Effective Meeting Toolkit

Table of Contents

Introduction: A Meeting of the Minds 2
Is This Meeting Really Necessary? 4

We Have To Start Meeting Like This 6
Virtual Meetings: The Next Best Thing To Being There 8
In-Person Meetings: We Gotta Talk 9
Step One: Getting Your Act Together 10
Step Two: Showtime! 14
Facilitator Responsibilities 17
Meeting Management Tools 18
Consensus 20
Handling Problem Situations 21
Critical Steps 22
Step Three: After the Curtain Falls 24
Meeting Evaluation Form 26
You've Got Meeting Style! 27
Stand-Up Meetings 27
Round Table Discussion 28
Focus Groups 29
Brainstorming 31
One-on-One Meetings 32
The Art of Feedback 34

Appendix A 35
Meeting Planner Worksheet
Meeting Guidelines

Appendix B 42
Facilities and Equipment

Appendix C 48
Meeting Tools

Appendix D 53
Warm-Up Activities

Appendix E 55
Evaluation Sheet

Introduction:
A Meeting of the Minds

Meetings are an essential ingredient in a professional environment. In most companies and agencies, meetings are the driving force behind new ideas, problem solving, and developing corporate strategies. In fact, most Federal employees, particularly managers, spend 40% of their day in meetings. It is critical that the best use be made of this time.

This issue was addressed during the Patent and Trademark Office Reengineering process. The outcome was the development by the Organizational Culture Team of an Immediate Initiative to address the "Effective Meeting" concept. An Effective Meeting Team (EMT) was established to design a procedure for conducting effective meetings. The EMT's research has shown that even minimum training and an effective tool (such as the *Effective Meeting ToolKit*) can increase overall productivity by 58% and reduce meeting time by over 28%.* The *ToolKit* includes basic and advanced techniques to help PTO employees conduct more effective meetings.

What Is a Meeting?

Webster's New World Dictionary defines "meeting" this way: **1.** A coming together of persons or things. **2**. An assembly; gathering of people, especially to discuss or decide on matters. **3.** An assembly or place of assembly for purposes of worship, as among Friends or Quakers. **4**. A point of contact or intersection; junction. **5**. A hostile encounter; duel.

Yes, a meeting is all of these things. But, above all, a *meeting* is an opportunity: to come together, to discuss, to decide, to grapple with important issues. And the only thing for certain is that as long as your work requires the cooperation and understanding of other people, you will meet to talk about it. Yes, meetings are inevitable!

Why Invest Time in Becoming a Better Meeting Leader?

Developing effective meeting skills will make you a more valuable employee. Possessing outstanding presentation skills to conduct a well orchestrated meeting will also provide you the chance to:

- Accomplish objectives
- Earn recognition from your peers and superiors
- Practice and improve leadership skills

**The Art of Effective Visual Presentation*

But more importantly an effective meeting offers you the opportunity to:

- Communicate and empower employees and customers
- Reach productive decisions
- Generate new ideas
- Promote meaningful decisions and interaction

With the *Effective Meeting ToolKit* you will discover basic and advanced techniques to help you conduct more productive meetings, while you develop the skills you need to achieve your goals and become a more valuable resource.

As you weave your way through this kit and fill out the Meeting Planner Worksheet (Appendix A), you will find that you must make a series of important decisions throughout the process. This kit will help you make all of these decisions and give you plenty of options for planning a meeting that will shine!

Is This Meeting Really Necessary?

As productivity becomes more essential to corporate survival, the efficient use of employee time has become more important to each company’s profit equation. Take a look at the table below to see how much a simple one hour meeting costs on a per-person basis, and you can understand why.

The costs of even a small meeting can add up quickly. Include the time traveling to the meeting, travel expenses (if any) and the time spent catching up on work that would otherwise have been accomplished, and the cost skyrockets. That is why it is important to develop meeting skills that help you communicate your message clearly, to the right people, in a timely manner - and why it is important to avoid unnecessary meetings altogether.

Consider the Cost

Annual Salary	**Hourly cost of meeting**					
$62,500	$125	250	375	500	625	1,250
$50,000	$100	200	300	400	500	1000
$37,000	$75	150	225	300	375	750
$25,000	$50	100	150	200	250	500
$12,500	$25	50	75	100	125	250
	2	4	6	8	10	20

Number of attendees in meeting

(The Art of Effective Visual Presentations, 3M)

Wrong Reasons To Hold a Meeting

All of us have been involved in meetings that were a waste of time. Often, the information presented could have been simply posted on the bulletin board. So, how do you determine whether a meeting is necessary? Generally, you should ***not*** hold a meeting when:

- **Your objective is simply to “stay in touch.”**
- **You are unprepared.**
- **The schedule can not support the time required.**
- **No information needs to be presented.**

Right Reasons To Hold a Meeting

There are, however, plenty of excellent reasons to hold meetings. A well-planned, well-executed meeting can be the perfect vehicle for producing new ideas, overcoming obstacles, and devising future goals.

For example, consider holding a "virtual meeting" when you:

- **Can get your information across with a memo, e-mail, or a fax--and still achieve your objective.**
- **Want to poll staff or co-workers or elicit individual feedback on an issue, document, or plan.**

On the other hand, you should hold an "in-person" meeting when you want to:

- **Explain a plan or project that might elicit questions or feedback.**
- **Tell people what to do. Explain the full scope of a project.**
- **Report progress on current projects and examine goals.**
- **Gain consensus or support for an idea, obtain funding, or get support for a process already initiated.**
- **Define or solve a problem, bringing key players together to address problems and formulate solutions.**
- **Get consensus on a decision yet to be made on a pending issue.**
- **Provide training to communicate standardized information to a group.**
- **Build morale, provide special recognition, or report on achievements to heighten the spirits of those attending.**

We Have To Start Meeting Like This!

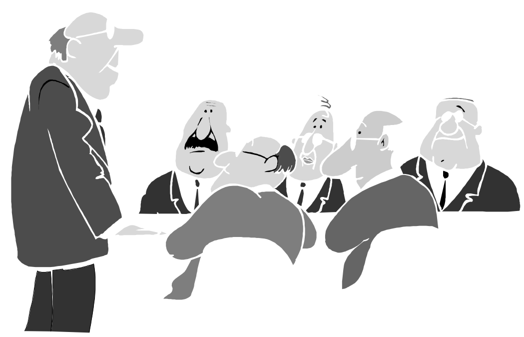
This *Toolkit* will walk you through many types of meeting styles to suit a variety of purposes. Before you plan your meeting, skim through the brief descriptions below to see what type and style meets your needs (See Appendix A - Meeting Planner Worksheet).

