



worldoutreach
SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP

SERIES FOUR

MODULE SIX: HOW TO RUN A LEADER'S MEETING



Outline Session 1 - 2

1. How to prepare for a meeting? How to successfully lead a meeting?
2. How to make a valuable contribution to a meeting? How to get the most out of meetings we chair?

SESSION ONE: HOW TO PREPARE FOR A MEETING?

Some of the content is adapted from a very helpful book entitled, '*Just About Everything a Manager needs to know*' by Neil Flanagan and Jarvis Finger.

IDEAS FOR HOW TO PREPARE FOR A MEETING

1. Make sure you've called the meeting for a reason

It's important to call a meeting *only* when one is warranted.

2. Be clear on the purposes of the meeting and your hoped-for outcomes

Have a checklist of what you want to accomplish.

3. Select the participants wisely

Only those who need to attend should be invited to do so. Or consider inviting participants to be present at a particular time; that is, for the agenda item for which their personal contribution is required.

4. Select the right time and place for the meeting.

Only call the meeting when you have the information required for the team to make a decision. Ensure the venue is accessible to all participants, yet sufficiently remote to avoid interruptions. Check out and book the location – seating, lighting, data projector, electrical requirements and other essentials.

5. Prepare and distribute an agenda.

The more care you take with an agenda, the more productive the meeting will be. The agenda should be more than just a list of items to be discussed. Key elements would also include the date, time, place and duration of the meeting. List the items to be discussed in sequence, detailing who will lead the discussion, time allocated and, importantly, the objective.

6. Email agenda and background reading material or proposals.

By giving adequate advance notice and distributing the agenda and support documents for all items, you will demonstrate your thoroughness and instil confidence in your leadership.

7. Consider meeting with some participants prior to the formal meeting.

If emotional or controversial issues are to be discussed during the meeting, for example, it is sometimes a good idea to talk through these items with some of the key participants beforehand. Consider their reactions and how you might handle them during the meeting to achieve the desired outcomes.

8. Ensure you have the appropriate equipment for the meeting.

Make sure you have considered the following items frequently required in a meeting, such as notepaper, pens, whiteboard, data projector, computer or tablet and refreshments.

9. Be prepared – mentally.

Mental preparation is also a vital consideration. In this regard, here are some suggestions:

- Know the meeting process and your role as the leader/chairperson
- Do your homework
- Believe you can lead
- Aim high

HOW TO LEAD A SUCCESSFUL MEETING?

Every ministry leader needs to be able to master the skills of chairing a meeting. A meeting chaired effectively will have the participants leaving with a sense of accomplishment and a clear understanding of future direction and task.

To lead a successful meeting, here are some important steps in the process.

1. Start on time

When you wait for latecomers, you penalise those who have arrived on time – and you inadvertently reward those who come late.

2. Open the meeting in prayer (and possibly a brief reflection from Scripture)

Because you are doing the Lord's work, even on seemingly trivial matters, always begin each meeting with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit's guidance, welcoming the presence of the Lord, seeking God's wisdom, and asking for unity of heart and mind.

3. Preview and confirm the agenda

Check that each member publicly agrees with the stated objective of each listed agenda item. Other items might be suggested and listed in 'Other Business'.

4. Sequentially work through the agenda continually focussing on your objectives. Consider the following process:

- **Initiate discussion on each item** by briefly setting the scene and asking for responses. You may refer the matter first to a member who can make the best initial contribution.
- **Clarify the nature and objective of each item as it is raised.** Is it information sharing / discussion only / decision required / or a problem to be solved?
- **Clarify issues.** If debate leads to confusion or impasse, it's your task to unravel the strands so that a decision can be reached.
- **Summarise regularly.** Particularly during lengthy discussion of an item. Summarise progress periodically to maintain a sense of direction.
- **Conclude discussion.** When you reach consensus on major points, these should be tested with the group, clarify what decision has been made and how it will be implemented, voted upon if necessary, and recorded.

- **Clarify decisions or outcomes that have been decided.** At the end of each item, assign responsibilities and set deadlines for actions. Record the actions and responsibilities in the meeting notes or minutes. Ensure the delegated person knows what's required and by when.
- **If an issue can't be resolved, find out why,** and appoint a task group or individual to investigate and report back to the next meeting.

5. End on a positive note – and on time.

Try to end on a positive note, even if there has been some disagreement during the meeting. Perhaps save for last an agenda item on which everyone can agree. Sum up the entire meeting, restate the outcomes, confirm allotted tasks and deadlines, and thank participants. Arrange the next meeting time. Then close in meaningful prayer.

6. Review and analyse the success of your meeting

While the meeting is still fresh in your mind, it is important to assess the meeting's effectiveness and your own leadership style. Use that information to make your next meeting better.

7. Follow-up promptly

Concise minutes, including a listing of decisions made, the tasks assigned, and the deadlines for action and follow-up, should be completed and distributed promptly.

In the period following the meeting, monitor the progress of assigned tasks (if possible). At the next meeting, check on delegated tasks. Any uncompleted tasks and unmet deadlines should be considered first. Such accountability helps ensure that the agreed outcomes of your meeting have some meaning next time.

SESSION TWO: HOW TO MAKE A VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO A MEETING?

1. Understand why you have been asked to participate

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Have I been brought in simply to fill a gap?
- Am I representing a particular demographic or specialist group?
- Have I been brought in to provide expertise or competence in a particular area?
- Am I here as the ministry's bright-young-person with ideas?
- Am I here as the voice of experience, the steadying influence?

