

San Pasa's Tips on
MEETINGS

1. **INTRODUCTION.** *A meeting is a **process** for doing business.* Like any process, a meeting may or may not be efficient, organized, cost effective, or useful. But there are some things that can be accomplished only by meetings. Successful meetings can be the result of a combination of factors—for example, leadership, interpersonal skills, participation, good will, meeting place and time, and the meeting structure, including ground rules, roles and responsibilities, and an appropriate agenda.

2. **MEETING AGENDA.** The example agenda below for an ongoing project team has several characteristics worth considering:

- The meeting time, place and length is clearly stated. The preparer of the agenda does not assume “everyone knows” when and where the meeting will be and how long it will last. Including this information in an agenda can be particularly helpful for people with tight schedules or those attend as last-minute substitutes—or if there are changes from usual times and places.
- All topics are clearly stated and numbered for easy reference.
- Every topic has at least one objective—*something to be accomplished in the meeting*. When assessing meeting effectiveness, it is helpful to know what was supposed to be accomplished, as well as what actually got done. Notice the topic itself doesn't imply action—the action desired is outlined in the objectives for each topic.
- There is a Topic Leader for each topic. Someone is responsible for presenting or for coordinating, for leading discussion, for providing information and materials, and for achieving the objectives declared in the agenda.
- Each topic has time “budgeted” to achieve the objectives. Participants may choose to allot more time to a subject that has been budgeted—if, for example, good progress is being made or its relative priority has changed since the agenda was published. Changing budgeted times can mean times for other topics are reduced or eliminated—or, meeting overall time is extended.
- The agenda format is the same from meeting to meeting. In the example below, the main topics are between the sets of double lines. Whatever format is used, leader names, time allotted, meeting place and time, etc., should appear in the same place in every agenda.
- The first and last agenda topics are the same from meeting to meeting. (Discussed below.)

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3. FIRST AND LAST TOPICS. The standard first topic gives the meeting leader a chance to adjust the meeting agenda, if necessary, to get team records (“minutes”) corrected and approved, and get other administrative business out of the way. If the team maintains an “Issues Bin” (discussed below), a review of it can be used to modify the agenda. The standard last topic gives the meeting leader and opportunity to summarize decisions, to reiterate actions and assignments, and to prepare for the next meeting by collecting agenda items and proposing a meeting date and time.

4. ATTACHMENTS. It’s a good idea to attach an up-to-date copy of the team Issues Bin and, periodically, to attach copies of the team roster and team meeting ground rules.

5. TIMING. Distributing an agenda well in advance of a meeting is a good practice. Participants can prepare and the agenda can be adjusted in advance of the meeting, if necessary.

(Example agenda below.)

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FURNDOCK PROJECT TEAM MEETING AGENDA

DAY: Tuesday
DATE: 7 December 2010
START TIME: **0930** a.m. [*Note the new meeting time!*]
ESTIMATED LENGTH: 85 minutes
SCHEDULED LENGTH: 90 minutes
PLACE: Horace P. Grokus, Sr. Memorial Conference
Room, Building 200, Room 43

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TOPIC 1: PRIOR MEETING RECORDS and HOUSEKEEPING

- Objective(s):
- a. Review and revise team records.
 - b. Review the Issues Bin.
 - c. Review/adjust the meeting agenda.
 - d. Dispose of administrative and other issues.

Topic Leader: Mr. Horace P. Grokus, Jr.

Time budgeted: 5 minutes

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TOPIC 2: ZAPIUM 2200 GHz CHIP UPGRADES

- Objective(s):
- a. Present and discuss the Director's orders for upgrading all computers to the new Zapium processor chip.
 - b. Review budget and costs and select pilot organization(s).

Topic Leader: Mr. Walt Wazmackian

Time budgeted: 10 minutes

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TOPIC 3: RESERVED PARKING

Objective(s): Discuss and reassign reserved parking places.

Topic Leader: Dr. Noreetia Hapley, BSW, MSW, Ph.D., Th.D.