Virtual Meeting

Virtual meetings are held on the interoffice E-mail system (and can include people on the Internet as well). They are ideal when you simply have to give information, distribute minutes from another meeting, or take a poll.

In-Person Meetings

In-person meetings are ideal for planning, feedback, problem solving or decision making, and counseling. Depending on your objective, you can choose from the various styles of meetings listed below:



Stand-Up Meetings--When you need people to "think on their feet" and not get into complex discussions on a certain topic, the stand-up meeting is ideal. Stand-up meetings are also necessarily brief.

Round Table Discussion--Round table discussions are useful when there is a problem that needs to be solved or when many people will be reporting. This type of meeting is conducive to thoughtful discussion and questions.

Focus Groups--Focus groups are used to gather information from representatives of a target audience, user group, or customer. The leader takes a major role in posing questions and ferreting out opinions and ideas.

Brainstorming--When you are really stuck on a problem, brainstorming is the way to go. Brainstorming meetings are generally fast paced, informal (except that all major ideas are recorded), and fun.

One-on-One--When you need to discuss sensitive information or information that involves only one other person, it is appropriate to schedule a one-on-one meeting.

Virtual Meetings:
The Next Best Thing To Being There

A virtual meeting is used in disseminating information through the use of Microsoft Mail and your personal computer. This type of meeting is used in place of individuals meeting. If you decide that you can use a Virtual Meeting, your planning is greatly simplified.

The steps followed in this type of meeting are:

1. **Create a file folder on Microsoft mail so that all employees can extract information at any given time. (This file folder can be used as a historical repository for information that can be viewed by new and current employees).**
2. **Create a Group address in Microsoft Mail.**
3. **Decide on the information you need to disseminate (minutes of a meeting, important notice).**
4. **Format information in Microsoft Word or Word Perfect and attach as a mail message in Microsoft Mail.**
5. **Disseminate information by highlighting "Send."**

Example*:* The Deputy Assistant Commissioner of Patents holds a weekly meeting. The minutes of the meeting are sent to all the Directors through Microsoft Mail. The Directors review the minutes and send them to the next level. SPEs, in turn, send them to examiners and support staff. Feedback can work in the same fashion, only upward.

Tools*:* Personal computer, knowledge of Microsoft Mail (Office E-Mail) and how to use the attach command, and a shared file folder designated for your area on the network.

In-Person Meetings: We Gotta Talk

So, you have decided to hold an in-person meeting. To start you thinking about your meeting, consider the four basic types of meetings:

Planning	A meeting used to develop a new policy, procedure, or strategy that will affect current operations. This type of meeting can be very structured if the outcome is a working plan or strategy for implementation. **Example:** Review of examining procedure in response to a new case law. **Meeting Style:** Brainstorming, Round Table

Feedback	A meeting where participants are expected to be prepared to provide input, comments, or feedback on the information, which is often provided beforehand. This type of meeting can be very informative and useful as a data exchange between participants and the meeting organizer. **Example:** Feedback from staff on change in a proposed procedure or policy. **Meeting Styles:** Focus Groups, Brainstorming, Round Table

Problem Solving/ Decision Making	A meeting designed to solve a recognized or existing problem. **Example:** Excessive delays in typing or correcting office actions. **Meeting Styles:** Brainstorming, Round Table

Counseling	A meeting held to talk to a person who has acted inappropriately or who needs help in learning the specifics of a job. Counseling also includes performance reviews. Counseling sessions often touch on sensitive issues. **Example:** An examiner has promised or suggested to an attorney that a particular case will be approved before it has been reviewed. **Meeting Style:** One-on-One

Step One:
Getting Your Act Together

You should have a better sense now of your objective and of what kind of meeting you might like to hold. You should now begin to think of who should be invited, when and where you should hold your meeting, and what materials you are going to need. The following guidelines can help you plan your meeting.

So, Who's Coming?

Inviting the right people will go a long way to making your meeting a more meaningful experience for everyone present. To help you determine who should participate, ask yourself the following questions:

- **Who can give help on this problem?**
- **Who is involved with this subject?**
- **Who has or needs information on this problem?**
- **Whose authority do we need?**
- **Who will be interested?**

Experts show that meetings suffer much more from being too large than from being too small. It is important to maintain control over the size of your "guest" list for several reasons. The larger your group, the more complex your work may become. In a brainstorming meeting that includes four people, adding one additional person increases the complexity of discussion and problem-solving by 127 percent. Making sure you invite as few people as necessary will give you a better chance of making progress in a timely manner. Consider these guidelines when planning the size of your group:

- *Problem solving or brainstorming* sessions should include five people or less.
- *Problem-identification* meetings should involve 10 people or less. More may stall the process by introducing too many conflicting opinions and preventing a consensus.
- *For information sharing*, the number of people may vary, depending on the information you wish to relate. However, you can maintain some control by limiting the number of people involved to managers or division representatives who, in turn, can relate this information to their respective departments at staff meetings.

Another Time, Another Place

As you begin to pin down the time and place for your meeting, you may come up with concerns or questions. Some that are common to meeting planners are answered below:

What Is the Best Time To Have a Meeting?

There are two schools of thought on this issue; decide based on your own preferences and needs. You can expect your participants (and yourself) to be at their freshest in the mornings. On the other hand, if your meetings tend to drag on past their allotted time, try a meeting right before lunch or at the end of the day--both times when people are more eager to finish!

The same principles apply for the day of the week. In general, people are raring to go at the beginning of the week--and anxious to finish up their work by Friday.

"We Have So Many Meetings I Can't Get My Work Done!"

This *Toolkit* provides a game plan that should reduce the number of meetings you hold, turn some of them into "Virtual Meetings," and shorten and enliven those you cannot avoid. ***(Example: The General Electric Company's Medical Health Group has declared Wednesday as a "no- meeting day.")***

Also, as you plan and schedule your meetings, follow the general rule of thumb that ***nobody should spend more than half of any day in meetings***. People need time to absorb the content of meetings, to implement any assignments that come out of meetings, or to get regular work done. So schedule your meetings when others involved do not have a full schedule of meetings. And consider establishing 1 day a week when no meetings will be held.

Haven't We Met Before? A Case for the Regular Staff Meeting

There are people who swear by a regular staff meeting. And there is a place for them--when there is true business that needs to be accomplished. There is no one right answer to how often you should hold a "regular" meeting. The schedule for regular staff meetings that has proven to be most successful is once a week for about an hour. Other options to consider are:

Daily	**15-20 min**
Bi-Weekly	**30-60 min**
Monthly	**1 -2 hours**

And remember, a regular "staff meeting" can also be held as a Virtual Meeting, especially when you simply want to pass on noncontroversial information.

