



Department Leadership School

Effective Meetings

Two primary types of meetings:

1. Routine meetings:

- a. Post Meetings
- b. District Conferences
- c. DEC
- d. Department Convention

2. Strategic meetings:

- a. Event/Program Planning
- b. Problem-Solving
- c. Membership Strategy

Routine Meetings - Basic Meeting Structure:

1. Call to order
2. Roll call
3. Reading and approval of minutes
4. Reports from officers and committees
5. Old business
6. New business
7. Announcements
8. Adjournment

When to Use Robert's Rules

1. Board of directors' meetings
2. Committee meetings
3. Annual general meetings
4. Any formal meeting requiring recorded votes
5. Situations where fairness and procedure are paramount

For informal meetings or strategy sessions, strict parliamentary procedure may slow things down. Use your judgment based on the meeting's purpose.

Key Principles of Robert's Rules

1. One topic at a time
2. One speaker at a time
3. Majority rules
4. Minority rights protected
5. All members are equal

Handling Motions

Understanding motions is essential for anyone running formal meetings.

A motion is a formal proposal for the group to take action or make a decision.

Handling Motions

1. A member makes a motion
2. Another member seconds it
3. The chair restates the motion
4. Discussion follows (stay on topic)
5. The chair calls for a vote when discussion ends
6. Results are announced and recorded

Strategic Meetings:

Define Purpose and Objectives

- Before scheduling a meeting, determine if it is truly necessary. Ask whether the objectives can be achieved through email, collaborative documents, or brief one-on-one discussions.
- If a meeting is essential, clearly define its purpose—whether it's for decision-making, problem-solving, project planning, or strategic planning—and communicate this to participants in advance.
- A meeting without a purpose is just a calendar event.

Strategic Meetings:

Prepare a Structured Agenda

- A single, clear purpose for the meeting
- Specific topics aligned with the purpose
- Prioritized items, addressing the most critical issues first
- Time allocations for each topic to maintain pace

Distribute the agenda at least a day in advance to allow participants to prepare and contribute meaningfully.

Strategic Meetings:

Invite the Right People

- Only include participants who are essential to the discussion or decision-making. Avoid over-inviting, as too many attendees can dilute focus.
- Assign roles to clarify responsibilities.

Start and End on Time

- Respect participants' time by starting promptly and adhering to the scheduled end time.
- Ending on time reinforces efficiency and accountability

Strategic Meetings:

Facilitate Engagement and Connection

- Encourage brief personal check-ins or small talk at the start to foster a positive atmosphere.
- During the meeting, actively manage discussions to ensure everyone has a chance to contribute and that conversations stay on topic.

Strategic Meetings:

Focus on Actionable Outcomes

- Every meeting should conclude with clear next steps. Ensure participants leave knowing:
 - What actions to take
 - Who is responsible
 - Deadlines for completion
- Document decisions and action items and share them promptly after the meeting.

Strategic Meetings:

Follow Up

- Send a concise summary of key points, decisions, and action items.
- This reinforces accountability and ensures alignment across the team.

Efficient or Effective

- Efficient meetings finish fast
- Effective meetings finish with a clear, usable result
- Everyone should leave knowing three things:
 - What to do
 - How to do it
 - When it's due

The “Silent Start” Strategy (The Amazon Method)

- Sometimes the best way to start a meeting is with silence.
- At Amazon, the first 20 minutes of high-level meetings are spent silently reading a detailed memo about the topic at hand.
- Why does it work? Science shows we read faster than we listen.
- Immediate discussion often leads to anchoring bias. The first person to speak sets the “anchor” for the conversation, and everyone else unconsciously adjusts their opinion to match that first comment.

Try a “Silent Start” at a Strategic Meeting

- Write a 1-2 page memo outlining the problem, context, and data.
- Send it out, but assume nobody read it (because let's be honest, they probably didn't)
- Set aside the first 10 minutes for silent reading
- Open the floor – Discussion will be deeper, richer, and less prone to groupthink because everyone is operating from the same facts.

Brainstorming

- If you want to generate ideas, the worst thing you can do is ask the group to “shout them out.”
- Research indicates that verbal group brainstorming is often flawed due to “production blocking.”
- While one person is talking, everyone else is blocked from sharing.
- They either forget their ideas, lose confidence, or succumb to groupthink.

The Fix: Brainwriting

Brainwriting separates:

- Idea *generation* (best done alone); from
- Idea *evaluation* (best done in a group).

How to run a Brainwriting session:

- 1. The Prompt:** State the problem clearly
- 2. The Solitude:** Set a timer for 5 minutes. Everyone writes down as many ideas as possible—silently. No talking allowed
- 3. The Share:** Once the timer rings, post all ideas on a board (physical or digital)
- 4. The Discussion:** *Now* the group can discuss, group, and vote on the ideas

By switching to Brainwriting, you ensure extroverts don't dominate the floor and you capture the unique brilliance of the quietest people in the room.

The Parking Lot

1. A person has a good idea, but it is off-topic.
2. You do not want to dismiss the idea, but you can't let the meeting derail.
- 3. Place it in the “Parking Lot”** – a designated place where you “park” ideas that are interesting, but not relevant to the current objective.
4. Makes the speaker feel heard without letting them hijack the agenda.

Handling Difficult Situations

Even with the best preparation, challenges arise. Here's how to handle common difficult situations:

- **The Dominator:** One person monopolizes discussion. *Solution:* Thank them for their input and say, “I’d like to hear from others. [Name], what are your thoughts?”
- **The Silent Member:** Someone never contributes. *Solution:* Invite them specifically: “Sarah, you have experience with this. What’s your perspective?”

Handling Difficult Situations

- **The Conflict:** Two people argue. *Solution:* Acknowledge both views, then redirect: “You both raise valid points. Let’s focus on finding a solution that addresses both concerns.”
- **The Tangent Train:** Discussion keeps veering off-topic. *Solution:* Use the parking lot consistently and say, “Great point—let’s capture that and stay focused on [agenda item].”
- **The Late Arriver:** Someone habitually arrives late. *Solution:* Start on time regardless. Recap briefly when they arrive, but don’t restart. Consistency trains people to show up promptly.



QUESTIONS?