



3 effective meetings

Objectives

-
- A 1 Introduce yourself during a conference call

 - 2 Explain the ground rules of a meeting

 - 3 Communicate your strategic objectives

 - 4 Keep a meeting on track

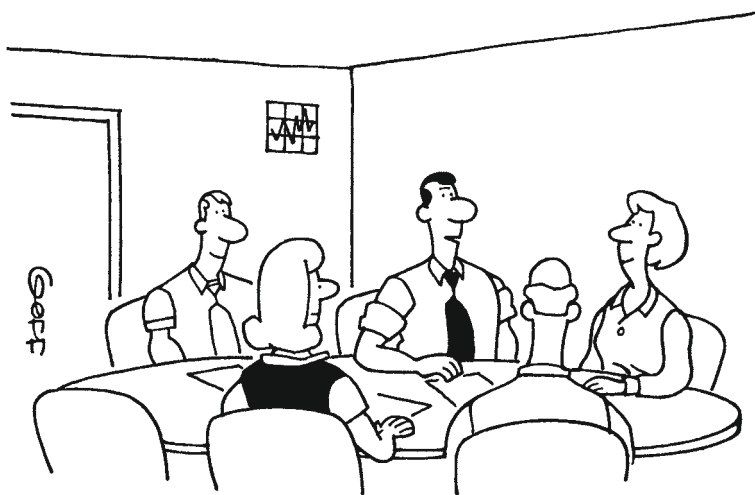
 - 5 Wrap up a meeting

 - B 6 Defuse potential conflict

 - 7 Frame a proposal

 - C 8 Notice the use of self-deprecating or hedging remarks

 - 9 Formulate a paradox that sheds light on your job or company
-



"Everyone here? Good. Meeting topic: Setting world record for shortest meeting. All in favor say aye. Ayes have it. Meeting over."

2 On the spot: Introducing yourself

You're attending a meeting with a group of people you haven't met before. Introduce yourself and state your function. Now imagine your meeting is via a conference call and introduce yourself again. How do the two introductions differ, if at all?

CD 1
11

3 'Hello everyone'

- a Listen to six people introduce themselves at a conference call kick-off meeting. What do you remember about each of them? What do they say or do to make their introductions interesting and easy to remember?
- b Listen again. What does each speaker do well or badly? Consider the checklist and give the speakers advice.

checklist

- ✓ State your name and location clearly.
- ✓ Explain your role or function.
- ✓ Say something about yourself that is interesting and easy to remember.
- ✓ KISS (Keep it short and simple.)

CD 1
12

4 'Before we get started ...'

- a Listen to Geraldine Brennan setting out the ground rules of the conference call. Which of the following does she do?
- Instructs participants on protocol
 - Invites participants to co-create the ground rules
 - Talks about timekeeping
 - Summarizes the items on the agenda
 - Mentions problems at previous audio conferences
 - Introduces her boss
- b How would you characterize Geraldine's style? Does it vary from what you are used to at your teleconferences? If so, in what way?

over
to you

5 Getting started

Adjust the way you introduce yourself to suit the various types of meeting you attend. Use the situations on the cards – or think up some of your own – to present yourself in different roles.

An acting deputy for a colleague in a regular conference call

A team member in a kick-off meeting for a new international project

A call leader of a conference call (Go on to set the ground rules.)

►► Skills file: Self-introductions, p 150; Opening a conference call, p 151

a way with words

Conference calls

Start the session by stating your name and how you would like to be addressed. Mention your job, expertise and/or background. If running the meeting, briefly explain the ground rules, then start with the agenda.

Hi. My full name is Thomas Beck, but please call me Tom.

I'm the purchasing manager here at FLT and I have a particular interest in the Asian market.

We'd like to ask you to please refrain from doing other tasks during the call.

I'd like to do a roll-call before moving on to the agenda.

►► Pocket coach, p 23

CD1
13

6 'And the desired outcome is ...'

Listen to Jean-Paul Le Neuf, an account manager at an oil company, keeping things on track during a conference call.