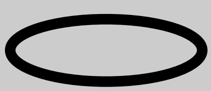
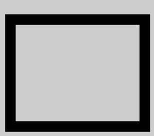
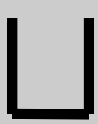
Does It Matter Where I Hold My Meeting?

Of course it matters! If you are not conducting a virtual meeting, try to get the best place you can that is within a reasonable distance from everyone's worksite. See Appendix B for a PTO Facilities/Equipment listing. There are three basic guidelines to consider when finding a good meeting place:

1. Try to find a designated room you can reserve.
2. Find a room with a comfortable temperature, good lighting, minimal distractions, and where you will have no interruptions.
3. Make sure the room is big enough.

What Is the Best Way To Set Up My Room?

The best rule of thumb for setting up a meeting room is to determine an arrangement that is comfortable and that will suit the style of your meeting. You may need to be creative to accommodate what is available. Just try to stay away from the traditional classroom setting where the "leader" stands in the front and lectures the participants or a situation that will be intimidating to someone in a counseling meeting. Several diagrams of appropriate seating arrangements are illustrated below:

 Circle	Groups of 6-20 people. Good for discussions, where there is no leader *(Knights of the Round Table).* Used in Round Table Discussions, Focus Groups, and Brainstorming Sessions
 Square	Groups of 6-12. Used in Focus Groups, Brainstorming Sessions, and Round Table Discussions (small groups or one large).
 U-Shaped	Groups of 30 or under. Best used when you expect heavy discussion. Conducive to all types of meetings.
 Rectangle	Groups of 6-30. Good for discussion/study groups. Conducive to all types of meetings

Confirming Your Logistics

So now you have chosen a space for your meeting, preferably a room with a comfortable temperature, good lighting, minimal distractions, and where you will have no interruptions. A day or so before your meeting, it is a very good idea to confirm that this space will be available. If an emergency has arisen or if your request has been lost, there should still be time to set up an alternative space or time. Also remember to set up your room as far in advance as possible--just in case you need more chairs or tables!

Preparing Your Materials

Provide participants with an agenda, participant list, materials for review, and assignments for the meeting--at least 2 days before you meet. See Appendix C for examples of agendas you can use. Remember, ***to save paper, time, and work***, you can distribute many items by the Office E-mail.

Step Two:
Showtime!

During your meeting, you will set the tone and be in charge of how well you meet your objectives. You will be the leader! Below are some reminders for people who lead meetings. The checklist that follows will also help you ensure that you have done everything you could to make your meeting a success.

You're the Boss--at Least for a Little While!

The leader of the meeting is responsible for providing guidance to the group and helping to unify it. All leaders must be prepared to fill a variety of roles:

• **Initiating**	• **Informing**
• **Orienting**	• **Integrating**
• **Clarifying**	• **Testing Possible Solutions**

A good meeting leader should help participants relax and help increase information retention. You can do this by:

• **Visualizing the meeting in advance**	• **Acting like a leader**
• **Arriving early**	• **Making people feel important**
• **Beginning with confidence and strength**	• **Being alert to pacing, grandstanding, sniping**

Circumstances change, and leaders must be prepared to listen and adapt. The following guidelines can help you guide your meeting effectively:

- **Make participants feel accepted**
- **Keep the group aware**
- **Promote an open atmosphere**
- **Work for consensus**
- **Ask productive questions**
- **Plan future action**
- **Build in an evaluation plan**

Finally, avoid these deadly meeting sins:

- **Coming unprepared**
- **Public chastisement**
- **Monopolizing the meeting**
- **Permitting interruptions**
- **Playing the comic**
- **Losing control**
- **Resenting questions**

In the beginning

- Begin on time ***(General Electric has meetings where participants outnumber the chairs by one. That means the last person in must stand -- but the meetings start on time.)***
- Introduce yourself and ask for introductions if appropriate.
- Announce the purpose of the meeting.
- Conduct a warm-up exercise if appropriate (see Appendix D).
- Set ground rules, for example:

  --The meeting starts on time. Latecomers must get updated afterwards.
  --One person speaks at a time.
  --No one speaks for more than 5 minutes ***(Monco, Inc., puts a cow bell in the middle of the meeting room. Anytime anyone thinks anyone else has droned on too long, he/she can ring the bell and the person speaking must end his or her dissertation.)***
  --Items not on the agenda will be put on hold for later discussion.
  --Everyone's input is desired.
  --The meeting will end on time.

The heart of the matter

- Set the stage.
- Follow the agenda, unless all participants agree to change it.
- Stay within time limits.
- Begin and end on time.
- Record minutes, assignments, decisions.
- Recognize new issues as they arise; agree on how/when to deal with them.
- Intervene when discussions go off point or are redundant.
- Summarize agenda items as they are completed to ensure understanding and consensus.

The last act

- Five minutes before quitting time, signal that the concluding time is near.
- Close the meeting with a summary of all decisions and agreements.
- Establish and assign action items.
- Determine next steps/give any specific instructions for taking action.
- Determine next meeting date.
- Ask for feedback on the meeting itself, to help you improve in the future!
- Close with a strong positive statement

Facilitator Responsibilities

- Keep the meeting focused and moving forward; respect time allocations.
- Intervene when the discussion fragments into multiple conversations.
- Tactfully prevent anyone from dominating or, conversely, prevent anyone from being overlooked.
- Ask questions, summarize, and clarify key points.
- Support participants during moments of confusion and doubt.
- Reinforce and capture ideas on flip charts.
- Test for consensus.
- Explain and clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Maintain objectivity.
- Mediate conflict resolution.
- Bring discussion to a close.

Meeting Management Tools

Agenda An agenda describes, in outline format, what will take place at any given meeting. An agenda should list the topics to be discussed, indicate who will lead the discussion on each topic, describe how the topic will be handled (e.g., presentation, discussion, video, etc.), suggest how much time will allotted to that topic, and describe an expected outcome. Agendas should be distributed at least 24 hours before the meeting, in order to allow participants time to prepare. Supporting information for each topic should accompany the agenda.

Ground Rules For any group to run smoothly, all participants should contribute to establishing ground rules to which the group can commit to adhere during the meeting.

Time Out/Process Check Every member of a group or team, not just the team leader or facilitator, is responsible for ensuring that ground rules and process issues are managed. If any group member feels there is a process problem he or she can call a "time out" or "process check," using the "T-shaped" time-out signal used in sports. This is intended as a neutral, non-threatening way of stopping the action, reminding the group of the ground rules and then getting on with the meeting.

Plus/Delta At the end of each meeting, an evaluation of what worked and what could be improved upon for the next meeting is generally helpful.

