

5 steps to facilitating a meeting

1. Setting up the meeting

- a. Set the scene – circle of chairs = all equals
- b. Background materials available e.g. notes of previous decisions, pics on walls (photos, maps etc.)
- c. Materials available that invite people to contribute e.g. post-it notes, market pens, blu tak –DIY tools for contribution
- d. Notice boards up as people come in – ask people to put up things like:
 - i. Good news since last meeting
 - ii. Notices of events
 - iii. 'Parking area' – people can note things that haven't been discussed or raised

2. Opening the meeting

- a. Ground Rules or 'culture of meeting'– ask for suggestions from the room. Below are some examples:
 - i. Phones on silent
 - ii. If you need to it's OK to leave the room and have a walk around
 - iii. Hand up if you want to speak
 - iv. Take your turn, respect the chair
 - v. Make comments not speeches – 1-2 sentences
 - vi. Allow others to speak if they have spoken less than you – look after the group and make sure everyone's needs are being met
 - vii. To agree something shake hands
 - viii. 'Parking area' if can't get something into the discussion
 - ix. All comments should be positive – no negative comments
- b. Agree chair (may be convener of meeting), note taker, timekeeper, shepherds/facilitators (people to check that all voices are being heard)
- c. Agree agenda/what you will achieve in the meeting and timings i.e. how much time to give to each point
 - i. Presentations should be kept short (5 mins max)
 - people get fed up if they feel they have just been invited to a meeting to listen (unless it is clearly sold as a lecture)
 - they can lead to frustration and 'overheating'
 - ii. If there are people who have attended previous meetings and therefore don't need so much background consider breaking the group up so some can get going more quickly

3. Achieving consensus in a large group

- a. Avoid answering points directly straight away – doesn't have to be a ping-pong
- b. Listen to all of points being made
- c. Do you have to respond at all? Your role might be to listen
- d. Empathise with points being made before you present an alternative view
- e. If you need to present constraints be clear about where those constraints come from e.g. legally we have to do this and this is how we have managed it before but we will look around for other best practice...

4. Breaking out

- a. Breaking into groups gives more people a chance to speak
- b. If you break the group it is best to break the work – have each group discuss something different. Move around groups so you can see notes from previous group and add to that, rather than just duplicate
- c. Need to allow time to feed back to main group and allow time for consolidation of thoughts, which in turn should give time for consensus to be achieved
- d. Be clear about how you want people to feedback e.g. pick three main points
- e. Make sure all of discussion recorded – each breakout group needs a recorder/scribe
- f. Ground Rules should apply to breakout groups as well as main group

5. Concluding the meeting

- a. Need to allow time for a proper wrap-up
- b. Check 'Parking area' and flag any key points now or for next time
- c. What are next steps? Make sure this is clear to all participants
- d. What have you agreed? What decisions have been reached? RECORD again – be clear
- e. Is there an Action Plan – have you assigned tasks (important to give people tasks at end of meeting)
- f. Allow time for networking at end of meeting and don't rush off

