

FROM TEDIUOUS TO TOP NOTCH: MAKING MEETINGS MEANINGFUL

INTRODUCTION

How a meeting is run can be a deal-breaker for many. Running effective meetings makes all the difference in keeping people engaged, inspired, and incentivized to keep coming back. The Neighborhood Program has put together this guide to cover the basics of meeting management along with tools you can use to make your meetings effective, collaborative, and motivating.

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DESIGNING THE MEETING

Meeting Purpose

Begin by defining the **purpose** and communicating the purpose via an agenda to those who will attend. Remember, your agenda is your opportunity to engage the public on what they can expect from your meeting. Include a **clear outcome statement** for each agenda item so that participants know what is intended to be accomplished for each topic. For example:

- Agenda Item: Report from Beaverton Police Department on crimes in our neighborhood
 - *Outcome Statement:* Listen to the presentation and ask any clarifying questions.
- Agenda Item: Parking on 103rd Avenue
 - *Outcome Statement:* 1-3 recommendations on how to handle the parking situation
- Agenda Item: Yearly NAC Visioning Exercise
 - *Outcome Statement:* At the end of the exercise we will have five to ten action items and team leads identified for the coming year.

A clear outcome statement defines measurable goals for the agenda item and a list of key elements.

Pre-Meeting Agenda Planning

- Gather potential agenda items (e.g., reports from government representatives, land use presentations, guest speakers, goal setting, project planning, issue identification, round robin)
- Clarify the purpose and outcome for each item
- Prioritize the items
- Estimate length of time for each item
- Order the items for the agenda
 - First item:
 - High or medium priority
 - Not too long
 - Easy for the group
 - Second item: Can be more difficult and take longer
 - Alternate short/long items and hard/easy items
 - Third item: Provide time for announcements and future logistics
 - Fourth item: Evaluation of the meeting at the end

IMPORTANCE AND USE OF AGENDAS

	For Chairs / Meeting Facilitators	For Participants
Before Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To identify what should/could be handled during the meeting - To define a road map (process) to accomplish desired end results - To identify appropriate participants or guests for a topic - To define the preparation required for participants to effectively participate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To know what to prepare/how much preparation is needed - To have the opportunity to think through issues beforehand in order to come fully equipped to meaningfully discuss
During Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To keep meeting on track - Acts as a group agreement for direction of the meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To know what is expected; whether and how to participate - To assist in keeping meeting on track
After Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To evaluate success of the meeting - To plan follow-up meeting agendas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To evaluate success of the meeting

Source: 1990 Confluence Northwest- PO BOX 8182, Portland, OR 97207 TM

SAMPLE AGENDA

Agenda

Monday, March 2, 2020 (7:00 PM)
Beaverton Swim Center, 12850 SW 3rd St

- 7:00 – 7:05 Call to Order, Welcome, Introductions
- 7:05 – 7:10 Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue (TVF&R) Report – Fire Station 67
- 7:10 – 7:20 Beaverton Police Report
- 7:20 – 7:25 Tualatin Hills Park & Rec Report – Heath Wright
- 7:25 – 7:30 Beaverton Committee for Community Involvement (BCCI) Report – Jonathan Todd Kourlas
- 7:30 – 7:35 City Update – Maria Aguilar Rodriguez
- 7:35 – 7:40 CBNAC Officers report –
Approval of previous minutes – Amanda Clark
Treasury Report – Ryan Shaw
- 7:40 – 8:00 Neighborhood Review Meeting—
Brandy Smay, Emerio Design
Proposed Residential Development,
13300 SW Farmington Rd.
- 8:00 – 8:20 Update on the Downtown Design Project
Steve Regner, Senior Planner
Community Development Department
City of Beaverton
- 8:20 – 8:30 Matching Grant Application
Kevin Teater, Beaverton Downtown Association
Heritage Mural Project with Beaverton High School
- 8:30 – 8:45 Old Business—
CBNAC Community Dinner & Meeting, Spring 2020
- 8:45 – 8:50 Visitor Comments, Announcements, Concerns, and
Wrap Up
- 8:50 Adjourn

Upcoming Events

Sat, Mar 7 –Coffee with a Cop
Brickhaus Coffe, 10 am - Noon

**Sat, Mar 7 – Downtown Design
Open House**
City Library, 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

**Mon, Mar 9 – Downtown Design
Open House**
City Library, 5:30 am – 7:30 pm

Need More Information:

City Main Line
503-526-3497

Police Non-Emergency Dispatch –
503-629-0111

Development Questions?
503-526-2420

Code Enforcement
503-526-2270


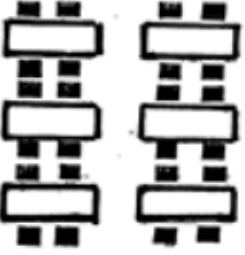

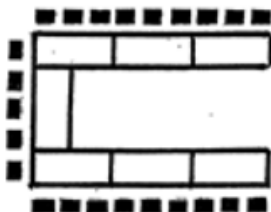
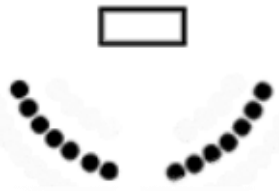
City Library
503-644-2197

THPRD - 503-629-6312

TVF&R – 503-649-8577

For a complete list of upcoming
events and services visit
www.BeavertonOregon.gov

EXAMPLE ROOM ARRANGEMENTS

Arrangement	Advantage	Disadvantage
<p>Theater style seating; all chairs in rows facing the front</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourages focus on slides/videos/presenters (if applicable) - May be appropriate format for highly controlled "feedback" meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Audience tends to be passive - Makes participatory discussion difficult (since all chairs are facing forward)
<p>Group seated at small tables</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexible: allows people to focus on speaker or panel at the front of the room, and also allows small group interaction and discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May be difficult for whole group to interact - Tables can be a barrier - Requires more space/needs a larger room
<p>Closed circle or rectangle</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourages eye contact and interaction among the whole group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No single focal point - If group is larger than 15 or 20, they may be too distant from each other to see or hear clearly
<p>Semi-circle or rectangle with tables</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allows group to focus on facilitator/each other - Allows facilitator to move closer to individuals as needed - Reduces interpersonal conflict (if applicable) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If group is larger than 15 or 20, they may be too distant from each other to see or hear clearly - Tables can be a barrier
<p>Semi-circle without tables</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No barriers between people - Can accommodate larger groups - Allows group to focus on facilitator/each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May be uncomfortable for people used to having tables - Cups, writing materials have to be placed on the floor

MEETING ROLES

Leadership is an essential key to a successful meeting. The Chair's job is to orchestrate the meeting process as the meeting facilitator.

NAC Chair's Role –

- Keep the group focused by:
 - Creating an agenda and distributing it to the members
 - Adjusting agenda as necessary
 - Following the agenda
 - Keeping the meeting moving
 - Being aware of time and involvement of the group
 - Bringing discussion to a close when needed or as time runs out
 - Summarizing often and remaining objective
- Create a safe environment by:
 - Enforcing ground rules
 - Protecting participants from personal attack
 - Guiding any conflict to closure
- Closing effectively by:
 - Developing "next steps"
 - Getting commitments for follow through from other members
 - Summarizing accomplishments
 - Evaluating the meeting

Recorder's Role –

- Listen to what is said
- Record all ideas as given (no editorializing)
- Ask participants if what has been recorded is accurate
- List actions needed, by whom, when, where and what
- Distribute the notes within a reasonable time

Board Member's / Other Participant's Roles –

- Attend and participate in the meeting
- Be on time
- Know purpose of the meeting and come prepared
- Support and follow the ground rules
- Encourage and support others and keep an open mind
- Keep personal issues away from agenda items
- Contribute their knowledge and expertise to the group

GUIDELINES FOR GROUND RULES

An important first step that you can take is to decide on a set of guidelines for communication for your meetings. The concept of ground rules is based on the belief that everyone involved in the meeting be treated equally and fairly. Ground rules explicitly spell out behavior and procedures that people normally consider fair but often abandon in the dynamic interaction of a group. Establishing guidelines will serve to create a common understanding and expectation among participants and help make your meetings run more smoothly.

