if you get done a little early, people will be pleased.
4. Send the agenda to all the meeting participants the day before the meeting with a reminder of the meeting goals, location, time and duration. At this time, ask the presenters if they are happy with the order in which they will be speaking and the amount of time they have been allocated.

5. Of course, the most important part of creating an effective agenda is to follow it during the meeting!

### Reviewing the Steps

As we have demonstrated, it is not unusual to spend as much time planning a meeting as running it. Preparation begins with asking these questions:

1. **What outcome do we want to achieve by the end of this particular meeting?**

A newspaper editorial from an irate father just after attending his daughter's college orientation session serves to illustrate the usefulness of understanding the various reasons for meetings. This man went to the meeting to learn about courses of study, relevant deadlines, tuition and expenses, financial aid, and safety precautions. "I knew I was in trouble," he said, "when I entered a room full of chairs set up in a circle." The meeting was designed, instead, to explore feelings about one's child going off to college, and to build relationships with other parents.

Whether you identify with the father who sought specific information and was sorely disappointed, or the meeting planners who offered an opportunity for consciousness raising - the point is that the purpose of the meeting must be clearly identified. The purpose drives who should attend, the agenda items, what materials or equipment to have on hand, and the direction of the next meeting.

2. **To achieve the desired meeting outcome, what must we do during the meeting? And how much time will each item realistically require?**

Knowing the purpose of the meeting is a first step in structuring the agenda. Having a firm idea of where you want to be by the end of the meeting suggests what must be covered during the meeting. Do we need to review last year's budget? Do we want to create a common vision of our organisation in the year 2020? If we want consensus on four short-term goals, how can we both inspire creative thinking yet maintain a sense of reality?

Each step in reaching the desired meeting outcome is thought through carefully to determine the amount of time needed.

- Establish how long the meeting is to last.
- List the agenda items that need to be covered or process steps that need to occur.
- Estimate how long each item will take factoring in time for dialogue.
- Leave about 15 minutes minimum at the end for summary and agreement on what comes next.

If, after following the above exercise, the agenda clearly requires more time, revise accordingly. Adjust the length of the meeting (and let participants know), or cut back on what you expect to accomplish. Keep in mind that critical thinking requires more time than typically allowed for in meetings, especially if there is controversy. Opportunities to voice an opinion, ask questions, and explain reasons behind positions are key to developing and achieving consensus on a plan. Shortcuts at this point could cause looping back or gridlock farther down the line.

3. **What idea-building processes would be useful?**

Planning alternates between expanding and culling ideas. Visioning and brainstorming help participants expand their thinking. Ranking, cost-benefit analysis, and comparing related concepts help participants winnow their thinking. When critical issues must be addressed, participants might use a problem solving process, or "force field analysis." Without a sequential structure to guide thinking and dialogue, participants become bogged down or overwhelmed. Using a rational framework guides and clarifies the participants' thought process.

**4. What should we send participants in advance? And, what information should we have available at the meeting (i.e., maps, flow charts, the old report, proposals, etc.)?**

Sending out an agenda before the meeting allows participants to ask questions about it, prepare if necessary, and in general sets a businesslike tone. If participants are going to be asked to read or edit documents, send the material in advance. (Even when material has been sent ahead, time for review at the meeting might be wise.)

Visual aids assist in making visionary dialogue more concrete. If the planning committee must consider capital improvements to a building, obtain floor plans or blueprints. If planning focuses on publicity for the annual arts festival, make sure participants have calendars. Use worksheets to develop action plans so participants can think in terms of implementing creative ideas.

**5. What's the best way to set up the space?**

The ideal planning group ranges from 6 to 12 members. Most rooms will allow a group of 12 to meet around a table. For a larger group up to 24 tables placed in a U-shape works well. If planning requires participation of a very large group or public input, a face-to-face arrangement may be difficult. At the least, participants should have easy visual and spatial access to speakers, facilitators, or the area of the room where most focus is directed. If the large group will need to separate into smaller groups, try to have separate "pods" of seating already set up so participants can move to their work-group areas without having to rearrange the furniture.

**6. What equipment will make the meeting run more smoothly?**

The flip chart is standard equipment in planning meetings. Make sure there is wall space nearby for posting the chart paper as the meeting progresses. (In other words, flipping the paper over does not provide participants the benefit of having their work product spread out on the walls before them.)

For larger groups, overhead projectors work better than flip charts, but only for presenting information. The group's work product should be recorded on flip chart paper and posted, even if not easily visible by all participants. At least the information is readily available to refer to or review before leaving the meeting.

Computers that project text onto the wall can be very useful when the group is developing a carefully worded document such as a mission statement.

