

AGENDA SETTING

Part of the **Communication & Social Skills**

INTRODUCTION

A simple meeting agenda, distributed in advance, is perhaps the most important tool in ensuring a successful productive meeting. Here's why:

- It helps potential attendees decide whether they need to attend.
- It helps invitees to prepare for the meeting.
- It provides a structure for the meeting.
- Similarly, it allows the chair to control the meeting.
- And it gives a way in which the meeting's success can be judged.

Different meetings require different types of agenda, but there are five or six broad areas you should always cover.

The example below shows you how you can set out your own meeting agendas.

LOGISTICS

This includes date, time and place of meeting, its title, and a list of invited attendees.

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of the meeting, and any background information such as whether this is the first in a series of meetings.

HOUSEKEEPING

This should include a welcome and introductions and any apologies for absence. It should also cover approval of previous minutes, and any matters arising from them that are not dealt with elsewhere in the agenda.

ITEMS

Each item should have a number, a title, and a presenter or lead. It should also have a suggested time limit on the discussion. You may want to consider allocating a priority order to ensure the most important topics are covered first.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Most meetings end with AOB. A chance for people to flag up something not yet included or discussed.

You need to be careful the AOB section of the meeting doesn't get hijacked by a negative participant.

A well-run meeting, with a well-prepared agenda, should ensure that nobody wishes to raise any other business.

So you may wish to leave this section out of your meetings altogether.

If you do include AOB on the agenda, you agree that it will only be as a way of raising issues for discussion at a future meeting, or elsewhere.

CLOSE

This should include the chair's summary of the meeting, the date and time of the next meeting, and any actions agreed and who is responsible.

TAKEAWAY

Meeting agendas are essential. They demonstrate to your attendees that you value their time as much you value your own. The extra effort needed to create an agenda will pay off further down the line as people get to know that your meetings are run well and achieve their aims.

ACTIONABLE ADVICE

Take the full Making Meetings Matter course in the Communication and Social Skills collection. It's packed with tips and ideas to help you make your meetings more productive.