Ground Rule Types

Behavioral Guidelines – These ground rules cover how the group is going to conduct itself

Examples:

- We will treat each other with respect
- Encourage involvement from everyone
- It's okay to disagree with one another

Process Guidelines – How individuals are going to talk with each other

Examples:

- Only one person talks at a time
- Use "I" statements instead of "you" statements
- Use good listening skills (paraphrasing, clarifying, validating)
- Listen for understanding, not just a response
- Watch negative body language

Procedural Guidelines – These ground rules include any guidelines for how the meeting will proceed

Examples:

- When one of us (board members) misses a meeting, it is their responsibility to get filled in
- Participants are prepared for the meeting and arrive on time
- Meetings will begin and end on time
- Robert's Rules of Order will be used for official business

EFFECTIVE LISTENING TIPS

As genuine listening has become a rare gift – the gift of time. It helps build relationships, solve problems, ensure understanding, resolve conflicts and improve accuracy.

1. Face the speaker and maintain eye contact

Trying to talk to someone while they scan the room, look at a phone screen or gaze out the window is like trying to hit a moving target. Look at them even if they don't look at you.

2. Be attentive, but relaxed

Be present, pay attention, remain ready to serve. Mentally screen out distractions, like background activity and noise. Don't be distracted by your own thoughts, feelings, or biases.

3. Keep an open mind

Listen without judging the other person or mentally criticizing the things they say. Listen without jumping to conclusions. Remember that the speaker is using language to represent the thoughts and feelings inside their brain. You don't know what those thoughts and feelings are.

4. Listen to the words and try to picture what the speaker is saying.

Allow your mind to create a mental model of the information being shared. Whether a literal picture, or an arrangement of abstract concepts, your brain will do the necessary work if you stay focused, with senses fully alert. When listening for long stretches, concentrate on and remember key words and phrases.

5. Don't interrupt and don't impose your "solutions"

Interrupting sends a variety of messages. It says: "I'm more important than you are;" "What I have to say is more interesting, accurate or relevant;" "I don't really care what you think;" "I don't have time for your opinion;" "This isn't a conversation, it's a contest, and I'm going to win". When listening to someone talk about a problem, refrain from suggesting solutions. If you must give an opinion, first ask, 'Would you like to hear my ideas?'

6. Wait for the speaker to pause to ask clarifying questions

When you don't understand something, of course you should ask the speaker to explain it to you. But rather than interrupt, wait until the speaker pauses. Then say something like, "Would you back up a second? I didn't understand what you just said about..."

7. Ask questions only to ensure understanding

Our questions lead people in directions that may have nothing to do with where they thought they were going. Sometimes we work our way back to the original topic, but often we don't. When you notice that your question has led the speaker astray, take responsibility for getting it back on track.

8. Try to feel what the speaker is feeling

If you feel sad when the person with whom you are talking expresses sadness, joyful when they express joy, fearful when they describe fears, convey those feelings through your facial expressions and words – then your effectiveness as a listener is assured.

9. Give the speaker regular feedback

Show that you understand where the speaker is coming from by reflecting the speaker's feelings. "You must be thrilled!", "What a terrible ordeal for you!" Nod or show your understanding through appropriate facial expressions and an occasional well-timed "hmmm" or "uh huh." The idea is to give the speaker some proof that you are actively listening.

10. Pay attention to what isn't said – to nonverbal cues

If you exclude email, the majority of direct communication is probably nonverbal. We glean a great deal of information about each other without saying a word. Facial expressions around the eyes, the set of the mouth, the slope of the shoulders are all clues to what the person is trying to express.

Source: Dianne Schilling, "10 Steps to Effective Listening", Forbes Magazine

DECISION MAKING

A critical part of all NAC work is decision making. Your goal is to make the best decisions you can with the information that you have. Decisions can be made either by consultation, by vote, or by consensus.*

- **Consultative Method:** The leader of the group makes the decision after consulting with members of the group.
- **Consensus Method:** The members of the group agree together that they are in absolute agreement on a decision or that they all can "live with" the decision.

Possible Levels of Consensus

- Unqualified "YES!"
 - It's perfectly acceptable
 - I can live with it, but I am not enthusiastic
 - I do not fully agree. I want to express my view, but I will support the decision of the group
- **Voting Method:** A majority of votes cast by board members constitutes a decision.

***Official business of the NAC**

(approving minutes, allocating funds, Land Use decisions, etc.) needs to be done in accordance with the NAC's bylaws, which require a motion, a second and a vote by board members.

“PARKING LOT” TOOL

The parking lot is a useful tool that provides a place for ideas that are off the subject of the agenda. It allows the group to acknowledge and save ideas without getting sidetracked by them. It also helps reduce the repetition of the one-track mind participant by having his/her issue up on the chart with a promise to deal with it eventually. Title a flip chart “PARKING LOT” and post it where everyone can see it. As issues arrive add them to the parking lot to deal with later.