- a What is the desired outcome of the meeting?
What objection is raised?
- b What phrases does Jean Paul use to
 - 1 state the objectives?
 - 2 check whether there are questions?
 - 3 get consensus?
 - 4 move on to the first point?



word
perfect

- c How do the speakers use these words?

issue concern matter quandary glitch

Now fill in the gaps.

- 1 There have been some _____ with the planned implementation.
- 2 Does anyone else share Bob's _____?
- 3 I'm in a bit of a _____.
- 4 I take _____ with point three on the agenda ...
- 5 I thought the _____ had been settled.

CD1
14

7 'I think we've covered everything ...'

Jean-Paul is wrapping up the conference call.
Listen and answer the questions.

- a How do you think the meeting went? What makes you say so?
- b Notice how Jean-Paul allocates tasks, asks for feedback and brings the meeting to a conclusion. What does he say?
- c What suggestions do the participants have for making their next telephone conference more effective?

over
to you

8 Running a meeting

- a Think of the last meeting you attended. What were the objectives? Did the meeting go well? Why (not)? What would have made the meeting (even) more effective?
- b Now imagine you are running the meeting above. State the objectives and then wrap up the meeting.

a way
with words

Running a meeting

A meeting runs more smoothly if all the attendees keep to the agenda. Use these phrases to clarify statements and tasks, keep people on track and specify follow-up.

The purpose of today's meeting is to ...

Our objective is to ...

I want to settle this point today once and for all.

If there are no other queries, I think we should move on to the next point.

Is everyone clear about the tasks they've been assigned?

Tony will write up the minutes and send them to us by 13 November.

► ► Pocket coach, p 24

On the one hand, ...

Look at the following statements about remote meetings. Do you agree or disagree? What's your position?

- 1 Remote meetings mean less travel, which is definitely good for the bottom line.
- 2 Participants' eyes can easily wander to email or any other distractions in the anonymity of their own office or workspace, making remote meetings less effective.
- 3 Remote meetings are a great equalizer for smaller companies.
- 4 In remote meetings, participants feel uncertain of themselves because the visual cues present in conventional meetings are largely absent.

Business buzzwords

Can you figure out what the following buzzwords mean? Translate them into plain English.

- blamestorming** moving the goalposts
- pushing the envelope** putting out fires
- helicoptering an idea around** passing the buck

Does any of this go on in your meetings?

During the blamestorming session, we concluded that if the client hadn't moved the goalposts midway through the project, we would have easily met the deadline.

Fine-tuning

Read these tongue-twisters aloud.

- 1 The **fifth** and **sixth months** of the year are when we **close** the most **deals**, and **so** are our **busiest**.
- 2 Have you **thought** about **loosening** up a few **resources**?
- 3 It's no **myth**; for every deadline you **miss**, you get that much **closer** to **losing** your next contract.

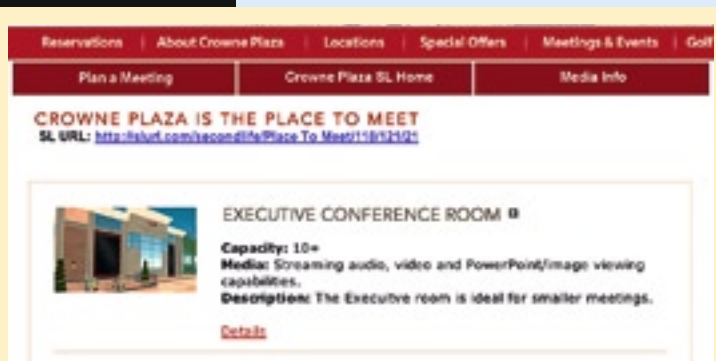
One-liner

Effective meetings don't happen by accident; they happen by design.

Do you agree or disagree?



Virtual worlds



IBM's Virtual Worlds Promoter, Ian Hughes, believes that the 330,000 IBM employees worldwide could avoid more than nine years' worth of wasted time every week by replacing all telephone conference calls with virtual meetings. How much time do you think your company could save? What aspects of your business are best discussed behind the corporate firewall? How could your company harness the power of virtual worlds to engage with clients, suppliers or customers?