Minutes are a summary of what occurred during a meeting and act as a record for participants. The format could follow the format of the agenda and should be well-organized, brief, readable, and explanatory. They should be distributed soon after the meeting has concluded. Minutes should include:

- The date, time, attendance, and agenda
- A brief description of activities
- Reports of action taken between meetings
- Discussion summaries for each agenda item
- Agenda items for the next meeting
- Informational attachments distributed at meeting

Issues Chart A sheet of flip-chart paper can be posted at the start of the meeting as a method for keeping the group from diverting from the agenda. If an idea or topic arises that is not consistent with the agenda item being discussed at the time, it can be written on the chart as an issue to be handled at the end of the meeting. Group members can add items at will. At the end of the meeting, each is addressed either as an agenda item for the next or subsequent meetings or given to a group member to research for a presentation at a later date.

Consensus

Effective teams seek to make team decisions by the consensus process. If team members feel left out of a decision process, they typically won't support its implementation. Without having their voice heard, there's little chance for emotional ownership or a sense of buy-in.

A consensus decision is an idea **everyone** in the group…

- …sees as a fusion of opinions expressed
- …agrees that it represents common thinking
- …can live with and support
- …believes is in the best interest of the group

A consensus decision may not be every individual's preference or first choice, but it certainly isn't a proposal totally unacceptable to anyone. As a result, consensus decision-making is an open and fair method of reaching a level of agreement that produces greater support and buy-in than horsetrading, power struggles, domination, politicking, or voting. On the downside, it requires more time than other methods along with skilled facilitation of group discussion.

A Consensus Decision…

Is…	Isn't…
An agreement all support	Majority vote
Reflects common thinking	Most popular or powerful opinion
Full participation of each member	Unanimous vote
Everyone feels good about doing	Morally or ethically objectionable
No reservation that decision will work	Pressuring members to buy-in
No opposition to the decision	Everyone 100% satisfied
From exploring disagreement	The result of avoiding conflict
The result of win-win negotiating	Win-lose or lose-lose negotiating

Handling Problem Situations

Problem	Leader Behaviors
Low Level of Contribution	Ask questions to bring in participants Praise contributions when made Have members contribute in turn Assign reports in advance Call on participants by name
Excessive Contribution	Interrupt and make procedural suggestion Acknowledge contribution and ask for others Bring in participants who have said nothing Get together one-on-one
Arguing	Listen and respond with understanding to each Do not take sides Highlight meeting purpose Put meeting back on course Summarize/check for understanding Invite contributions of others
Rambling	Acknowledge contribution and restate focus Put meeting back on course Invite contributions of others
Laughter/Diversion	Allow to continue briefly in hopes it will end Put meeting back on course Summarize Take a short break
Late Arrivals	Start on time Praise those arriving on time Briefly summarize progress Have one-on-one meetings with habitual latecomers
Attacks on You	Keep your cool Seek information to establish if there is a problem Maintain other’s self-esteem Suggest settling matter at later date Summarize discussion prior to attack

Critical Steps

1. Explain the purpose and importance of the meeting.

The purpose should be a concise statement of what is to be achieved by the meeting. This statement should answer the questions: Why should I spend my time in this meeting? and Why is the discussion important to me and my organization? A clearly stated purpose provides a focus for the group. By explaining the importance of the meeting and what it means to group members, you will encourage cooperation and participation.

2. Review the agenda of the meeting.

An agenda is more than just a list of topics to be discussed – it outlines for participants the procedures you want to follow in discussing the topics. Since you probably distributed the agenda in advance of the meeting, you will need only briefly review the procedures to be followed, as well as the sequence of topics.

If appropriate, indicate how much time is allotted for each agenda item. Since the group's acceptance and support for the agenda is crucial, check with group members to determine if anything needs to be added or deleted.

3. Collect and clarify information relevant to the meeting.

At this point in the meeting, bring out all relevant information about each topic and check for thorough understanding. Avoid developing solutions or deciding on courses of action. However, if any constraints to investigating or resolving the issue exist, they must be brought out at this time. If you have information that is unknown to the group, introduce it and seek information from the group about concerns or information they feel should be considered regarding the topic. This helps group members to better understand the issues and encourages their involvement by showing them that you feel their contributions are worthwhile. **This step is required for each major issue on the meeting's agenda.**

4. Summarize any information discussed in the meeting.

Summarizing ensures that everyone has the same understanding of the information that has been discussed. If the issues are complex, you can take this opportunity to review content or further clarify information; if the discussion has been fairly simple, your summary will serve as a transition to the next step. A good summary is concise. **This step is required for each major issue on the meeting's agenda.**

5. Seek suggestions, solutions, or alternatives.

Before you provide answers or suggestions, you must first seek the ideas and suggestions of group members. They may be closer to a problem and able to offer solutions or alternatives you may have overlooked. In a addition, you are likely to gain more cooperation in reaching your stated objective, since people are more likely to commit to solutions they have helped develop. Seeking group suggestions is also an effective way to enhance the self-esteem of each individual; this in turn, increases the commitment of group members.

The challenge in gaining group commitment to a solution is to manage the group process so that you seek suggestions instead of dictating solutions. Two techniques that can be helpful as you do this are *brainstorming* and *building on suggestions*. Effective brainstorming involves seeking as many ideas from the group members as possible before evaluating the pros and cons of each idea with the group. When building on suggestions, the meeting leader begins by commenting on the part of the suggestion that is effective or desirable, and then adding a thought or suggestion that moves the original idea toward a desirable outcome. These approaches help maintain the self-esteem of the group members, maintain their active participation, and build commitment to taking action. **This step is required for each major issue on the meeting's agenda.**

6. Reach agreement of specific actions(s).

The group must agree on specific actions and responsibilities. You will need to summarize frequently and check for understanding to ensure group agreement. You will be able to achieve greater commitment if you allow participants to choose specific actions or assignments, if appropriate. Remember to specify *who* is responsible for *what* by *when*. **This step is required for each major issue on the meeting's agenda.**

7. Summarize and set follow-up date(s).

Regardless of how successful the discussion seems, it is meaningless if participants leave the meeting unsure of specific actions and responsibilities. A concise summary of agreements reached, specific actions, and responsibilities will ensure thorough understanding. By setting follow-up dates, you will indicate to the group the importance of the meeting. Follow-up dates also allow you to check progress and ensure that important actions are not being overlooked.

Step Three:
After the Curtain Falls

Whatever you do, do not stop now! A few critical steps after a meeting can make the difference between one that will be remembered and one that is quickly forgotten in the rush of other obligations. So, after your meeting, take a few minutes to evaluate the outcome and determine what you need to do to follow up.

How Did I Do?

Immediately after your meeting, take a minute to review the following questions. Future meetings will be improved by an honest evaluation of how it went--and how you did as a leader.