Time budgeted: 50 minutes

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TOPIC 4: CLOSING OF SATELLITE UNIT 12

Objective(s):

- a. Review City Council and Local 972 protest letters.
- b. Review and approve unit closing plan.
- c. Assign bulldozer operators.

Topic Leader: Mr. Buckley Randolph

Time budgeted: 15 minutes

LAST TOPIC: MEETING CLOSE

Objective(s):

- a. Summarize decisions and actions.
- b. Reiterate assignments.
- c. Collect agenda items for next meeting(s).
- d. Set next meeting.

Topic Leader: Mr. Horace P. Grokus, Jr.

Time budgeted: 5 minutes

Attachments: Team Ground Rules
Team Roster and Phone List
Team Issues Bin

End of agenda.

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Example meeting rules:

FURNDOCK PROJECT TEAM MEETING GROUND RULES

1. OUR DECISIONS ARE BY CONSENSUS.

Consensus shall be the preferred way of making decisions; failing consensus, a simple majority shall decide questions.

2. OUR COMMUNICATIONS ARE OPEN.

3. WE HEAR EACH OTHER OUT.

Members shall hear each other out, listen actively, and check out their assumptions.

4. TOPIC LEADERS CONTROL THE FLOOR FOR THEIR BUDGETED TIME.

5. WE MAKE OUR MEETINGS A SAFE PLACE TO SPEAK OUT.

Members may ask for "nonattribution" (off-the-record) time during meetings; nonattribution discussions and materials shall not be part of team records and shall be kept confidential by meeting members.

6. CRITICISM IS CONSTRUCTIVE FOCUSED ON ISSUES NOT PEOPLE.

7. WE MEASURE OUR PRODUCTIVITY AND PROGRESS.

The team shall measure and report on its own meeting productivity every three months.

8. WE DO SELF-ASSESSMENTS.

The team shall conduct an assessment of its meeting effectiveness at least once each calendar year.

9. NO QUORUM, NO MEETING.

10. ALL FURNDOCK TEAM MEMBERS MAY ATTEND TEAM MEETINGS.

11. MEETING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

A. THE TEAM LEADER MANAGES MEETINGS.

B. THE RECORDER MANAGES MEETING RECORDS.

C. THE TIMEKEEPER MANAGES MEETING TIME.

12. OUR MEETINGS ADD VALUE OR WE DISCONTINUE THEM.



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Example meeting goals [not rules]:

- Members review prior meeting records before the next meeting
- One-hour (or less) meeting times
- No meetings without an agenda
- Meetings follow an agenda
- No “surprises” in agendas
- Minimum meeting notice of three business days in advance of meetings
- Meetings scheduled via an electronic calendar system with e-mail notification
- Meeting records published via e-mail three business days after meetings
- Last meeting action items resolved before the next meeting
- Issues Bin used to help manage meetings



HOW AN “ISSUES BIN” WORKS

Meeting members often bring up issues or topics not on the agenda. These members can be acknowledged by having their issues recorded in an Issues Bin for later consideration. (Note the Issues Bin review in standard Topic 1 above.) Issues listed in the bin may be added to a future meeting agenda, referred to other another more appropriate meeting or forum, be handed over to another team or organization process, or be redirected in some other way. Initial Issues Bin entries include:

- the date the issue was raised
- who raised it or who was designated as the “owner” of the issue
- the issue owner’s organization and contact information
- a concise description of the issue which the owner must endorse
- any other members who wish to add their names as “co-owners” of the issue
- whether or not the issue was referred elsewhere at that time

Issues in the bin may be overcome by events, come to be seen as unimportant after reconsideration, be addressed by some other process or group, or otherwise be considered no longer important. Whatever the case, the disposition of an issue is also recorded in the Issues Bin, along with the date it was closed and any other pertinent

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information. As issues are closed, their records should be deposited in an Issues Bin history file—which may prove to be a valuable resource to someone in the future.

Issues in the bin can also become the “property” of other meetings, processes and groups. Depending on the nature and scope of an issue, Team Leaders can contribute insights and ideas to other teams and organization functions by sharing issues raised in their meetings.

End.