WebQuest: [Virtual meetings or Second Life](#)

Mind benders

... to mull over when the meeting drags on ...

- 1 You thought you'd **squared everything away**, but now you're back to **square one**. How do you explain things to the boss?
- 2 You're not sure if the meeting is caught in a **virtuous** or a **vicious circle**. How do you decide?
- 3 Your boss wants you **to fit a square peg into a round hole**? Will that be easier than **squaring the circle**?
- 4 **Circular or pointed arguments**? Which ones are best when you want to **throw someone a curve**?

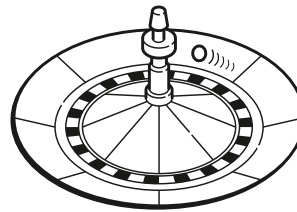
B Meeting challenges

“More important than the quest for certainty is the quest for clarity.”
*François Gautier (b. 1950),
 French journalist and writer*

1 focus

Explore the following questions. ▶▶ **Pocket coach, p 25**

- a What **specific** types of problems land on your desk? Which ones do you handle yourself and which ones do you deal with in meetings?
- b Can sensitive issues be dealt with adequately in remote meetings (e.g. conference calls)? Why (not)?
- c How do you react when interrupted while trying to make a point at a meeting? Give an example. Do you regard interruptions generally as annoying or potentially useful?
- d Do you **rely on** intuition or **trial and error** when solving problems? Is there a case to be made in your organization for both rational and imaginative approaches to problem-solving?
- e Have you encountered any of the following decision-making pitfalls in meetings you've attended? If so, how could they be overcome?
 - Team members are unclear about their own decision-making authority.
 - Team is **insufficiently** briefed or is unprepared.
 - There is **inadequate** time for a thorough discussion.
 - The wrong people attend the meeting.
 - Staff members **pursue personal agendas**.
 - Issues are **shelved** indefinitely.
 - Team members are **economical with the truth**.
- f Optimizing working relationships is a priority for most organizations. Can you give an example of how **interpersonal disputes** are managed in your company?



which way?

A: I think that we should be more careful in future.
B: I suggest we be more careful in future.
 Is there any difference between these two statements?

▶▶ **Language file 6, p 138**

word watch

economic	<i>Wirtschafts-, ökonomisch</i>	The economic indicators look good. We can expect a period of rapid growth.
economical	<i>sparsam</i>	We're looking into the most economical way to run meetings.
process	<i>Verfahren, Vorgang</i>	This novel problem-solving process is very effective.
trial	<i>Prozess, Gerichtsverhandlung Test, Probe</i>	The trial will determine whether the former CFO is guilty of fraud. We agreed to employ her for a trial period.
trial and error	<i>Ausprobieren</i>	We discovered the best operating procedure by trial and error .

2 On the spot: Reacting in conflict situations

You are at a meeting. How would you react to the following situations?

The other participants' body language shows that they are sceptical of your ideas.

Somebody has just put forward a proposal that you think is flawed.

A direct report frequently interrupts you.

CD 1
15

3 'But have you considered ...?'

Anna Sanchez, one of the senior partners of an industrial vehicles manufacturer, is meeting up with Helen Becker, a financial controller, and Max Garvin, a project leader. They are discussing how to fund the design and production of some new equipment.

- a Listen and decide whether the statements are true (T), false (F) or unclear (U).
- 1 The engineers disagreed strongly about the design of the equipment.
 - 2 Anna is considering asking the banks for finance.
 - 3 Helen counsels caution because the interest rates are currently quite high.
 - 4 Max favours venture capital as a funding option.
 - 5 Helen fears the project won't be profitable within the anticipated time frame.

- b Look at the following exchanges from the meeting.
What do you think is happening?
What techniques do the speakers use to defuse tricky situations?

1

Max Fine, we had a few problems with the engineers ...

Anna Problems?

Max Well, just teething troubles, actually.