Review the success of your meeting:	**Evaluate your meeting leadership skills:**
• **Did the right people attend?**	• **What were my strong points?**
• **Was the agenda covered?**	• **Did I consult my agenda so that I and the participants knew where we were in the meeting process?**
• **Were the decisions or discussions productive?**	• **My weak points?**
• **Did you stay within the time frame or continue by consensus?**	• **Did I summarize at various key points during the meeting?**
• **Did people come prepared?**	• **Did I make effective use of my visuals?**
• **Did you meet your meeting objectives?**	• **At the end of my meeting, did I make it clear what had been accomplished and what was to happen as the end result?**

If the answer to any of these questions is "**NO**," outline the reasons and consider what actions you can take to avoid these pitfalls in the future. You may also wish to consider whether training or additional practice would improve your leadership skills.

Becoming a Better Meeting Participant

Those who attend a meeting have responsibilities as well. Just as you would wish others to show respect and courtesy during your meeting, participants should be certain to follow the simple rules on meeting etiquette listed below. After every meeting, it is a good idea to check the list to be sure that you have been the best possible participant!

- Be on time
- Be prepared
- Contribute
- Listen
- Follow stated objectives
- Cooperate

Follow Through: The Secret to Success

You have done a great job! Now, all you have to do is take the following steps to ensure that everyone else follows through on the decisions and action steps that were determined at your meeting:

- Prepare and distribute minutes (see Appendix C). Keep these to less than one page to ensure that everyone reads them. They should focus on decisions and action steps. Remember that these can be sent over the interoffice E-mail system.

- Act on or implement decisions of the meeting. Do not wait to follow up on the decisions that are made at your meeting. Others, who were there, will notice--and you are likely to forget what you were supposed to do as time passes.

- Plan any follow-up meetings or other activities. For best results, start back at the beginning of this *Toolkit*! And remember to put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting!

- Follow up and encourage participants to complete their resulting tasks.

Meeting Evaluation Form

Meeting Type______________________Meeting Leader___________________

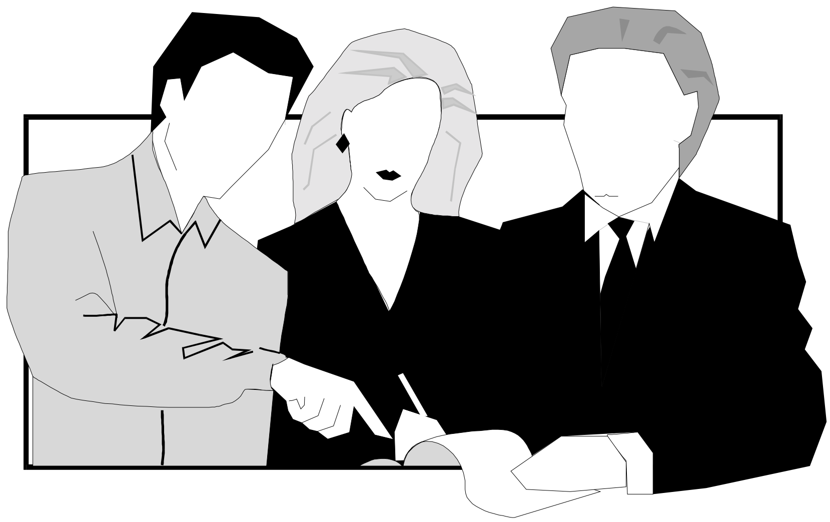
On a scale from 1-5 (1=Strongly Disagree; 5= Strongly Agree), respond to the following statements:

1. I understood why this meeting was being held and what outcomes were expected 1 2 3 4 5
2. I understood what was expected of the participants. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I understood how the meeting was to flow. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Most participants expressed themselves openly and directly. 1 2 3 4 5
5. Agreements were clear and conflicts explored and constructively managed. 1 2 3 4 5
6. The meeting proceeded as intended and achieved its purpose. 1 2 3 4 5
7. My participation contributed to the outcome. 1 2 3 4 5
8. Overall, I am satisfied with the meeting. 1 2 3 4 5
9. The Meeting Leader demonstrated the following effective behaviors.

10. The Meeting Leader should work on the following behaviors:

You've Got Meeting Style

Stand up Meetings



Traditionally, the "Stand-Up" meeting is a morning meeting. Everyone stands at this meeting, except the senior leader. There is a strict time limit. The meeting starts right on time and generally lasts 20-30 minutes. If you have something to say, this is the time to say it. Sometimes these meetings are used to talk about upcoming events for the day. If there is an issue that needs to be handled this is where it would be raised and then handled off-line with the appropriate parties. ***(Example: Organizations that use this type of meeting are Merck & Co., Ritz-Carlton, U.S. Army, General Pagonis during the Gulf War).***

Example: SPEs meet before attending a job fair. The meeting would be used to air any questions or concerns and to make sure everyone understands their roles.

Set-Up: Only the leader and notetaker should sit down (although some leaders prefer to stand as well). Therefore, there should be no more than 2 chairs in the room.

***Roles*:**
- Leader
- Notetaker
- Involved staff

Round Table Discussion

Round table discussions are the ideal medium for encouraging communication and new ideas. While there is not a lead "speaker," there should be a facilitator to make sure that the discussion stays on track and follows the agenda schedule and two notetakers to record all decisions and ideas. The facilitator should not be the person who calls the meeting and should be someone without a vested interest in the subject under discussion.

The facilitator should:

- Explain that consensus is not required or needed during this type of session.
- Guide the discussion and act as air traffic manager during the session.
- Encourage everyone to talk. It should be explained that if one person has taken over the session the facilitator will intercede and bring the session back to group discussion.
- At the end of the discussion, summarize the major points received during the session.
- Avoid getting into a one-on-one discussion with a participant for any amount of time.
- Not defend or try to lead the discussion toward the PTO way of thinking. It should not be a biased discussion and all participants opinions should be heard.

Example: Managers have been asked to design and implement a new rating system. After 1 month of using the system, managers have come together to discuss problems and solutions they have experienced.

Set-Up: A circle of chairs around a table if desired; a square or rectangular table is also satisfactory as long as the leader or facilitator does not place him- or herself at the "head."

Roles: Facilitator (Call CQS 305-4217, BPR 308-6758, P&E 305-8510, or WED for contractor facilitators)
Notetakers
Participants

Tools: Flip Charts
Markers

Focus Groups

A focus group session is a meeting of approximately 15-40 customers/partners. The audience can be separated into smaller groups. Structured brainstorming of multiple topics can be used, along with Nominal Group Technique ranking (see next page). This type of meeting is very structured and is usually moderated by a neutral professional and is observed by the process owner who should take notes.

