



6 Leading meetings

Either lead, follow or get out of the way. *Sign on the desk of Ted Turner, founder of CNN*

1 How much influence do you have at the meetings you participate in? When it comes to meetings, would you rather lead, follow or simply get out of the way?

Discussion

- 2 Think about a regular meeting you attend and consider the following:
- Who is the most powerful person in the room? Does he/she actually lead the meeting?
 - What are the seating arrangements – fixed or flexible?
 - Does anyone tend to dominate the discussion? Is that ever a problem?
 - Are there people who hardly speak at all? If so, why are they there?
 - Who, if anyone, is the most ‘dangerous’ person in the room?

Explain to a partner how the meeting works. A simple diagram may help you.

Collocations

3 Combine one word from each box to make ten common problems encountered in meetings. Do you have similar problems in your meetings?

communication time point- inadequate	communication hidden pulling late over group-	+	barriers breakdowns scoring	wasting agendas runs	preparation rank think starts
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- | | |
|---------|----------|
| 1 _____ | 6 _____ |
| 2 _____ | 7 _____ |
| 3 _____ | 8 _____ |
| 4 _____ | 9 _____ |
| 5 _____ | 10 _____ |

- Which of the above mean:
- misunderstandings?
 - failing to finish on time?
 - competition between colleagues?
 - the need to agree at all costs?
 - secret intentions or objectives?
 - using your status to get what you want?
 - things which make people reluctant to talk?

4 Read the suggestion below. Does it strike you as a good idea? Which of the problems in 3 might it help to solve? Which would it probably make worse?

The power table

Suppose you removed the table from your conference room and replaced the seats with armchairs. Suppose you turned it into a living room. How much would this affect your meetings?

That's how much your meetings are about power, not communication.

David Weinberger, The Cluetrain Manifesto



5 Five alternative approaches successful companies have taken to the problem of meetings are listed below. What do you think they might involve?

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| a the non-stop meeting | d the democratic meeting |
| b the mobile meeting | e the virtual meeting |
| c the recreational meeting | |

6 6.1 Listen to an extract from a business news programme and match the approaches in 5 to the companies that have adopted them.

- Federal Express another.com Xerox Corporation
 Michaelides & Bednash Media St. Luke's Advertising

7 Could any of the ideas in 6 work in your company? Would any be thought ridiculous?

Chairing skills

Discussion

1 Complete the following and compare with the other members of your group. A meeting without a chairperson is like (a) _____ without (a) _____.

Collocations

2 Complete the collocations by writing the nouns and noun phrases in the right-hand boxes. They are all things the leader of a meeting might do.

the agenda the final decision the participants	points of view the main goals the meeting	areas of conflict an action plan other speakers	follow-up tasks the key issues troublemakers
open close		bring in shut out	
welcome introduce		anticipate avoid	
set stick to		identify discipline	
ask for summarise		work out draw up	
establish define		prioritise assign	
deliberate over take		explain focus on	

Which of the skills above are mostly about managing

- the content of the meeting?
- the people present?

Write C or P.