

Dr. Dennis E. Hensley

## HOW TO RUN EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

### I. When NOT to Hold a Meeting

- A. When you cannot decide what the meeting is for or what its outcome should be
- B. If there's an easier way of handling the matter
- C. If you don't have adequate time to prepare and plan
- D. When all of the key people cannot attend
- E. When the cost of the meeting (hourly wages x the number of people attending the meeting) is too costly
- F. Right after lunch when everyone is sleepy

### II. Why Too Many Meetings Never Accomplish Anything

- A. There is no set agenda or starting and stopping schedule
- B. Meetings ramble, run too long, and are boring.
- C. People aren't informed in advance what the meeting is about, what they are to bring, and what is to be accomplished.
- D. Someone dominates all the time, people tell "war stories" or no one wants to focus on the real issues.
- E. The A-V and handout materials are poor.
- F. There are too many items to cover.
- G. Distractions and interruptions destroy the continuity.
- H. People are uncooperative, they attack each other's suggestions and ideas, or they wonder why they are there.

III. The Four Stage Approach to Making Meetings Work

- A. Planning
- B. Informing
- C. Conducting
- D. Following Up

Overview Guide for Planning a Meeting

Date the Meeting Will Be Held: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Room Set Up: Table w/chairs \_\_\_\_\_ Classroom seats \_\_\_\_\_ U-Shape \_\_\_\_\_

Persons Attending:

- |          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____  |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____  |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____  |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____  |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

What are the goals for this meeting? What discussions, decisions, explanations, or votes need to be focused on?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How will the meeting be run: by presentation? small group interaction? open discussion? brainstorming? individual reports?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What support equipment will be needed?

Flip Chart _____	Chalkboard _____	Overhead Projector _____
Screen _____	VCR and TV _____	Tape Recorder _____
Handouts _____	Overheads _____	Slide Projector _____

How many handouts will be needed and what kinds?

Notebooks _____	Charts _____	Reports _____
Samples _____	Letters _____	Contracts _____
Outlines _____	Pictures _____	Minutes of Meeting _____

What will be the basic agenda of the meeting?

Opening: \_\_\_\_\_  
Reports: \_\_\_\_\_  
Introductions: \_\_\_\_\_  
Discussion Issues: \_\_\_\_\_  
Votes: \_\_\_\_\_  
Summaries: \_\_\_\_\_  
Assignments: \_\_\_\_\_

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IV. When to Schedule a Meeting

- A. Before lunch
- B. Before quitting time

NOTE: People can get to the point quickly when they are hungry or when they have to catch a car pool ride.

V. Informing People of Key Information

- A. Send a written memo of the agenda and format of the meeting to those expected to attend
- B. Let key people know what they will be expected to present or share at the meeting and when they will be called on
- C. Attach copies of any materials (keep them short) that should be read before the meeting convenes

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NOTICE OF SCHEDULED MEETING

Memo to: \_\_\_\_\_  
From: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_  
Time of Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Persons to Attend:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of the Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Results and Goals Desired: \_\_\_\_\_

Format	
Topic: _____	Led By: _____
Topic: _____	Led By: _____
Topic: _____	Led By: _____

VI. The Do and Don't Aspects of Running a Meeting

- A. Start on time. Don't wait for stragglers (unless he or she has the power to fire you; then, be sensible).
- B. Write on the chalkboard what the reason is for the meeting and ask if there are any modifications or add-ons before you start. Then, quickly review the agenda.
- C. Stick to the agenda and to the time allotments. Take the toughest tasks first because people's energy levels will wane as the meeting progresses.
- D. Keep attendees time conscious: "Our next item is the discussion of a new promotional mailer. Remember that we have decided to limit discussion to 20 minutes on this."
- E. Manage the discussion. Keep people on the topic at hand.
- F. At the conclusion of each agenda item, decide on a specific course of action, who is responsible and what the time expectations are.
- G. Don't let anyone (including yourself) hog the meeting.
- H. Remember to let ideas flow. Protect people from being criticized for their views and suggestions.
- I. If the meeting is for developing ideas and formulating plans, ask direct questions of people to draw them in.
- J. Don't manipulate the group with leading questions, such as, "I can't see why anyone would be against this project, right?"
- K. Write into the minutes what really was said, not what your interpretation was of what was said.
- L. End on time.