Focus groups can be used to explore attitudes, opinions, and beliefs that motivate people to act in a particular way or to determine customer needs and expectations. If there is a possibility that participants may be inhibited in front of a superior, that person may elect not to attend.

Example:	Examiners want information to share with colleagues to encourage change in a current process.
Set-Up:	Circle, square, or rectangle
Roles:	Professional impartial focus group moderator (Call CQS: 305-4217, BPR: 308-6758, P&E: 305-8510, or WED for contractor facilitators) Process owner (may or may not be present) Notetaker Representatives of target group or customers
Tools:	Automated System (Groupware, CoNexus) Flipcharts Overhead Projector Viewgraphs

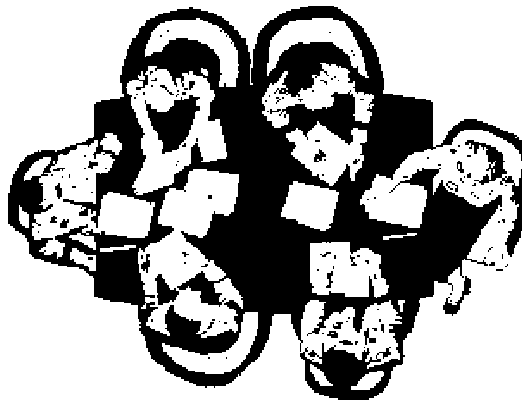
Using Nominal Group Technique with Focus Groups

Nominal group technique is a structured approach to generate a list of options and narrowing them down. It is an effective way to decide on highly controversial issues when a team is stuck or in disagreement. It is also a good tool to use when group members are unfamiliar with each other. These are the steps:

1. Define the task in the form of a question.
2. Describe the purpose of the discussion and rules and procedures for this technique.
3. Introduce and clarify the question.
4. Generate ideas.
5. List ideas.
6. Clarify and discuss ideas.

One way to do it: Have the group take a listing of items and group them together, deleting any duplicates. After you have compiled a master list have the participants review it and come to agreement. Once agreement is received, have everyone vote five times anonymously on the items. Using a scale of 1 to 5, give a 5 to the item that is most important, a 1 to the item that is least important, a 4 to the next most important item, a 2 to the next least important item and a 3 to the remaining choice. These votes will then be tallied up and an average will be given with the most important coming to the top.

Brainstorming



Brainstorming is a technique for generating a list of ideas about an issue. It can be used to generate a list of problems, topics for data collection, potential solutions, or items to monitor. There are several steps to brainstorming:

1. Decide on a topic.
2. Have each member in turn offer an idea about the topic.
3. Have one person record all the ideas on a flipchart.
4. Continue until the team feels it has exhausted its ideas on the topic.
5. Discuss and clarify the ideas on the list.

The following guidelines will be helpful when conducting a brainstorming meeting:

- Set a time limit for the brainstorming session.
- Offer ideas only when it is your turn. Between turns, write ideas down so you do not forget them.
- Any idea is acceptable even if it seems silly, strange, or similar to a previous idea. Some of the best ideas are simply variations on what somebody else just said.
- Never criticize, question, or even praise others' ideas during the brainstorming session.
- Go around the table and have each participant (including the recorder) take turns identifying an idea.
- Do it quickly - no anecdotes or elaboration.
- After each participant has had a turn, accept ideas from anyone at the table. If a participant cannot think of an idea, he/she should pass.

Example*:* A document needs to be generated to help train new examiners. Input is needed to help make the document useful.

Roles: Facilitator
Notetakers
Scribe/Recorder
Participants

Set-Up*:* U-Shaped with flipchart(s)
Several tables in groupings of 4-8 people

Tools: Automated System (Groupware, CoNexus)

One-on-One Meetings

One-on-one meetings are generally meetings between a supervisor and a subordinate, although they may also be between team members who are working on a common project. Contrary to other types of meetings, one-on-one meetings should last *at least* an hour. Anything less tends to make one person confine him or herself to simple subjects that can be handled quickly. If the meeting is between a supervisor and a subordinate, the following guidelines should be followed:

- Have the meeting in the subordinate's work area (they are likely to be more comfortable and you will have a chance to see how they work!)
- Allow the subordinate to determine the agenda and the tone of the meeting. Both parties should have a copy in front of them.
- Encourage the subordinate to talk about what is going on and what is bothering him or her. If the conversation stalls, ask a question.
- Remember, a supervisor is there to learn and to coach.
- Take notes to keep on track and to remember any actions you have decided to take.

Example:	An examiner is scheduled for a counseling session (i.e., performance or disciplinary).
Roles:	Supervisor (as coach and information gatherer) Subordinate Two colleagues or team members
Set-Up:	The subordinate's office or other comfortable private place

Special One-on-One Counseling Meetings

A counseling meeting is held between a supervisor and subordinate to remind the subordinate of the necessity of adhering to established regulations, rules, and requirement of the organization or agency of which the subordinate is a recognized member.

A counseling meeting is neither a training meeting nor an investigatory meeting. The facts that precipitate a counseling meeting should have been firmly established during an investigation/fact-finding phase of the matter causing the concern. The lines between training, investigatory and counseling meetings should be fully and clearly appreciated.

If a counseling meeting is held with an employee, no disciplinary action should be taken from the matter(s) that prompted the counseling meeting. Obviously, a warning of the consequences for failing to comply with the rules, regulation, and requirements of the organization should be politely but firmly stated at the conclusion (or at the beginning) of the meeting.

Job Performance Counseling Meeting

A Job Performance Counseling Meeting is a meeting between a supervisor and subordinate for the purpose of informing/reminding the subordinate of his/her failure to meet established job performance standards. A method or process should be established in the counseling meeting to enable the subordinate to achieve or exceed the established minimum acceptable job performance standards. The necessity of meeting job performance standards relative to the efficient and viable operation of the organization should be a primary item on the agenda.

Conduct/Discipline Counseling Meeting

Conduct/Discipline Counseling Meetings are held between a supervisor and a subordinate to inform the subordinate that a particular form of conduct in which the subordinate has been engaged, which has been clearly established, is not acceptable and will not and cannot be permitted because it is detrimental to the operational efficiency and public image of the organization.

The Art of Feedback: Principles

Definition of Feedback Constructive feedback (either positive or negative) is information that helps people decide whether their behavior has had its intended effect.

> **Positive** feedback is information that reinforces desired behavior and encourages repetition of that behavior by communicating that it had its intended effect.
>
> **Negative** feedback is information that discourages undesirable behavior by communicating that it did not have the intended effect.

