



Simple Tactics to Manage a Meeting

Make the purpose of the meeting clear at the outset – write it up on a flipchart so you can easily refer back to it.

Use the Agenda to manage time and contributions.

Assess the atmosphere. Know when to take centre stage and when to take a back seat.

Listen to all contributions and reflect back those that warrant greater attention.

Encourage equal contributions, or at least make sure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute by asking direct questions e.g. “What do you think about that Jack?”

Capture key points where everyone can see them, e.g. on a flipchart.

Signpost the meeting. For example “Now we’ve agreed X, we should move on to Y” this shows that one topic of conversation is over.

Do not interrupt people or cut them off – if they are dominating the meeting, summarise their point then firmly pass the discussion to someone else.

Ask for clarification or examples where appropriate. This can help to move things forward or it can stop the conversation diverting down an unhelpful route.

If people begin to side track then record the points on a flipchart, and suggest focusing on them properly at a separate meeting.

Gain confirmation of your interpretation of things.

Actively time keep. Say things like “We assigned 30 minutes to this issue, and we’ve had 25. We need to start bringing our thoughts together.”

Use silence appropriately. Silence makes people stop, think, and will (often) result in more information being provided.

Turn complaints into positive objectives – ask people to re-phrase them as ‘how to?’ statements, and write them on a flipchart – then work through them.

Gently but firmly stop any side discussions by saying something like “Anita, we’ll come to your point in a moment, but now I’d like to hear what Sanq has to say.”

Focus on solutions, not problems – insist the group moves forwards and doesn’t rake over the past.

Focus on action – If people start moaning about things ask “What can we do about this?” – Then capture it as an action point.

Summarise regularly. It helps to focus on areas of agreement rather than areas of difference, and helps to keep the meeting moving forwards.

Thank people for good contributions.

Make sure that you (and other participants) use language that everyone can understand.