Innovative ways of presenting information enhances participants' attention and inspires creativity. Facilitators, for instance, might employ videotapes to illustrate success stories or skill methodologies. Visual aids, in the final analysis, however, do not substitute for participants rolling up their sleeves and getting to work.

Tape recording can be intimidating and stifle creative thinking. Generally tape recording is used when there is a low trust level and someone anticipates a law suit.

Food at meetings: Light refreshments, especially coffee or other beverages can help sustain energy levels. If the meeting is planned for the evening, serving a light meal first allows more control in starting on time. In some organisations, food is an enticement to attend the meeting.

### Voting

There are a number of methods used for voting or agreeing on a decision. In the cases of public companies and larger entities, there are Standing Rules or other procedures that must be used. Check to see if there is a preferred method for voting in your organisation.

#### Decision-Making by Vote.

Traditionally, groups made decisions by voting, and allowed the "majority to rule." Voting makes sense when:

- Many people are involved.
- The population is diverse.
- Moving forward is more important than settlement.
- Before votes are cast there is ample time for dialogue.
- The dialogue includes looking at and evaluating a number of options.

The disadvantage of voting is that it leads to an all or nothing, win/lose outcome. What happens to those who voted "nay" and were outnumbered? How committed are they to supporting the outcome? And, what happens to the concerns driving the no-vote. Were those concerns addressed, or will they come back to haunt the yea-sayers? Ample discussion with analysis of alternative courses of action can counteract the disadvantages of voting. Even then, voting might be reserved as a last resort. Clearly, in a small group convened for the purpose of planning, consensus is possible and more desirable.

### Decision-Making by Consensus.

Consensus is the cooperative development of a decision that is acceptable enough so that all members of the group agree to support the decision. Consensus means that each and every person involved in decision-making has veto power. Keep in mind, though, that members of the planning group are team members, not adversaries. Responsible team members use power only to achieve the best results vis a vis the group's purpose, not for their own personal gain. In other words, if a team member objects, it behooves the others to find out why and give considerable thought to the concerns expressed by the dissenting member.

The remarkable result of giving individuals veto power is that they rarely use it! If participants are reassured nothing can go forward without their approval, they tend to relax, contributing more to the content and worrying less about procedural matters.

Consensus does not mean there is an absence of conflict. It does mean there is a commitment of time and energy to work through the conflict. Consensus requires taking all concerns into consideration and attempting to find the most universal decision possible. Factors working against consensus include: competition, individualism, passivity and solution-orientation.

There are many techniques to facilitating consensus:

- Frame the dilemma so participants see the big picture and recognise their interdependence: "What decision do we need to make and why do we need to make it?"
- Remove insecurity and make sure all participants have the same key information and have the opportunity to discuss that information together.
- Build little agreements along the way: "So we agree that this is a good way to state the problem we are trying to solve." Or, "At least you do all agree that something has to be done, that things are unacceptable as they are now."
- Motivate creativity by asking "Isn't there anything else you can suggest?" and then allow for a long pregnant pause.
- Summarise and fractionate: "This is what we agree on, and this is still in question. What are the specific causes for concern?" Or, "How can we get the benefit from doing this, but not the detriment?"
- Refer to the mission and purpose of the group for guidance: "If we do this, are we in line with what we are all about?"
- Finally, ask: "What will happen if we can't all agree?" Or, "Do you really need to make a decision on this issue?"

Voting and consensus are the "how" of decision-making. Decisions, themselves, seem to come in three shapes:

1. Some decisions have to be answered "yes" or "no." Either we close the theatre for inclement weather, or we go on with the show. The outcomes are mutually exclusive and a choice is imperative for the good of the organisation.
2. Other decisions require finding a solution to a problem. "How shall we solve for X?" "What shall we do about lack of attendance at our performances?" Or, reframing the problem in the affirmative: "How can we ensure record attendance?"
3. A third type of decision is even more open-ended. "Which way shall we go?" Or, "What goal shall we attain?"

Try out different ways of framing the decision using the above three formats. The way in which the decision is framed sets the stage for the solutions generated. Different framing of the same topical issue elicits very different solutions. For example, a decision regarding regulation of outdoor advertising can be framed, "Who is going to control outdoor advertising, local municipalities or the state?" Responses will be very different from those prompted by the question: "How can local government determine the character of its land use without eliminating outdoor advertising?"

The important rule of thumb about good decision-making is "Do Not Decide Prematurely." Ultimately, the thinking process for any type of decision is the same:

- Gathering and analysing relevant information.
- Careful framing of the question you want answered.
- Discussing values and criteria.
- Envisioning various scenarios.
- Evaluating consequences of those scenarios.
- Making the decision.
- Refining specific aspects of the decision and ensuring its implementation.



### Activity One

Complete the following quiz to see how prepared you are for planning a meeting.