Principles of Giving Feedback

- Be sure that your intention is to be helpful.
- If the recipient has not asked for feedback, check to see whether he or she is open to it.
- Deal only with the behavior that can be changed.
- Deal with specific behavior, not generalities.
- Describe the behavior; do not evaluate it.
- Let the recipient know the impact that the behavior has on you.
- Use an "I statement" to accept responsibility for your own perceptions and emotions.
- Check to make sure that the recipient understood your message in the way you intended it.
- Encourage the recipient to check the feedback with other people.

Principles for Receiving Feedback

- When you ask for feedback, be specific in describing the behavior about which you want the feedback.
- Try not to act defensively or rationalize the behavior at issue.
- Summarize your understanding of the feedback that you receive.
- Share your thoughts and feelings about the feedback.

Feedback Guidelines

- Describe what was said or done (be specific)
- Explain why you liked it or didn't and its effect upon the workplace.
- If you did not like it, discuss/offer another way of saying or doing it.

Adapted From *The 1989 Annual: Developing Human Resources*

Appendix
A

- **Meeting Planner Worksheet**
- **Meeting Guidelines**

Meeting Planner Worksheet

Objective. **(What should be achieved by the end of the meeting?)**

____

What type of meeting do you need?

Virtual **In-Person Meeting**

What style of meeting do you need?

Stand-Up **Brainstorming**
Round Table **One-to-One**
Focus Group

Who should attend?

Who needs the information?

____

Who can contribute?

____

Who would expect to be involved?

____

Who would provide support?

____

Who might resist?

____

Participants.

____________________ ____________________ ____________________

____________________ ____________________ ____________________

____________________ ____________________ ____________________

____________________ ____________________ ____________________

____________________ ____________________ ____________________

Total Number ______________

Background Information.

What information do I already know?

____

_

What additional information do I need?

____

_

What limitations exist?

When must issue be resolved?

____

What constraints exist?

____

What resources are available?

____

Participate Participation.

What information has been provided to participants?

____

What are participants expected to have done prior to meeting?

____

Agenda Planning.

How much time is needed for the meeting?______________________________

At what time is the meeting to begin?____________________________________

Who will take notes?____

How much time will be spent on each agenda item?_______________________

When and Where?

Tentative date ___________________ Time _______________ Duration __________

Room/Building:____

POC: _______________________ Date Confirmed_________________________

Address: ____

Phone/e-mail ____

Directions:
____
____

Type of room arrangement:_________________________________

Materials needed:

____________________________ __________________________________

____________________________ __________________________________

____________________________ __________________________________

____________________________ __________________________________

Meeting Guidelines

Before you start

- **Make sure that everything is set.**
- Several days before your meeting, send out a pre-agenda, participant list, and any review materials.
- Confirm room and equipment several days before the meeting--and on the morning of the meeting.
- Have all materials in hand the day before the meeting.

In the beginning

- **Begin on time**
- Introduce yourself and ask for introductions if appropriate.
- Announce the purpose of the meeting.
- Conduct warm-up exercise if appropriate (See Appendix D.).
- Set ground rules:

  --The meeting starts on time. Latecomers must get updated afterwards.
  --One person speaks at a time.
  --No one speaks for more than 5 minutes.
  --Everyone’s input is desired.
  --Items not on the agenda will be put on hold for later discussion.
  --The meeting will end on time.

The heart of the matter

- **Set the stage.**
- Follow the agenda, unless all participants agree to change it.
- Stay within time limits.
- Record minutes, assignments, decisions.
- Recognize new issues as they arise; agree on how/when to deal with them.
- Intervene when discussions go off point or are redundant.
- Summarize agenda items as they are completed to ensure understanding and consensus.

The last act

- **Five minutes before quitting time, signal that the concluding time is near.**
- Close the meeting with a summary of all decisions and agreements.
- Establish and assign action items.
- Determine next steps/give any specific instructions for taking action.
- Determine next meeting date.
- Ask for feedback on the meeting itself, to help you improve in the future!
- Close with a strong positive statement--and end on time!

Follow-Up

- **Prepare and distribute minutes.**
- Act on or implement decisions of the meeting.
- Plan any follow-up meetings or other activities.
- Follow up and encourage participants to complete their resulting tasks.
- Evaluate your success as a leader or meeting participant.

Appendix B

Facilities and Equipment Listing

Patent Academy

Point of Contact: **Monica Erwin**
Location: **Crystal Square 4, Suite 700**
Phone: **308-9660**

Room Capacity and Equipment Availability

(1) Large room that accommodates (86) people
(2) Monitors
Podium
Projector

(1) Large room that accommodates (60) people
(2) Monitors
Podium
Projector

(5) Medium rooms that accommodate (15 to 20) people each
Overhead
Easel Pads/Stands
White Boards

(2) Medium rooms that accommodate (24) people each
Overhead
Easel Pads/Stands
White Boards

(4) Medium rooms that accommodate (38) people each
Overhead
Easel Pads/Stands
White Boards

(3) Small rooms that accommodate (10) people each
No Equipment

(4) Computer Rooms w/ PC Equipment
Training Use Only

Workforce Effectiveness Division

Point of Contact: **Michael Smith**
Location: **CPK1, Suite 700**
Phone Number: **306-2807**

Rooms will not be available until May 1996

Room Capacity and Equipment Availability

(2) Medium rooms that accommodate (35) people each
TV/VCR Only

(1) Medium room that accommodates (25) people
No Equipment
White Boards

(2) Small computer rooms that accommodate (15) people each
Computers Only

Office of Civil Rights

Point of Contact: **Sharon Galler**
Location: **CPK1, Suite 600**
Phone Number: **305-8292**

Room Capacity and Equipment Availability

(1) Medium room that accommodates (30) people
TV/VCR
Easel Pad/Stand
White Board

Office Of Administrative Services

Point of Contact: **Peggy Karavasilis**
Location: **CPK1, Suite 509/511**
Phone Number: **305-8183**

Rooms will not be available until January 1997

Room Capacity and Equipment Availability

(2) Medium rooms that accommodate (30) people each

You can reserve equipment from Workforce and Effectiveness on 305-8431.

You must bring your own materials.

The following items are available:
Easel Pads/Stands, markers, etc.