## VII. Preparing the Minutes of the Meeting

- A. Summarize only what was covered or said in the meeting. Don't add opinions or interpretations or extra data.
- B. If two differing opinions were expressed during the discussion time, include the points from both sides.
- C. Keep the minutes short (so that people will read them). An outline form is perfectly acceptable.
- D. Try to make your summaries interesting to read.
- E. Note when the meeting was held, who attended, its purpose, what was decided, what action will be done and by whom and by when.
- F. Tell when and where the next meeting will take place.
- G. Attempt to get the minutes distributed as soon after the meeting as possible. This allows people to make notes on their copies while information is still fresh in their minds.

## VIII. How to Be a Good Participant in a Meeting

- A. Come prepared: know the agenda; read the homework material sent to you in advance; bring your calendar; give careful thought to the meeting's topic before you show up; arrive with a positive attitude.
- B. Keep on the subject. If you express a thought, try to have facts and figures to support your premise.
- C. Help the leader. Mind your manners. Don't attack other people. Be cooperative in helping the leader bring the meeting to the desired results.

A FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION OF A MEETING

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Person Leading the Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Purpose of the Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

PLANNING:

Suggestions for Improvement

Well planned?	Yes	_____	No	_____
Right people?	Yes	_____	No	_____
Agenda sent?	Yes	_____	No	_____
Room ready?	Yes	_____	No	_____
Good handouts?	Yes	_____	No	_____

INFORMING:

Purpose clearly communicated in advance?	Yes	_____	No	_____
The agenda was complete for topics/times?	Yes	_____	No	_____

CONDUCTING:

Kept schedule?	Yes	_____	No	_____
Assured delivery?	Yes	_____	No	_____
Won the group?	Yes	_____	No	_____
Points made?	Yes	_____	No	_____
Used good visuals?	Yes	_____	No	_____
Restated issues?	Yes	_____	No	_____
Anxiety in check?	Yes	_____	No	_____
Set climate for new ideas?	Yes	_____	No	_____
Stayed on subject?	Yes	_____	No	_____
Used questioning?	Yes	_____	No	_____
Listened well?	Yes	_____	No	_____
Protected ideas?	Yes	_____	No	_____
Encouraged group to build on ideas?	Yes	_____	No	_____
Ended on time?	Yes	_____	No	_____

FOLLOW-UP:

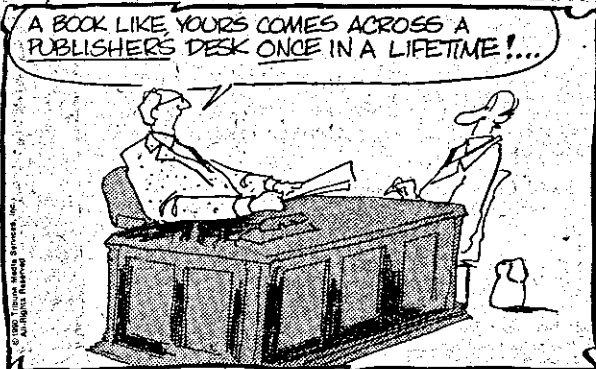
Action plan was developed and followed through?	Yes	_____	No	_____
Everyone received the minutes?	Yes	_____	No	_____

HOW TO MAKE YOUR AUDIENCE BETTER LISTENERS  
WHENEVER YOU ARE DOING PUBLIC SPEAKING

The prime objective in public speaking is to make sure that your message is being heard and understood by the members of your audience. Here are some tips on how to insure that:

- A. Understand what should be said
  - 1. Do you have clear objectives?
  - 2. Has the audience been told these objectives by you?
  - 3. Are you speaking in plain, direct language?
- B. Be familiar with your audience
  - 1. Are you picking up on peoples' non-verbal signals?
  - 2. Are you making assumptions or judgments before getting to know your listeners?
- C. Get the attention of the audience
  - 1. Have you created a good rapport?
  - 2. Does the audience trust you and have confidence in your abilities?
  - 3. Are you varying your vocal inflections and pace of speech so as to keep people interested?
  - 4. Have you weighed the interest level of your audience for the subject you are presenting?
- D. Gauge the level of understanding
  - 1. Are the vocabulary and jargon appropriate for this group of listeners?
  - 2. Is your presentation giving one idea at a time?
  - 3. Are you remembering to summarize key points before moving on to a new topic?
  - 4. Are you helping the listeners associate new concepts and ideas with things they are already familiar with?
- E. Seek responses from the listeners
  - 1. Are you using open-ended questions to discover people's thoughts, feelings and opinions?
  - 2. Are you a good listener when your audience members share their feedback, suggestions and ideas?

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# Holding Successful Seminars

## Controlling Problem People

by Dr. Dennis E. Hensley

IT CAN DRIVE YOU CRAZY, YOU have gathered a group of 20 people together to discuss estate planning. You get off a great start, but five minutes into your talk someone in the back starts whispering, "That'll never work" or "No, that's not right." Soon your prospective clients are paying more attention to that person's under-the-breath mumblings than they are to your presentation.

Or how about this situation: you are talking to a group of small-business owners about Keogh plans. Your enthusiasm is catching - your audience is warming to you. Suddenly the door opens and a latecomer walks in. He looks around and says, "Have you started already?" All eyes turn from you and instantly your meeting's momentum is completely lost.

These are but two of at least half-a-dozen situations which show how people can completely destroy the continuity or effectiveness of your seminars. Fortunately, there are ways to deal with these people, chief among them being the ability of the chairperson to control people who make a habit of causing

problems at meetings. Following is a review of these types of troublemakers as well as some ideas on how to deal with them.

*The Late Arriver.* He or she usually arrives ten minutes late, makes a noisy entrance and then slows things down by asking to be "caught up." To indulge such people serves only to encourage them to continue to be late.

Here are some solutions: make a habit of always starting your seminars on time. Also, do not stop your seminar to accommodate late arrivers. Just look up and say, "Good morning, Jenny; we're on agenda item two," and then proceed. Let Jenny check with you after the meeting or have her read the minutes if she wants to know what was decided in regard to item one.

Putting important items at the top of the agenda will stimulate people to be on time. If they want to get their two cents' worth in about item one, they will have to be there when you discuss it. Sometimes, assigning a person a job, such as taking minutes or setting up the meeting room, will put additional pressure on that person to be early.

# Holding Successful Seminars

*The Whisperer.* This person visits with a friend while you are trying to conduct your seminar or mumbles comments which instantly critique every statement you make.

One simple way of dealing with a whisperer is to use dominant body language. If, while you are speaking, you nonchalantly walk over and stand

right in front of a person who is whispering, you will draw the focus of the room with you. The combination of your height towering over the whisperer and the weight of a dozen sets of eyes on him or her will usually silence a disruptive whisperer.

*The Big Mouth.* This person interrupts you or other people in the seminar without warning or apology. He or she will often try to speak from an authoritarian viewpoint which serves only to aggravate or antagonize the interrupted speaker even more. Since big mouths see meetings as places to hold court, they are strong negative factors, which must be dealt with firmly.

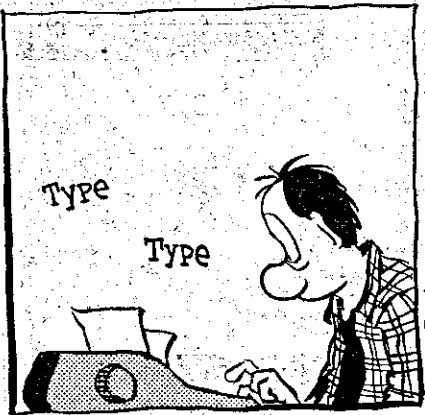
Like the whisperer, a big mouth can sometimes be controlled by a speaker's use of dominant body language or through a private confrontation during a short break from the meeting. Other times additional tactics are needed.

If a big mouth starts an argument with someone, control it by walking between their lines of vision; then call individually on each person to explain his or her viewpoint. Do not permit one to interrupt the other.

