



Leadership Tips *October, 2019* **Making Meetings Worth Your Time**

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Learn Powerful Phrases to Make the Meetings You Attend Better



In a meeting have you ever:

- Walked out at the end with no results or agreed upon actions?
- Been stuck in a long discussion with no focus?
- Found the meeting hijacked by irrelevant tangential issues?

Whether you're the meeting's organizer or its captive, there are things you can do to salvage lost meetings, get wayward meetings back on track, or change the tone in the room as an attendee. You just need to know what to say.

Lead from Where You Sit, Stand or Suffer

It's not true that only the meeting's leader can alter a meeting's course. Regardless of the level of formality of meetings, the following tips can be used to increase the productivity and sharpen the focus of any meeting.

Make Parliamentary Procedure Your Friend

Most of today's meetings are less formal than those found in the House of Commons, yet they still operate on the underpinnings of their rules of order which follow:

- Meetings start and end on time
- Only one matter is addressed at a time
- Only one person may speak at a time
- No person can speak a second time until all who wish have also spoken
- A spirit of fairness and good faith is paramount
- Each member has the right to understand any question and understand the effect of their decision at any time

You Already Know the Basics

Whether or not you formally apply rules of order in decision making, you are likely using them informally on a daily basis. Consider the following conversation among members of a department at work:

Jack: "I think we ought to plan a special meeting for November to get to know all the new hires." (Jack has made a motion.)

Angelica: "I agree. That sounds fun." (Jack's motion has just been seconded by another, deeming it fit for further discussion.)

Carol: "Wow, what an efficient way to get to know them." (Discussion of pros and cons has begun)

Reggie: "We used to just do it through emails and a group

lunch." (discussion continues)

Steve: "What about turning it into an offsite retreat?"
(motion is amended)

Multiple responses (amendment is discussed):

"Yes."

"I love that idea."

"Good thinking"

"What a boost for our team."

"Hmm. How many would prefer a retreat?"

(Vote on the amended motion)

"Great. It's unanimous. We'll plan an offsite." (Motion carries.)

Phrase It

You don't have to be a Parliamentarian to use the following procedural phrases:

I (hereby) call this meeting to order

To officially start the meeting

Let's table that

Suspend discussion of the topic (or motion)
at hand indefinitely

Point of information

Nice way of asking for clarification - at any time

Point of clarification

How to ask - at any time - when you are confused

Let's refer it to committee

A way of off-loading the current discussion

Since we're in agreement...

Another way of garnering agreement to act

We're adjourned

To end the meeting

Phrases to Focus and Forward the Action

At the beginning, to address the objectives of the meeting:

"We're here today to discuss..."

"Our main objective today is..."

"The primary purpose of today's meeting is..."

In the middle of the meeting:

To curtail an endless discussion:

"Are we here to discuss or decide?"

If one person's monopolizing the conversation:

"I'd like to hear from those who we've yet to hear from"

When someone revisits an issue that's already talked out:

"That question has already been asked and answered"

"Let's not reopen a discussion we've already concluded"

Addressing inappropriate behavior:

"Please, let's have one conversation only."

"Just a reminder to refrain from interrupting."

"Thank you for your undivided attention;
we've scheduled a break in 10 more minutes."

"Please let's express our passion positively."

"Let's all take a deep breath before going further;
clearly there's a lot of energy around this topic."

"It's important we hear from those who've yet to speak."

To Get Meetings Back on Track:

"I'm afraid that's outside the scope of this meeting."

"Let's try to stay to the point."

"Let's get back on track, shall we?"

Furthering the action:

"Great. That's a nice transition to our next topic."

"Duly noted. At this time we should move on to our next agenda item."

"We have to leave this discussion there for today, in the interests of time."

"Let's move this topic to the Parking Lot for further consideration."

"Given our time constraints, let's refer this to committee. Toni, please chair this committee with Tom, Celeste and Maria, and we'll make time next meeting for your report."

To close the meeting:

"Before adjourning, let's review who will do what by when."

"This is a good finishing point. Let's review today's decisions and action items before adjourning."

"Unless there's anything else I'll adjourn our meeting on time."

"Thank you all for your engagement and input. Please review the minutes within 24 hours of receipt and we'll meet again a month from now. Meeting adjourned."

"As the top of the hour has arrived, I will now close this meeting. Meeting Adjourned."

Before we adjourn...

Don't be stressed by uncomfortable meetings. Try using our suggestions to help everyone be productive and leave energized.

Meeting Adjourned.



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