Note: The group must be committed to return to the parking lot to decide when and how those issues will be handled.

MANAGING CONFLICT

Conflict is nothing more than two or more people having different views about things that are important to them. When handled in a constructive manner, conflict can be a catalyst for understanding and respect, real dialogue and sharing, increased self-awareness and new ways of doing things. Conflict is best resolved when the process for resolution is collaborative, not competitive. The facilitator usually guides the resolution process. When conflict arises in your meetings, try these guidelines:

- Separate the person from the issue
- Focus on interests not positions (why you want a particular solution)
- Listen for understanding (seek first to understand, then to be understood)
- Look for common ground
- Brainstorm mutually beneficial solutions
- Agree on solutions that meet the most interests of the parties

INTERVENTIONS: WHEN TO STEP IN

An intervention is an action by the facilitator to bring about some change in the meeting process. The goal of an intervention is to keep the meeting positive, productive, safe and on task. Interventions can be subtle or can be obvious. The goal in all cases is to maintain the group and, to the fullest extent possible, help individuals keep their dignity intact so that they can remain engaged and invested members of the group.

Disruptions to a meeting's progress can come from two sources:

- **Group situations** – for example the group is tired, confused, off track, uncomfortable, dealing inappropriately with a conflict, etc.
- **Individual behaviors of the group members** – for example, individuals who dominate the conversation, attach other group members or the facilitator, refuse to participate or interrupt others, etc.

Methods for Intervening in Group Situations

- **Step 1 – Read the Group**
Pay attention to changes in the group's energy or focus.
- **Step 2 – Check with Yourself**
Check to assess whether this is your issue or really a group issue. What are you feeling? Are you

confused, tense, angry, frustrated? Where is your energy level? Is your reading of the group coming from something in particular to you or is it an accurate reading of the group?

- **Step 3 – Name What You Perceive**

Mirror to the group the problematic behavior you are seeing. Use descriptive rather than blaming language.

- **Step 4 – Check Your Perception**

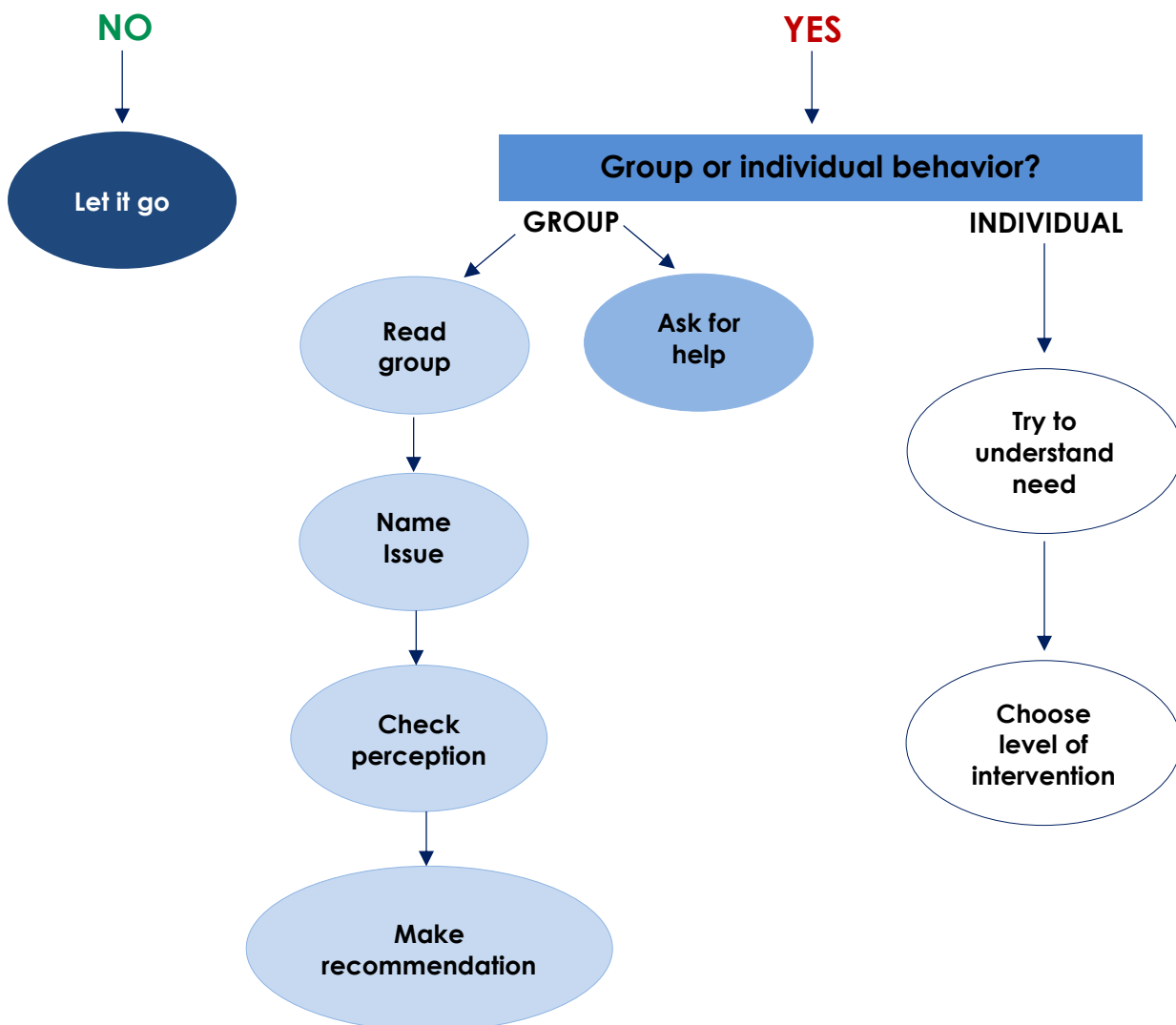
Ask the group if your interpretation of the behavior is accurate.