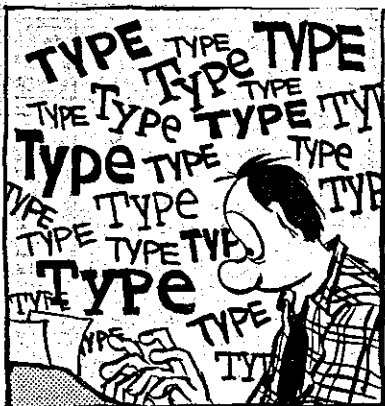
Sometimes the only way you will be able to deal with an interrupting big mouth will be by behaving equally as brashly. If someone is addressing you and the big mouth cuts in loudly with, "What Jim is getting at is that ...," you should instantly respond, "Just a moment - I want to hear it from Jim himself." Not only will you put the big mouth in his or her place, but you will also win Jim's appreciation and the respect of the others in the meeting.

*The Would-Be Expert.* This person is the one who constantly reminds you that he is the only one in the group with ten years' experience or that she's the only person with a Ph.D. The conceit of such persons makes them non-team oriented and, as such, of little use to your group.

ADAM  Brian Basset



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*Since these "experts" feel they are above the group, you can often counter their moves by turning the weight of the group against them.*

You must either change their attitudes or, at least, prevent them from trying to recast your meeting into the type of mold they feel is correct.

Since these "experts" feel they are above the group, you can often counter their moves by turning the weight of the group against them. For instance, the would-be expert might say, "No, no, I've been in this business 25 years and I can tell you that your ideas just won't work. Now why don't we talk about the strategies I use and save ourselves some time?" You should respond by recognizing the person's background but insisting on staying with your game plan: "We all respect your experience, Don, but the point of this seminar is to explore a lot of ideas. Now who else has a suggestion? I see that you're making notes, Linda. Let's hear from you."

Because your time is so valuable to you, your seminar must be run efficiently. You cannot afford to permit one or two disruptive individuals to ruin it. Things will go a lot better if you correct these disturbances. By remembering the above-mentioned techniques, you will have several patterns to rely on.

## Managing Your Time (How Do You Rate?)

Check either yes or no for the following questions:

- | Yes   | No    | Do you:   |
|-------|-------|---|
| _____ | _____ | 1. Start the day before thinking through what has to be done?   |
| _____ | _____ | 2. Start a job before thinking it through?  |
| _____ | _____ | 3. Leave jobs before they are completed?  |
| _____ | _____ | 4. Do the easy or less important work first before the more important (and possibly more unattractive) work?            |
| _____ | _____ | 5. Assign tasks without specifying quantity, quality, and time?   |
| _____ | _____ | 6. Assign difficult tasks without checking to see if they are in need of assistance?                                    |
| _____ | _____ | 7. Have trouble saying no even though you cannot see when the task will get completed?                                  |
| _____ | _____ | 8. Do most of the work rather than assigning someone to help you?   |
| _____ | _____ | 9. Do work by hand that a machine could do?   |
| _____ | _____ | 10. Do things that aren't really your job?  |
| _____ | _____ | 11. Spend a lot of time doing the things you have always done and are good at doing?                                    |
| _____ | _____ | 12. Feel that the best way to do things is the way you have always done them?   |
| _____ | _____ | 13. Start projects that you have little interest in or know that you probably will not finish?                          |
| _____ | _____ | 14. Make sure the short, easy tasks get done early?   |
| _____ | _____ | 15. Often operate by crisis management?   |
| _____ | _____ | 16. Handle a large number of different jobs?  |
| _____ | _____ | 17. Handle the concerns of employees immediately when requested?  |
| _____ | _____ | 18. Socialize daily during business hours either in person or via telephone with friends?                               |
| _____ | _____ | 19. Get distracted while working by such things as newspapers, friends who drop in to see you, low priority mail, etc.? |
| _____ | _____ | 20. Make several trips outside your office rather than grouping errands together for one trip?                          |

*To rate yourself, count the number of "yes" answers and the number of "no" answers. If you answered "yes" more than "no" -- you have a lot of work ahead. If you have 5 to 10 "yes" answers, you can improve the effective use of your time. If you answered "yes" to more than 15 questions, you are in big trouble.*