	<b>When should you call a meeting?</b>
	Anytime your group needs to share information.
	When a meeting is the best way to achieve your objective.
	Never. Meetings are always a waste of time.
	<b>What is your objective and how do you find it?</b>
	Look for the goal, the purpose is the basic reason for holding a meeting.
	If the meetings are routine, identifying an objective is unnecessary.
	As the meeting begins, decide as a group what the objective of that meeting should be.
	Meeting objective? Sounds overrated to me.
	<b>Should you hold meetings on a regular basis?</b>
	Yes. Regular meetings are the only way for a group to communicate effectively.
	Yes. However, routine meetings require a clearly defined objective and each meeting must contribute to the fulfilment of this objective.
	No. Meetings should never be held on a regular basis.
	Yes. How else are we supposed to catch up on office gossip?
	<b>Who should participate?</b>
	Anyone who wants to participate. The more the merrier!
	Anyone who has anything to do with what will be discussed at the meeting. After all, we wouldn't want to exclude anyone.
	Those who can influence the fulfilment of the meeting objective.
	Those who are entertaining, tell great jokes and make meetings fun.

	<b>Is it necessary for the agenda to be distributed before a meeting?</b>
	Yes. The agenda should be distributed at least one week before the meeting. This gives participants enough time to prepare for the meeting.
	Yes. The agenda should be distributed at least one day before the meeting. This gives participants time to prepare for the meeting discussion.
	No. Distributing the agenda as participants enter the meeting room is sufficient.
	No. What's the point? We never follow the meeting agenda anyway.
	<b>Is it appropriate to hold a meeting in a restaurant?</b>
	Yes. But only if you're in the food business.
	No. Meetings are most productive when they occur in a boardroom.
	Yes. If the objective is to establish a social as well as a business relationship.
	No. Food puts people to sleep.
	<b>How can you keep a meeting from running overtime?</b>
	Buy an extra large alarm clock for your meeting room. When the alarm rings, the meeting's over.
	Make each meeting participant contribute a dollar for each minute the meeting runs overtime.
	Set a time limit in advance and stick to it!
	It's impossible. Your meetings run overtime so often that you don't know what "on time" means anymore.
	<b>When do you end a meeting?</b>
	Adjourn the meeting only once it has run 10 minutes overtime.
	Always adjourn the meeting once the objective has been accomplished.
	Once every person in the room has fallen asleep.
	Once all the donuts and coffee are gone.
	<b>How can you best evaluate the success of your meeting?</b>
	At the end of the meeting count how many of the agenda items were discussed. The more agenda items covered, the more successful the meeting.
	To get an accurate picture of the meeting's effectiveness, ask participants for their written opinions.
	If the meeting finishes on time, the meeting was successful.
	Count how many people are still awake in the room.
	The more open eyes, the more successful the meeting.

**If most of your answers were incorrect, your meeting knowledge needs some attention!**

After all, these questions reflect your basic meeting know-how. To brush up on your effective meeting skills, reread Element One.

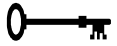
**If approximately half of your answers were correct, your meeting knowledge is average.**

Although you're aware of some meeting basics, you could learn more. It would be a good idea to review the material in Element One before proceeding.

**If most of your answers were correct, congratulations!**

Your meeting I.Q. is above average. You understand the basics of having an effective meeting. Continue building your meeting knowledge and you'll become your group's own meeting guru! You are ready for Element Two.

SAMPLE



### Key Points Section 1

- A purpose statement should explain why the group is meeting.
- A clear desired outcome statement defines a specific, *tangible* accomplishment.
- A clear purpose and desired outcomes will help keep your meeting on track.
- Meeting structure must be carefully selected to meet the purpose of the meeting.
- Different meeting structure will dictate who should attend, what venue and requirements are needed.
- Participants need adequate notice of attendance to adequately prepare and arrange their schedules.
- All legal requirements must be consistently met as a priority.

SAMPLE



## Section 1 - 'True' or 'False' Quiz



T	F	Board Meetings would generally be attended by Shareholders.
---	---	---



T	F	It's important to keep in mind that calling a meeting doesn't always have to be a major production.
---	---	---



T	F	Before you call for any meeting, push yourself to deeply examine why you need the meeting.
---	---	--



T	F	Each type of meeting requires a different structure and supports a different number of participants.
---	---	--



T	F	"Tail-gate Meetings" would typically include the CEO.
---	---	---



T	F	Public meetings are held to inform the immediate staff of changes.
---	---	--



T	F	A decision-making meeting produces results faster with a large number of participants.
---	---	--



T	F	The purpose of your meeting will determine who will attend.
---	---	---



T	F	Ensure that whatever you do is legal and give serious consideration to ensuring that you meet the requirements of the Acts which impact on your industry.
---	---	---



T	F	Guests may be invited to any meetings to provide additional information or explanation if required.
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