2

Max Well, the interest rates seem reasonable enough ...

Helen Uhm ... well, there are indeed many good arguments in favour of doing it that way – we've done it like that for other ... uhm ... smaller ... projects in the past and things have always worked out ...

Anna Mmm, but you seem a little sceptical.



3

Max Venture capital! Talk about swimming with the sharks!

Helen Well, sorry Max, please bear with me. I do believe we should keep our options open at this stage, and just to finish my point, if I may, ...

4

Helen Well, of course I realize that there's a downside to venture capital ...

Max Too many cooks ...

Helen You're right, Max. And there's no such thing as a free lunch!

- c Ahead of the meeting Helen made some notes.
How does she express these points in the meeting?

- 1 *Serious repercussions if no profitability within three years*
- 2 *Funding through venture capital?*
- 3 *Disadvantages of venture capital option*
- 4 *Grants or government-backed finance?*

word perfect

- d How do the speakers use the following words?

wary extreme get bear utter

Now fill in the gaps.

- 1 It's just _____ difficult for any of us to second-guess the market.
- 2 ... please _____ with me.
- 3 I'm not _____ convinced that venture capital is feasible.
- 4 ... I am a bit _____ of banks.
- 5 What I'm _____ at is ...

CD 1
16-18

4 'I understand that you're upset ...'

- a Listen to three excerpts where different managers deal with tricky situations and fill in the table below.

Extract	Problem
1	
2	
3	

- b What techniques do the speakers use to deal with objections? Match the extracts to the techniques (note that one item will be left blank) and find phrases in the dialogues to justify your decision.

- A _____ Acknowledge the comment and relay the question.
 B _____ Acknowledge feelings and rephrase the comment without the hostile tone.
 C _____ Refuse to continue the discussion until the hostile party uses a civil tone.
 D _____ Turn the comment or question into a neutral question.

a way with words

Defusing

potential conflict

Meetings can become tense when you have to deal with hidden agendas, personal conflict and hostility. Active listening, strategic repetition of key points, tentative language and impersonal idiomatic phrases can help ensure effective communication.

Uh-huh – I see / I'm with you / please go on ...

A: We've had a few glitches but nothing serious.

B: Glitches?

This could/might have serious repercussions.

I hope we're not barking up the wrong tree.

There are indeed many good arguments in favour of going ahead with the deal.

All things considered, I think it's definitely an option worth looking into.

Note that qualifying phrases don't necessarily indicate uncertainty. They are just a polite and effective way of presenting ideas that might be controversial.

►► Pocket coach, p 27

c Notice how idiomatic language was used in the first two extracts. Listen again and fill in the gaps. What do these idioms mean and how are they used by the speakers?

- 1 When the _____ were shifted ...
- 2 And every _____ has a _____ lining ...
- 3 They have built quite a bit of _____ room into their terms.
- 4 The _____ is in the _____.

5 Dealing with objections

The phrases below could all be used when dealing with an objection from one of your peers. Which of them could be used for dealing with an objection from your boss or a direct report?

your boss: _____

a direct report: _____

- 1 To be frank, I think that's a bit of a stretch.
- 2 Well, I'm not sure that I'd go quite that far.
- 3 Thank you. That's a good point. I will certainly take that on board.
- 4 Mmm, so what you're saying is ...
- 5 Sorry, but that doesn't sound very realistic.
- 6 It's interesting that you say that.
- 7 I see what you mean.
- 8 Are you serious?

over
to you

6 How to frame it

Choose one of the cards below and decide what you would say in a face-to-face meeting. Refer to the phrases on page 41 and, if appropriate, use an idiom to ease tension or defuse the situation.

►► Skills file: Framing proposals, p 125

►► Pocket coach, p 28

You would like to negotiate a number of additional days off per year as your boss is unable to give you an increase in salary. Negotiate with your boss.

You would like to do a distance learning MBA and would like the company to pay your university fees. You anticipate objections.

A team member would like to reduce his or her workload to a four-day week. Negotiate with him/her.