When you can answer such questions, you can channel your efforts appropriately.

2. Get to know the other participants

Get to know their likes and dislikes, strong and weak points, the way they operate, and how they react to new ideas and proposals. Why is this important? Because knowing them better will help you communicate, listen and interact in the interpersonal dynamics of a team meeting.

3. Arrive prepared

Prepare yourself by studying the agenda and all the reading and proposals in advance. Focus on items for your particular attention and anticipate any needs the group will have for data you can bring. Give thoughtful attention and reflection on key decisions that have to be made. Plan for your involvement by preparing recommendations or suggestions. The amount of preparation you do will determine how others view you – as a passenger or valued participant. Plan in advance to make at least one specific contribution.

4. Arrive early and use the time wisely

Use any waiting time profitably, perhaps reviewing the reading or thinking about specific agenda items. Sit someone where you will be able to participate and not hide.

5. Talk up, get involved

Don't hesitate to get into the act from the start. A well-chosen question or comment can often help break the ice. Enter into discussions and speak freely. Make your points clearly, succinctly and positively. Remain silent when you have nothing useful to say. Listen, observe, and save your arguments until you can make a really telling point. Build on the ideas of others, pose 'what if' questions, seek clarification of relevant issues, be supportive with constructive comments, and be open minded, willing to compromise, and respectful of others' contributions.

6. Be an active listener

Practise the skill of listening in meetings because it will lead to understanding and good questions. Failing to listen can cause meetings to fail.

7. Be willing to learn

Go into meetings with the attitude of being prepared to learn. Effective participation in meetings doesn't always mean getting your own way. Rather, it means learning from others, accepting criticism, incorporating the ideas of others into a decision to make it better.

8. Adhere to the rules of meeting etiquette

Consider the following rules:

- Avoid interrupting
- Refrain from distracting behaviour, such as checking or answering texts
- Avoid side comments to your neighbour
- Always be pleasant, courteous and tactful

9. Be prayerful

Come to every meeting after prayerful preparation.

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF MEETINGS WE CHAIR.

Good meetings have leadership; bad meetings do not. The success of a meeting will depend largely on our ability as chairperson or leader to get things done efficiently and to reach group decisions in minimum time. Here are some ideas for how to do so.

1. Create a member-centred meeting

As chairperson, our primary job is to release the expertise of the group. This means we should refrain from voicing our opinions until everyone has had a chance to be heard. Good ideas are lost when meeting members are reluctant to contradict or disagree with a leader who has already stated a position. Be persuasive, but not dominant or overly partisan. Be seen to have a balanced approach.

2. Encourage participation by all

Make sure everyone has an equal chance to express a view. Allow no single member to monopolise, and avoid calling on the same speakers, even though they may be the most experienced, knowledgeable or eloquent. Encourage different points of view. Tactfully draw out the reticent members by asking them for their opinions or comments.

3. Stimulate discussion and ideas

A good meeting should be an exchange of ideas and information, and it is the chairperson's role to foster this exchange through probing and the use of open-ended questions:

- To clarify issues: 'Are you saying you can get the information by the end of the week?'
- To restate certain points: 'So let's confirm this point...?'
- To confront issues: 'Are we really prepared to...?'
- To question critically: 'What exactly do you mean by...?'
- To seek solutions: 'What should we do?' 'What do you think?' 'Why?'

4. Ban comments that crush or suppress discussion

As chairperson, you set the tone and culture of the group meetings. This includes the type of language used. Monitor or disallow putdowns such as:

- 'That won't work.'
- 'You're joking.'
- 'You'll learn next time.'

Especially watch out for any response that treats another team member's comments as uninformed, naïve or inferior. Instead, encourage supportive comments like:

- 'Let's follow that notion through a little...'
- 'Would anyone care to build on or refine that suggestion?'
- 'I'd like to expand on that idea by looking at it from another angle...'

5. Keep the meeting on course.

Many meetings lose themselves through side-tracking or by getting bogged down on one issue. Some wandering may be useful, but it is frequently necessary to call the group back to the main topic at hand. Keep rambling speakers in check.

As well, be alert for potential trouble. Deal with conflict, hostility and tension when it begins to appear. Create harmony by mediating differences. Use humour to call for a break at the right time to ease tension.

Keep an eye on the clock. Keep the meeting on the move. Respect the participants' personal schedules. Aim to finish on time.

6. Vary your style

The key to chairing a meeting is flexibility. You will be a good chairperson if you assess the kind of leadership that the meeting requires, then adjust your style accordingly.

Be sensitive to the mood of the meeting – when to be relaxed, when to be firm, when to use humour, when to break. Each style exhibits effective leadership if it is right on the occasion.

7. Focus on the process.

Control the meeting by sticking to the agenda. Keep discussion to time limits, but allow adequate time to treat complex issues. Stop and clarify issues if they become obscure. Summarise from time to time to demonstrate progress. Monitor loss of attention. Watch for signs that an item has been discussed enough, finalise it, and move to the next item. Break up into small groups if this assists in reaching your desired outcomes more efficiently.

8. Finally

Take steps to ensure the meeting is not interrupted unless in an emergency. Be the first in the room and use this time to connect with the participants. Start and finish on time. Remember to thank members for their contribution and at the conclusion of the meeting. Always set an example. Be firm, polite, calm, relational, supportive, even-handed and confident.