- **Step 5 – Make a Recommendation**

Offer a suggestion for how to resolve the problem. If the group disagrees with your idea, or has a different suggestion, go with what works for the group.

DIAGRAM: INTERVENING IN GROUP SITUATIONS

Does the behavior interfere with the group's ability to accomplish its task, make others uncomfortable or affect your ability to facilitate the meeting?



DEALING WITH DIFFICULT BEHAVIORS

Step 1 – Assess what the behavior is and what the underlying person's need might be.

Step 2 – Decide what kind of intervention to make. Always begin with the minimum intervention necessary to succeed, increasing the level of intervention only as required.

Levels of Intervention

LEVEL 1

- Ignore the difficult behavior and treat the person's core idea as a legitimate concern using whatever summarizing or reframing if necessary.
 - If it is on target for the group's current work, integrate it into their work by recording it in the appropriate place or opening discussion on it.
 - If it is off subject, use the parking lot tool to put off discussion until a later time.
- Approach the problem indirectly by stating the problem in terms of your own need. For example *"I'm having trouble hearing the person speaking; it would really help me if only one person speaks at a time."*
- If a ground rule exists that would solve the problem, point to the list of ground rules and remind the group without naming or directly interfacing with the person.
- Naming the behavior in general, rather than pinning it on one person, can be effective.

LEVEL 2

- If the behavior continues, name it. For example, *"Joe, that is the second time that you have raised that concern."* Check that you understand the concern. If you have written it down in the minutes, ask the individual if what is written expresses the concern accurately.

LEVEL 3

- If the behavior continues, speak to the person privately during a break.

LEVEL 4

- As a last resort confront the person publicly. If necessary, ask the person to leave if they cannot stop the behavior. This level is rarely used because it is counterproductive for your relationship with the person and for the cohesiveness of the group.

END OF MEETING

At the end of the meeting the Chair should:

- Review any decisions made
- Make sure board members understand what is to be done for the next meeting
- Make sure the Recorder will have the minutes to everyone in a reasonable time
- Ask if there is any feedback about how the meeting went and/or suggestions for improvements for the next meeting

APPENDIX TOOLKIT

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE MEETING LEADER

1. Has a clear objective for the meeting.
2. Is intentional/selective about the invited guest speakers.
3. Prepares an agenda and distributes it in advance of the meeting.
4. Arrives early enough to check the arrangements.
5. Starts the meeting promptly, regardless of who is present.
6. Follows the agenda.
7. Manages time and concludes the meeting as scheduled.
8. Elicits everyone's participation.
9. Helps in the resolution of conflict.
10. Maintains proper control of the discussion.
11. Helps the group reach closure on decision points.
12. Summarizes accomplishments at the end of the meeting and clarifies any actions to be taken.
13. Requests evaluative feedback from participants.
14. Takes agreed upon action.
15. Follows up on actions to be taken by others.