A staff member would like time off to do a two-week intensive English course in Malta. You have a number of objections.

a way with words

Using proverbs and sayings in business

Proverbs can be used to evaluate situations in a non-personal way, **OK, things are not looking great but remember – every cloud has a silver lining.**

We have to be careful here.

We mustn't put all our eggs in one basket.

or to comment wryly on difficult situations.

How does it go again? It's a choice between the devil and the deep blue sea!

Well-known proverbs are sometimes not completed because it is assumed that those present are familiar with the saying.

You know what they say – a fool and his money ...

Too many cooks ...

Choose tentative language when you wish to evaluate a situation in a non-personal way and can't come up with a suitable proverb or saying.

OK, things are not looking great but maybe we can still find something positive here.

We have to be careful here. It could be dangerous to rely on a sole supplier.

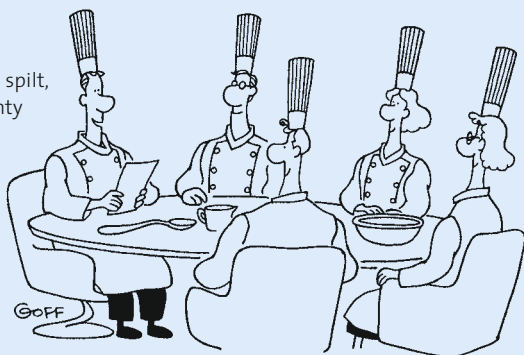
►► Pocket coach, p 29

Headline news

Business units need not be run by head honcho, report suggests

Translate the meaning of this newspaper headline into plain English. What do you think the article is about?

"Our eggs are all in one basket, no milk has been spilt, and we have plenty of dough"



Idioms used to describe tricky situations

Complete the idioms with the following words:

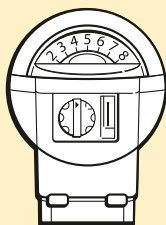
beat bitten frying pan mice safe tango

- 1 Once _____, twice shy.
- 2 When the cat's away, the _____ will play.
- 3 Better _____ than sorry.
- 4 Let's speak frankly and not _____ around the bush.
- 5 Out of the _____ and into the fire.
- 6 It takes two to _____.

Use one of the idioms above to rephrase this sentence: 'I appreciate what I have and don't want to risk losing it.'

Time is (quite literally) money

Have you heard of a Meeting Meter? Similar to the way a parking meter tracks the cost of the time spent in a parking space, this software package allows companies to calculate how much their meetings cost. The names and salaries of meeting participants are entered into the system and the program calculates the cost of their presence in the meeting on a minute-by-minute basis. Can you make an educated guess about what your last meeting cost?



Drama queens

Patrick Lencioni, author of *Death by Meeting: A Leadership Fable ... About Solving the Most Painful Problem in Business*, says meetings are like movies in that they need drama, conflict and resolution to hold people's attention.

Is this a bit OTT (over the top) or do you see eye to eye with Patrick Lencioni? What kind of 'drama' goes on in your meetings?

Joke

Quote from a recent meeting: 'We are going to continue having these meetings, every day, until I find out why no work is getting done.'

Why?

Toyota's '5 whys' strategy is a problem-solving tool. When confronted with a problem, you ask 'why' five times to get to the root cause. Try it out on your current challenge.



- The problem: The customer is unhappy.
- Why? He had to wait for a delivery. (#1)
 - Why? We could not process the order because the computers were down. (#2)
 - Why? There was an IT test going on all day and the systems were unstable for some days following that. (#3)
 - Why? The IT staff does not work at night or at the weekend and the department is understaffed. (#4)
 - Why? The IT department does not have the infrastructure and resources it requires to support a booming company like ours. (#5 ► the root cause)

C Meetings *with style*

Factfile

Biodata Rudi Singh is 55, married, and has three children

Position CEO of India Business Venues (IBV), a company that provides luxurious facilities in locations throughout India where corporate clients can hold top-level meetings

Latest Project Establishing a conference centre in the ancient town of Shimla in the foothills of the Himalayas

My Style

I respect people.

