

SKILL BOOSTER 1: MEETING SKILLS



REIGNITE DEVELOPMENT
Reflect, Refocus, Results

When running a meeting or even just attending a meeting you may be faced with dealing with different behaviours and people. This skill booster has some tips and ideas for how to deal with these behaviours.

Dealing with quieter or more reflective people

- If you can, issue an agenda prior to the meeting to enable your more reflective guests to think and plan ahead of the meeting.
- Invite participation by maintaining eye contact and use the person's name when asking questions so no one else can answer.
- Ask questions the person should be able to answer to encourage participation and build confidence.
- If you're the chair, sit opposite the quietest person so that your conversation can be directed to that individual.
- Ask for volunteers for jobs such as note taker or time-keeper. This can encourage quieter team members to be part of the conversation.
- Use a round robin to collect ideas. This technique gives everyone a chance to express an idea.
- Canvass their ideas one to one outside the meeting. If necessary express their ideas to the group giving them credit for it.

Dealing with people who dominate meetings

- Remain calm.
- Sit next to the person and keep eye contact to a minimum.
- Look at everyone but the dominator when posing questions to the group.
- If people want to discuss a problem not on the agenda, but which they need to get off their chest let them vent their feelings for a short while. If their issue is legitimate, albeit off topic show empathy by agreeing. When they have finished ask whether you can proceed with the topic in hand.
- If their tone of voice is hostile and they begin to hijack your meeting, intervene when they stop for a breath and point out firmly but politely that the matter may be important but this is not the meeting at which it will be addressed.
- If people are totally out of line, or make exaggerated claims, or are suggesting ridiculous ideas don't debate with them. You could canvass their peers to confirm that they alone hold that view. If there is general agreement that the hostile person's

argument is invalid confirm this by saying “well it looks like no one agrees with you so why don’t we agree to discuss this later”. Then move to closure and the next item on the agenda.

- Take the person outside at a break or at the end of the meeting. Share your observations and frustrations. Ask for help in making the next meeting more productive.
- Interject when the person stops to catch a breath. You can say “Thank you; what other opinions are there?”
- Signpost your desire to get a variety of opinions before you ask a question.
- Get opinions in sequence (round robin) reaching the dominant person last.

Dealing with people who side track meetings

- Post the meeting objectives where they can be seen by all. Before the meeting begins, get agreement to stick to the agenda. Set ground rules!
- Ask how the issue is related to the subject under discussion!
- Interrupt when the person takes a breath with a comment such as “Thank you but it appears as if we are on to something else. Could we agree to get back on the topic?”
- Allot a parking lot on the flip chart to record issues unrelated to the meeting. Agree to deal with those issues later.