Source: Marion E. Haynes, *Effective Meeting Skills: A Practical Guide for More Productive Meetings*

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

1. An agenda is prepared prior to the meeting.
2. Meeting participants have an opportunity to contribute to the agenda.
3. Advance notice of meeting time and place is provided to those invited.
4. Meeting facilities are comfortable and adequate for the number of participants.
5. The meeting began on time.
6. The meeting has a scheduled end time.
7. The use of time is monitored throughout the meeting.
8. Everyone has an opportunity to present their point of view.
9. Participants listen attentively to each other.
10. There are periodic summaries as the meeting progresses.
11. No one person tends to dominate the discussion.
12. Everyone has a voice in decisions made at the meeting.
13. The meeting typically ends with a summary of accomplishments.
14. The meeting is periodically evaluated by participants.
15. People can be depended on to carry out any action agreed to during the meeting.
16. Minutes of the meeting are provided to each participant following the meeting.
17. The meeting leader follows up with participants on actions agreed to during the meeting.
18. The appropriate and necessary people can be counted on to attend each meeting.

Source: Marion E. Haynes, *Effective Meeting Skills: A Practical Guide for More Productive Meetings*

EXAMPLE ICEBREAKERS

Icebreaker Questions Good for Meetings

- What sport would you compete in if you were in the Olympics?
- What was the worst job you ever had?
- You can have anyone fictional as your imaginary friend, who do you choose and why?
- What would your superpower be and why?
- As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
- What is your favorite holiday or tradition and why?
- What is your favorite breakfast food?
- What is your favorite time of the day and why?
- Are you a coffee or tea person?
- If you had a choice, would you choose teleportation or flying?
- What is one career you wish you could have?

Other Icebreaker Questions

- What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?
- When you die, what do you want to be remembered for?
- What is your favorite item you've bought this year?
- What would be the most surprising scientific discovery imaginable?
- What is your absolute dream job?
- What would the title of your autobiography be?
- Say you're independently wealthy/don't have to work, what would you do with your time?
- If you had to delete all but 3 apps from your smartphone, which ones would you keep?
- What is your favorite magical or mythological animal?
- What would your dream house be like?
- If you could add anyone to Mount Rushmore who would it be; why?
- You're going sail around the world, what's the name of your boat?
- What fictional family would you be a member of?
- What is your favorite television network?

Funny Ice Breaker Questions

- What is one article of clothing someone could wear that would make you walk out of a date with them?
- What was the worst style choice you ever made?
- Have you ever been told you look like someone famous, who was it?
- If you could bring back any fashion trend what would it be?
- What was your first car? Did you give it a name? Does your current car have a name?
- You have your own late-night talk show, who do you invite as your first guest?
- What was your least favorite food as a child? Do you still hate it, or do you love it now?
- If you had to eat one meal every day for the rest of your life what would it be?
- What is your most used emoji?

MEETING SITUATION SOLUTIONS

1. Dominating the discussion

A person talks too often, too long, or too loud, making it difficult for others to participate.

- Stop the person, thank them, and say you'd like to hear from someone else.
- Call attention to the agenda and timeframes.
- Break eye contact. Move away from the person. Stop giving them focused attention.
- Move closer and closer to the person, maintaining eye contact. Get in front of them. The problematic behavior will start to stand out (even to the person).
- Summarize what the person has said and move to someone else.
- Give the person a time limit.
- Before the discussion starts, pose a standard for the length of comments. For example: "Let's hear from a few people for no more than 2 minutes each."
- Propose a ground rule that asks people to monitor their airtime. Explain that for some this means talking less; for others it means talking more.

2. Inserting personal agendas

A person continually inserts a concern, a disagreement, or an alternative agenda item.

- Ask the person how what they are saying relates to the current agenda item.
- Record the point, thank the person, and move on.
- Ask the person what they want the group to do with the input.
- Give the person a time limit.

3. Repeating the same point over and over

A member of the group keeps repeating the same thing.