I try to anticipate the wishes of my clients.

I never raise my voice.

I am a great believer in etiquette and the art of politeness.



The big question

Q Mr Singh, thank you for your invitation to use the conference facilities in Shimla, but tell me, isn't it a bit of a paradox that in the heyday of audio and video conferencing so many people still want to hold meetings in remote and expensive locations?

A That's an excellent point and I can understand your **take** on the issue. It may sound paradoxical but I recommend that you not dismiss this idea out of hand. Relationship-building is easier to achieve when the participants meet up in pleasant surroundings, and companies recognize this fact. If this weren't true, we would have gone out of business many years ago. However, I'm happy to say that business is booming. And I beg to differ with you on one point. At first glance, our locations, I grant you, may appear remote. **Take** our secluded retreat in Shimla in the Himalayas, or our hidden-away beach resort in Goa. They may look remote but they are actually both in the vicinity of central transportation hubs. If you decided to **take up** our offer, I assure you that it wouldn't **take you long** to get to your destination. And it goes without saying that we have state-of-the-art communications equipment in place at each of our centres. May I add one thing? Our facilities are also

designed to help our guests relax and so make them more productive. In the evening we offer Ayurvedic massage and traditional Indian music. You may even hold your conference on board a historic train furnished with regal décor and equipped with attendant service. In my opinion, the results that can be achieved in such a setting far outweigh those achieved through a conventional audio or video conference. Please correct me if I'm wrong, but don't you agree that virtual conferencing **doesn't always have what it takes** to get those creative juices running? Sometimes a little luxury is simply essential! Let me clarify something though, if I may. Our corporate clients usually have business contacts in India and the type of meetings they hold at our venues are top-level ones. Given the fact that in such meetings people take decisions that will impact the lives of many thousands of people, I think I would be justified in saying that a little luxury is a sound investment. We aim to make meetings both relaxing and stimulating, both enjoyable and serious, and not just creative but productive too. Far be it for me to say that we always succeed, but I urge you to **take me up on** my invitation. I'm sure you won't be disappointed.

1 Analysis

- a What line of business is Rudi Singh in?
- b What is his main contention?
- c Rudi Singh uses expressions with ‘take’ that mean the following:
to accept – to have the qualities to be successful – opinion – to need a lot of time
Can you find them in the text?
- d Is meeting up in luxurious surroundings an expense you or your company can justify?

2 Style

- a How would you describe Rudi Singh’s style? Circle the appropriate words, or come up with some of your own.
dramatic – flippant – guarded – hyperbolic – logical – modest – thoughtful – wry
- b Notice that Rudi Singh frequently modifies his statements with self-deprecating or hedging remarks. Here’s one example:
‘I might be wrong on this, but I truly believe that our venues enhance the quality of our corporate clients’ outcomes.’
Can you find any examples in the text? What effect do these self-deprecating or hedging remarks have?
- c Imagine you are talking to Rudi Singh about the possibility of staging a meeting at his conference facilities. How would you respond to his questions? If you were doing the interviewing, how would you reframe the questions? What other questions would you ask?

Excuse me asking you so directly, but what little luxury might enhance your next meeting?

Would you perhaps be requiring any expert facilitation at your meeting?

If you don't mind me asking, how important is the venue for making your top-level meetings more productive?

Given that you want the best possible outcome, what facilities do you consider vital to the success of your meetings?

- d Rudi Singh enjoys employing paradoxes. Here’s one:
‘We, at IBV, attempt to square the circle. We plan meetings meticulously in order to encourage participants to be spontaneous.’
Can you find any examples of paradox in the text? Can you think of an interesting paradox that describes some aspect of your company or job?

Personal notes

Introducing yourself at face-to-face meetings and conference calls

Explaining the ground rules and communicating strategic objectives

Keeping a meeting on track and wrapping it up

Framing a proposal

Phrases for dealing with interruptions and objections

Phrases for defusing potential conflict

Self-deprecating or hedging remarks

Some paradoxes that shed light on your job or company

My words