Planning and Evaluation

Point of Contact: **Emmett Thorton**
Location: **CPK1, Suite 1107**
Phone Number: **306-2800**

Room Capacity and Equipment Availability

(1) Small room that accommodates (14) people

TV/VCR
Easel Pads/Stands
Electronic White Board
Overhead

<u>Center for Quality Services</u>

Point of Contact: **Donna Oliver**
Location: **CPK1, Suite 812/819**
Phone Number: **306-2702**

<u>Room Capacity and Equipment Availability</u>

<u>Customer Conference Center</u>

(1) Large room that accommodates (40) people

Projector Screen
VCR
PC connected to a Monitor/Projector Screen
Podium w/Small Microphone
Wireless Lapel Microphone
Dual Cassette Deck

<u>Quality Training Center</u>

(1) Medium room that accommodates (20) people

TV/VCR
Easel Pads/Stands (Hanging or floor stands)

<u>Presentation Center</u>

(1) Small room that accommodates (15) people

TV/VCR
Easel Pads/Stands
Electronic White Board

Business Process Reengineering

Point of Contact: **Joanne Marshall**
Location: **CPK3, Suite 902**
Phone: **308-9891**

Room Capacity and Equipment Availability

(5) Medium rooms that accommodate (15) people each

Electronic White boards
Overhead Projectors
Easel Pads/Stands

Groupware Facility:

Point of Contact: **Rob Harris**
Location: **CPK3, 9th Floor**
Phone: **305-8510**

Room Capacity and Equipment Availability

(1) Medium room accommodates (18) Groupware participants

18 - 486 computers
Groupware software
Overhead screen

Appendix C

Meeting Tools

- **Agenda**
- **Sign-in Sheet**
- **Minutes**
- **Supply Checklist**

Agenda

The purpose of the agenda is to organize the meeting, plan what you want to accomplish, and keep the meeting on track. The agenda can also help participants plan their own input and stay on the topic. Once you have identified the purpose of the meeting, you are ready to plan your agenda. Your agenda should be short and to the point. When developing an agenda, list most important items first--and be sure to build in time for decision making. In addition, include:

- The meeting objective
- The date and the start and finish time of the meeting
- The location of the meeting and directions (if needed)

Before your meeting, give participants an opportunity to add items to the agenda. And, when you have completed your agenda, distribute it to all those planning to participate at least 2 days before the meeting. It is also a good idea to distribute a participant list, assignments, and any materials that will be reviewed.

During the meeting, make the agenda visible to all participants, and last, but not least--STICK TO YOUR AGENDA!

Example 1

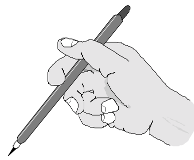
[Meeting Name: Objective]
[Type of Session]
Pre-Agenda
[Date, Time, Location (with directions)]
[Objective of Meeting]
[What is needed for the Meeting]
[RSVP Response if needed with Date]

Example 2

[Meeting Name: Objective]
[Type of Session]
Agenda
[Date and Time]
Welcome [Name of Person]
Overview [Name of Person]
Opening Question and Discussion [Name of Person]
Closing Remarks [Name of Person]
Thank You for Attending

Example 3

[Meeting Name: Objective]
[Type of Session]
Agenda
[Date, Time and Location]]
[Time] Welcome [Name of Person]
[Time] Overview [Name of Person]
[Time] Discussion [Name of Person]
[Time] Closing Remarks [Name of Person]
Thank You for Attending

 **Error! Switch argument not specified.**

<u>Sign-In Sheet</u>

[Topic]
[Date]

Name	Office	Telephone Number

Minutes

Minutes provide a meeting leader with a way to remind participants of critical decisions or tasks that result from a meeting. They also offer a simple way to announce next steps and further meeting plans. Minutes should be brief (less than one page if at all possible) and should include:

Meeting Name
Date
Time
Place

- Recap of Meeting
- Assignments Given
- Decisions Made
- Next Steps
- Next Meeting

Recommendation: When saving an automated copy of your minutes set up a numeric code system so you will know how many meetings you have participated in a certain timeframe. (Example: MN1-5JA, MN2-8JA, MN3-12NO).

<u>Supply Check List</u>

Flip Charts:

One
Two
Three
More ___________

Miscellaneous Supplies:

Markers
Agenda
Sign-in Sheet
Note pads
Pencils
Name tents
Name tags
Masking tape
Stapler
Paper clips
Scissors
Postettes

Automated Equipment:

Lap Top Computer
LCD Plate
Groupware
CoNexus
Overhead Projector
Viewgraph
Slides

Appendix D

Warm-Up Activities

A Few Warm-Up Activities

Blackboard Sentences

Ask two teams of participants to race one another to formulate a sentence to which each team member has added a word. No preplanning is allowed. The final result must be a full sentence. The race continues until all participants have contributed a word. Builds team spirit. Approximately 7-10 minutes.

Gossip

Participants must be sitting in a circle. The leader whispers a statement to the person to her or his right, who whispers it to his or her neighbor, and so on. Good opening to discussion about rumors and communication. Approximately 5-10 minutes.

Grin and Bear It

This exercise asks two teams of participants to attempt to make one another laugh. The teams stand opposite each other and try to make those on the other team laugh. A draw is declared if after 2 minutes no one laughs. A good warm up for a problem-solving meeting. Approximately 5-10 minutes.

I Bequeath

This exercise involves the participants in the writing of group wills. The leader may explain that this is being done in case the participants should "die of boredom" in the upcoming meeting. Each participant folds a piece of paper, accordion style into five sections. On the top section each person writes his or her name and folds it down so that the writing is hidden. The papers are passed clockwise to the next person, who writes in the second section some possession that they wish to bequeath to someone. Then they fold this section down and pass the paper on. The third person writes the name of the person sitting to their left. The fourth person writes a reason for their bequest, and the fifth person writes a condition they wish to attach. The leader asks each person to read their "will" by filling in the blanks to "______ bequeaths _________ to _________ for the purpose of ______________ on condition that ___________." This warm-up is appropriate before a discussion of a policy change or other change that requires people to give up something. Approximately 15 minutes (best with a smaller group).

From: *The Encyclopedia of Icebreakers* by Sue Forbess-Greene. Pfeiffer & Company

Appendix
E

Effective Meeting "ToolKit"
Evaluation Sheet

Effective Meeting "ToolKit"
Evaluation Sheet

This **"ToolKit"** was designed to help you organize and run an <u>Effective Meeting</u>. Please fill out the following information, so that we can evaluate the **"ToolKit"** for that purpose**. (Please circle the correct answer and write comments where applicable.)**

1. Was the "ToolKit" informative? **YES / NO**
   If **NO**, Why wasn't it informative?

____
____
____
____

2. Was the "ToolKit" helpful to you in preparing for your next meeting? **YES / NO**
   If **NO**, what would make it more helpful to you?

____
____
____
____

3. Was the "ToolKit" designed in a user friendly format? **YES / NO**
   If **NO**, what would make it easier to use?

____
____
____
____

4. Do you think that you will use this "ToolKit"? **YES / NO**
   If **NO**, why not?

____
____
____
____

5. What type of improvements can we make to this **"ToolKit"**?

____
____
____
____
____