- Acknowledge the importance of the point and the person's passion, advocacy, or determination.
- Demonstrate that they have been heard and the point recorded.
- Explain how and when the point will be dealt with.
- Ask directly if the person can "let it go for now."
- Give the person a final time-limited opportunity to make the point.

4. Talking off subject

A member's talking is irrelevant to the group's task or out of sequence with the agenda.

- Ask them to relate what they are saying to the current agenda.
- Ask if the group can come back to their point and record it on a parking lot sheet.
- Ask others if they have anything to add to what the person said.
- Stop them. Tell them it's not appropriate now. Bring it up later under a different part of the agenda.

5. Having side conversations

There are people making private comments to one another.

- Invite them to share what is being said.
- Stop the conversation, be quiet, and look at the people talking.
- Ask them to stop.

- Ask if they would please join the group.
- Move closer to the people having the side conversation.
- Repeat the topic under discussion and ask if everyone can focus on having one conversation at a time.
- Point out that the whispering and talking is distracting.

6. Being constantly negative or antagonistic, or presenting hostile demeanor

Some members are constantly naysayers, doubters and cynics. Nothing is OK and nothing will work.

- Acknowledge their points of view.
- Make a special point of thoroughly paraphrasing their view the first couple of times they speak. Stick very close to their exact wording.
- Point out the negative pattern.
- Ask if there is any part of the topic at hand that they feel good about.
- Ask for their opinions about what is needed. Record the opinions. Ask the group to respond.

7. Interrupting others

People are cutting one another off or jumping into a conversation too soon.

- Enforce any related ground rule.
- Stop the interrupter and ask them to wait while the group allows the speaker to complete their thought or point.
- Ask people who feel impatient to write down their thoughts rather than blurt them out.
- When your group has 9 or more members, establish a hand-raising rule.
- Be neutral and consistent. Don't let some interrupt but not others.

8. Attacking, criticizing, or picking an argument

Some people are going after other members, the speaker or the facilitator.

- Describe, non-judgmentally, what the person is doing.
- Stop any argument. Ask for and record a statement of each position. Engage the other group member in discussing their positions.
- Ask the person what the group could do to respond to their concern.

9. Clowning

Sometimes a person may overuse humor, act silly, or joke about everything. These are usually attention-getting behaviors if they are regular and patterned.

- Ignore the behavior and the person.
- Ask the person to stop.
- Describe what is going on and point out its distracting quality.
- Talk to the person privately, after the meeting or during a break.
- If the person is really disrupting the meeting take a break. Talk to them. Come back with a structure and focus on the agenda.

EXAMPLE STATEMENTS

Introducing Roles, Ground-Rules

- “I want you all to be clear about my role as the meeting facilitator...”
- “My job is to direct the meeting, keep us focused on the agenda, ensure equal participation and make process suggestions.”
- “I will remain neutral during the discussion and will only be assisting the process of the meeting.”
- “Our basic ground rule for the NAC meeting is we will treat everyone equally and fairly.”
- “Decisions are made by a vote of the board members, but anyone in attendance may contribute to the discussion.”
- “While we use Robert’s Rules of Order during the meeting, we will accommodate anyone who is unfamiliar with the rules, so they are able to participate.”
- “Does anyone have questions about the ground rules?”
- “Can the group agree to accept and abide by these simple rules?”

Asking for Input / Drawing Out Responses

- “Are you saying you’re worried about....?”
- “Thanks for bringing that up. It’s an important point to consider.”
- “Derek, you haven’t said anything. I’d like to know what you think.”
- “Let’s hear from you, Albert.”

Paraphrasing

- “I think that Pam’s point is that... Have I understood you right?”
- “It sounds like the situation we’re describing is...”
- “I think what I’m hearing is that the problem is...”
- “So, one alternative solution might be...”
- “You seem to be saying that...”

Orienting the Group / Staying on Track

- “Ok, I’m looking for a common thread here.”
- “This seems like an issue for a longer discussion. I suggest that we add this discussion to the next agenda.”
- “I think that we have wondered away from our focus. The purpose of this discussion is to...”
- “How does what we’re talking about here relate to the topic we started on?”
- “These are all good ideas, but I don’t think we’re ready for that until we decide on.... We will come back to that.”
- “We were doing fine a minute ago, but I think that we got distracted. Some of you look as if you’ve tuned out a bit. Let’s do a little backtracking and review the record... Can anyone remember what we were trying to do?”
- “Okay, we said we were going to talk about (subject). I’m not sure that’s the problem you’re addressing now.”

