Ways to Help Make Meetings More Productive

<u>Assign</u> roles and <u>use</u> active tools: Agenda, Ground Rules & Action Items

Chair/Team Leader

- Responsible for generating and publishing the Agenda prior to the meeting, including setting the time allotted for each agenda item.

- Ensures that all resources (room logistics, handouts, fact sheets, guest speakers, etc.) are available for the meeting.

- Leads the dialog of the meeting through the agenda items.

- Primary person responsible for calling on speakers and moving the meeting to successful completion, on time, with clear purpose and realistic outcomes.

- Responsible for the content of the meeting (getting it *done*).

Facilitator

- Takes primary responsibility for establishing and maintaining a thoroughly supportive atmosphere throughout the meeting; encourages every member to participate.

- Helps the group use efficient communication processes that provide better information than the chair working alone could marshal. In particular, is responsible for asking clarifying questions and eliciting feedback from group members who show, through body language & other signs, that they are not 'with' the group. Also, promotes the <u>building</u> of ideas, through redirection of dialogue back to key points.

- Helps the chair assess appropriateness of decision making model being used, and is responsible for ensuring that each member's support for the final decision is authentic, thus gaining members' commitment to execute it fully.

- Responsible for the context of the meeting (*how* it gets done).

Scribe

- Takes minutes reflecting general theme of discussions (<u>not</u> verbatim dialog) and most importantly lists, and reads back at the end of the meeting, all **Action Items** that have been generated during the meeting.

- Responsible for getting copies of minutes out to all pertinent parties, ASAP, preferably within a week.

Timekeeper

- Keeps track of the time allotted for each agenda item and gives appropriate warning signals ("half way through this item," "5 minutes left," "Only 1 minute left," Time's up!") Sometimes performed by the Chair. Needs to be performed respectfully, but firmly.
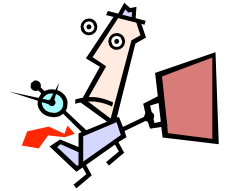
Agenda

- The list of items that will be covered at the meeting, with time estimates applied against each item, and for the meeting as a whole.

- Begins with a Housekeeping item, where roles are assigned and agenda modifications (additional items, time allotted per item, etc.) are considered.

- Next item is review of last meetings Action Items, for status updates.

- Includes an open 'Parking Lot' (or Compost Pile) item that allows for capture of all good questions & talking points from the participants that don't fit into any of the agenda items.

- The 'Parking Lot' items get carried forward to a future agenda time, or get turned into action items for someone.

Action Items

- Whenever a decision is made during a meeting to do something specific, an Action item is created, noting **Who** is responsible for the action, **What** they are specifically going to accomplish, and, **When** it will be done by. Note: it is NOT an Action Item if it does not contain **ALL three**; Who, What and When!

- Action items are an organization's way of keeping track of what's getting done, and what's slipping through the cracks. It helps when Action items are featured in the meeting's minutes by grouping them at the beginning or end, and by putting the Who and When in a bold or underlined font.

Ground Rules/Operating Agreements

- Effective large group communication works best when there's a basic set of shared beliefs and agreements. These need to be consensual in nature and revisited from time to time to ensure that everyone maintains his or her commitment to them.

- Examples of common ground rules:

  - ✓ Begin and end meetings on time.
  - ✓ Only one person speaks at a time; no interruptions.
  - ✓ Be respectful; challenge the idea, not the individual.
  - ✓ When brainstorming, there's no such thing as a bad idea.

Cell Phones