

meetings¹⁰¹



The Talking Stick

"The talking stick, used for centuries by many American Indian tribes, serves as a means of just and impartial hearing. Some tribes use a talking feather instead of a talking stick. Other tribes might have a peace pipe, a wampum belt, a sacred shell, or some other object by which they designate the right to speak. Whatever the object, it carries respect for free speech and assures the speaker he/she has the freedom and power to say what is in his/her heart without fear of reprisal or humiliation."

Carol Locust, Ph.D.

*Native American Research and Training Center - Tucson, Arizona
(Tribal affiliation - Eastern Band Cherokee)*

Before, during and after meetings



Discuss any of the tools at a typical meeting and make agreed upon improvements; use agenda template or adapt it



Any meeting attendee or facilitator can utilize these tools

To maximize meetings you conduct or to enhance your participation in the meetings that you attend



Meetings I Never Miss

http://www.fastcompany.com/articles_by_topic/teammeeting

40 short and varied examples of how successful managers run meetings



Cautions:

1. Failure to agree on the purpose and benefits of improving meetings in general
2. Overly structuring meetings that require debate and consensus
3. Treating all meetings as equal
4. Using meetings unnecessarily; wasting people's time
5. Not recognizing your part in the Common Meeting Complaints list



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Common Meeting Complaints

Use this list to create new meeting ground rules, to identify your common problems, and to discuss and plan ways to overcome them.

- | | |
|--|---|
| A. Confusion between process and content
- how we decide vs. what we decide | K. Hidden agendas, confused objectives, and
unstated expectations |
| B. Attacking the person and not the problem | L. Communication problems due to poor
listening or verbalizing |
| C. Loss of focus - everyone goes off in a
different direction at the same time | M. Group members present do not have proper
authority to make the decision |
| D. Dominant members corner discussion
and force ideas and decisions on less
vocal members | N. Poor meeting environments - lighting, noise,
temperature, improper tools, distractions |
| E. Roles and responsibilities of group
members are unclear | O. Lack of trust and openness among the
group members |
| F. Abuse of power by manager or
chairperson | P. Good ideas and decisions go unrecorded or
incorrectly recorded |
| G. Repetition and wheel spinning - same
ideas are restated repeatedly | Q. Participants come late or leave early
disrupting the flow of the meeting |
| H. Compromises arrived at by voting
resulting in lack of ownership and
commitment, partial solutions, and
"we/they" attitudes | R. Responsibility, authority, and accountability
are not made clear preventing subsequent
action from occurring |
| I. Disorganization - length of meeting | S. Poor follow-up after meeting |
| J. Side conversations, cell phone abuse,
multi-tasking | T. Members multi-task with computers,
cell phones, or blackberrys. |

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Sample Meeting Ground Rules






Meeting ground rules change over time as a group matures so re-visiting and updating ground rules like these will improve meetings.

1. Encourage others who seem upset to express their feelings directly.
2. Always ask, "Why?" when you don't know.
3. Question well-established ways of doing things.
4. Encourage ideas even if they are vague or unusual.
5. Ask someone to help you with an assignment that is yours.
6. Express praise to someone who has done a job well.
7. Repeat and confirm goals and objectives.
8. Use each other's expertise to prevent and resolve problems.
9. Open and close gates (invite quiet member's input; ask dominant members to allow others to speak).
10. Use an agenda template to organize topics and estimate time allocations.
11. Be mindful of others' time by starting and stopping on schedule.
12. Your ideas _____

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Meeting Agenda Template

Meeting Planning software exists to help in the scheduling of meetings but this template adds several important features that will enhance the actual meeting.

LOGISTICS 		MEETING ROLES 	
Date: Time: to Location: Bring (materials): Preparation required: Attendees:		Meeting Leader & Facilitator: Time Keeper: Note Taker: (Decisions reached, action items, open issues...)	
AGENDA ITEMS 		PERSON RESPONSIBLE 	
Mtg. Introduction	3 mins.	Meeting leader	
• _____			
• _____			
• _____			
• _____			
• _____			
• _____			
• _____			
• _____			
• _____			
• _____			
• wrap-up (what went well? what do we not want to repeat?)	4 mins.	All meeting members	

meetings¹⁰¹

Format for Standing Daily Staff Meetings

[Assume a 15-30 minute daily meeting for eight-ten operations staff. Expand its length when circumstances require troubleshooting or group problem solving.]