Clarifying

- “I think that’s an important issue, and I’m not sure we all got it. Can you repeat that?”
- “Larry, what do you think Lauren is trying to say?”

Managing Time

- “We’ve got 10 minutes to see if we can reach agreement on…”
- “We’re moving pretty fast here. Let’s slow down a bit.”
- “I think we may need to spend more time on this. Did some of the others here have any comments or questions to add?”
- “We’ve spent 15 minutes on this. Do we want to give it more time, and remove something else from the agenda?”

Dealing with Criticism, Reticence & Tension

- “We agreed we weren’t going to criticize each other’s ideas at this stage. Do you have an idea you would like to add to the list?”
- “It’s okay to see the issue differently at any stage in the process. But at this stage we’re just getting out on paper everyone’s perceptions and ideas…”
- “Okay, that’s Pam’s statement. Now let’s brainstorm some other ideas.”
- “Bob, it looks like you don’t believe that we’ll be able to reach consensus on this… You might be right. The process of reaching agreement can sometimes be frustrating. But we won’t know if we can until we try… Are you willing to give it a chance?”
- “It seems like there’s more on this issue. Is there something else that needs to be discussed?”
- “In the long run, it’s going to be much better to deal with the real issue than to ignore it.”
- “Is there a more general situation that this problem is a part of?”
- “I sense that we are not addressing the issue. Is that right?”
- “In my experience, it is unusual to find total agreement on a subject as this. Is there more here than people are saying so far?”
- “Ron, I’m not sure your questions were fully answered… Is that right?”
- “The issue of (name issue) seems to be the stumbling block in this discussion. Is that right?”
- “This discussion seems to be getting bogged down. Would it make sense to divide it into smaller subtopics and discuss each one individually?”

Handling Objections / Argumentativeness

- “I think that’s an important concern. What can we do about it?”
- “This discussion is hard, and I think we’re doing pretty well at listening to each other. Let’s state clearly that the objective is to (state objective), not to establish whether Ross has a better approach than John.”
- “You look concerned… Do you want to say something?”

Dealing with Side Conversations

- “Let’s try to keep a single focus here. We won’t get anything done if we’re going off in different directions.”
- “Jim, did you have a comment you wanted us to get?”

Dealing with Dominance by One Participant

- “We’ve already taken up some time on this. Let’s make sure we hear from everybody.”
- “I’d like to hear all the views on this.”

Dealing with Resistance / Hostility

- “I can see a couple of alternatives here. We seem to be really spinning our wheels now. If the process is the problem, and that’s what Alice is saying, one idea would be for me to step aside as facilitator for a while and have one of you suggest and facilitate some procedures for the group. Another idea might be to take a short break now while I talk with any of you who have suggestions as to how we might revise our process and facilitate differently after the break. How do these options sound? Are there other ideas?”
- “Let’s us a round robin just to get the ideas out, all the different perspectives.”
- “Larry says we’re not getting anywhere. Does anyone else have a comment on this?”

(In the face of strong attack or continued disruption, where progress is hampered by the tension created, be willing to recess or end the meeting.)

Generating / Evaluating Alternatives

- “Let’s brainstorm all the ways we might...”
- “Does anyone know what other organizations have done on this...?”
- “We have seven alternatives; let’s rank them in order. Write down on a piece of paper your top three.”
- “I’d like to check out how the group feels about alternatives A and B. How many could go with option A?... Option B?”
- “We have quite a list. We may not be able to work with all of these in this meeting. Who would like to pinpoint one that seems critical?”

Consensus Building

- “Who likes the proposal?”
- “Who can live with the proposal?”
- “Who cannot live with the proposal?”
- “I think the point that Sally just raised is important to keep in mind.”
- “Who would like to propose an action?”
- “Is there anyone who could not live with this proposal?”
- “Can you think of any changes that would satisfy your concern?”
- “Can you see a way this can be dealt with?”
- “Can everyone live with this, as revised? Is there anyone who can’t accept this as it now stands?”
- “Are there any on the list that you know now that you can’t accept, at least as they are now written?”
- “Does everyone agree we can cross #7 off the list?”
- “Do we have agreement that...”
- “My sense is that we have agreement that...”
- “Are there any objections to the proposal that...”

Source: Trudy Cooper, Portland Water Bureau