IMPORTANT: *Begin this meeting on time and hold to the agreed upon timeframe.*

Staff sharing. Move the discussion quickly around the entire group. Give each participant one-two minutes to BRIEFLY share:

- Their day's key task or goal
- Any obstacles or challenges they foresee
- What assistance they need from others in the group. The manager/supervisor can:
 - a. prompt solutions from the group
 - b. offer assistance
 - c. remove obstacles

Following staff comments, the manager/supervisor:

- Makes key reminders
- Gives positive or corrective feedback that applies to the group as a whole
- Encourages questions/clarifies assignments
- Informs group of her/his schedule and availability during the day (for discussions, problems, etc.)
- Praises an individual(s) for one thing he/she observed - however small. Be specific about what made the action or result praiseworthy.

IMPORTANT: *Never use the daily meeting to deliver corrective feedback to one individual.*

Occasionally, add variety to the meeting format. Insert questions such as:

- a. Share an accomplishment from the previous day. What 'win' did you have yesterday?
- b. What will you try to do differently today? How will you stretch?
- c. What did we learn from what happened yesterday?
- d. How can we work more efficiently so that we can spend more time in creative problem-solving and planning?
- e. What new ideas did we create and share?
- f. How can we become more competitive?

Option: Once the routine of daily meetings is established, ask staff members to take turns leading the meeting.

meetings¹⁰¹

Things You Can Do As A Meeting Attendee

Remember: Your time is valuable; decide how to invest it.

Before the meeting:

- Ask for an agenda
- Ask why you have been invited
- Ask what to prepare and/or bring
- Ask if you need to attend all or a portion of the meeting
- Prepare for it by reading the agenda, completing an assignment, or bringing ideas
- See who else is attending and if you really are needed
(If it is not essential that you attend, cancel yourself)

During a meeting:

- If necessary, ask to review the agenda at start of meeting
- Suggest any changes that might be more productive
- If no agenda exists, ask to create one and prioritize items by importance and relevance
- Offer to keep time, take notes, or chart key ideas/brainstorming, etc.
- Before each item, ask for outcome of discussion and time estimates
- Ask questions to help focus the issues
- Summarize the discussion to help get back on track
- Help the group come to action
- Suggest some items may be better handled outside the meeting and keep track of them in a 'parking lot'
- Invite less verbal members into the discussions
- Support the ideas of others
- Bring humor as needed
- Ask for feedback about how the meeting is going by saying, 'Are we on track?'

At the end of the meeting:

- Ask members tactfully to critique the meeting for plusses and minuses
- Suggest improvements and changes for future meetings
- Offer to facilitate the next meeting
- Meet with meeting convener and if they agree, offer feedback after the meeting

meetings¹⁰¹

Kinds of Meetings

Type of meeting	Do	Do Not
Daily operational and transactional	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have a fast format and keep it moving (see Format for Standing Daily Staff Meetings, page 5) 2. Have everyone repeat their newly promised action items so follow-through is ensured 3. Use webcam and/or conference for remote staff 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Discuss items at length B. Start late and run over C. Have snacks and comfortable chairs D. Let staff bring problems without recommending solutions
Issue discussion or exploration of a change	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Re-define the issue or create a strategic question for the discussion 2. Allow an agreed upon but approximate time frame for each topic 3. Allow for debate and opposing views, healthy conflict 4. Allow for a devil's advocate 5. Redefine the issue again 6. Agree on next steps 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Forget to re-define the issue to reach the core or cause B. Over-structure the discussion C. Avoid conflict or different views
Decision making	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have a fast format and keep it moving (see Format for Standing Daily Staff Meetings, page 5) 2. Allow for input from both quiet and vocal members 3. Use webcam and/or teleconference for remote staff 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Let a few people dominate the discussion B. Avoid conflicting views C. Vote

meetings¹⁰¹

Type of meeting	Do	Do Not
Informational	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use a format to keep updates fast and efficient 2. Consider alternatives to a meeting, like a weekly web news brief 3. Ask how staff like to receive certain types of information and try new methods 4. Pass the information on; act on it as required 5. Give kudos to staff who role model efficient updates 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Let a few people dominate the discussion B. Get into lengthy discussion C. Use meetings for informational things people can read
Strategic planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plan well ahead for this type of session so that all participants come prepared and ready to lead discussions 2. Use a strategic planning format; have an agenda and endpoint 3. Find a space away from daily distractions 4. Know the difference between strategy and objectives 5. Use a facilitator 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Meet unprepared without data, agendas, timeframes, etc. B. Exclude key talent for input C. Neglect follow-up and related action planning



- Encourage efforts to improve your meetings.
- Eliminate at least one meeting from those you attend.
- Continue to calibrate your meetings.