GROUP COMMUNICATION

Introduction

- Nowadays the importance of teamwork and group communication has increased in almost all organizational set-ups

- This has been particularly so as more and more business enterprises, government organizations, and educational institutions embrace the concept of an open organizational climate and participative management.

- Hence organizations now look for people who can interact successfully in small groups and make significant contributions during such interactions

- Acquiring and developing team-building skills and group skills lead to effectiveness in managing organizational affairs.

Introduction

- Today, you find teams in factories, corporate offices, research laboratories, universities, hospitals, law offices, government agencies, and every other kind of organization you can imagine.

- Teams have become an integral part of so many organizations largely because of the growing complexity of the decisions they need to make.

- Though teams are different from groups per se in that the former is process-based while the latter function-based, they share common communication processes.

- For example, when a company sends one of its project teams to develop software for its clients abroad, that particular team carries out a process.

Introduction

- Members of an organization communicate in groups to achieve any of the purposes listed below:
  - to share and exchange information and ideas
  - to collect information or feedback on any project/policy/scheme
  - to arrive at a decision on important matters
  - to solve a problem which is of concern to the organization as a whole
  - to discuss the issues related to a particular topic in relation to the group itself or for the benefit of a larger audience
  - to elaborate upon any work undertaken or research done in order to elicit feedback.

Introduction

- Depending upon the purpose and structure, group communication takes various names, such as

- meeting,

- seminar,

- group discussion,

- symposium,

- panel discussion,

- conference,

- convention, etc.

- Though all these forms fall under the category of group communication, they d slightly in terms of their purpose, structure, characteristics, and procedure (Table 7.1). All these forms of group communication are oral. They require effective oral communication skills, which would enable the members to present and discuss the matter and also to persuade and convince the other members of the group.

Introduction

Table 7.1: MAJOR FORMS OF GROUP COMMUNICATION

Sl No.	Name	Purpose/objective	Structure	Characteristics	Procedure
1.	Meeting	• Convey information at one time • to instruct, brief, solve problems, take decisions	• Two or more persons large also (several hundreds) • Formal physical setting	• Punctuality • Chairman present • Introduction • Problem-centred, • Discussion-oriented, • Information-centred • Fair chance to every one • May be periodic • No side • Conversations • No hidden agenda • High degree of formality • Conclusion	• notice • agenda • minutes

Table 7.1 Continued

Introduction

Table 7.1 Continued

Sl No.	Name	Purpose/objective	Structure	Characteristics	Procedure
2.	Seminar	• Present the results of original research or advanced study/cross-fertilization of ideas • Share knowledge, get view points	• Small groups of experts or well-informed persons	• Academic in nature • Close interaction with lead speaker • Free discussion	• Presentation • Discussion
3.	Group Discussion	• Exchange information • Solve problems • Persuade • Take decision • Assess or judge personality traits	• Seven to ten	• No named leader • Rules are minimum • Free oral interaction • Interdependent • No personalization • Conclusion	• Understand, • Discuss • Conclude
4.	Symposium	• Discuss different aspects of a problem for audience	• Any number	• Formal • For larger audience	• Each one presents one aspect • Audience participate

Introduction

Sl No.	Name	Purpose/objective	Structure	Characteristics	Procedure
5.	Panel Discussion	• Interchange ideas through conversation, co-operative thinking	• Small number of panelists (experts)	• Moderator • Meant for public discussion • Programmes on radio & TV • Less formal than meetings	• Problem/topic worded as question • Panelists answer
6.	Conference	• Confer with people having similar interests; to pool experiences & opinions	• Any number of participants • Subject matter wider • Several sessions	• Closed G.D. • Wide range of activities	• Presentations • Discussion
7.	Convention	• Discuss matters of professional interest	• Rigorously structured • Professional gatherings, Companies, Associations, Societies, Political Parties	• Formal • Only professional matters for same profession	• Share views

Introduction

Table 7.2: Characteristics of Major Forms of Group Communication

Sl. No.	Forms				
1.	Meetings	3	2	2	2
2.	Seminars	2	2	2	3
3.	Group Discussion	1	1	3	3
4.	Symposium	2	3	2	2
5.	Panel Discussion	2	3	2	3
6.	Conferences	3	2	2	2
7.	Convention	2	3	2	2

Very High = 3; High =2; Low = 1.

Introduction

Group discussion

Conference

Meeting

GROUP DISCUSSION

☐ In this form of group communication, a particular number of people (approximately three to eight) meet face to face and through free oral interaction originate, share, and discuss ideas to arrive at a decision or solution to a problem.

☐ Group discussions are widely used in many organizations for decision making and problem solving.

☐ They are also used widely as a personality test for evaluating several candidates simultaneously.

☐ They help to shortlist candidates for a final interview, to select personnel for positions of responsibility especially in the service sector and also to select students for admission to professional institutes.

ORGANIZATIONAL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- In organizations, the group discussions are mainly used for group decision making.
- Members of the interacting group take the responsibility of explaining their ideas
- and arriving at a consensus.
- Group discussions can help to reduce the many problems inherent in the traditional interactive groups .
- The word 'traditional' refers to an organizational set-up where hierarchy is given much importance.
- In such organizations the group decision making process may involve *groupthink*.
- A team suffering from groupthink will place so much value on maintaining loyalty; unity, and agreement that critical thinking and open enquiry are prevented.
- The participants may censor themselves and pressure other group members into agreement.

ORGANIZATIONAL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- Brainstorming
  - Brainstorming is a method for generating a Varity of ideas and perspectives.
  - It is as uncritical as possible because criticism inhibits the free flow of ideas.
  - A typical brainstorming session follows the steps given below:
    - A group of six to twelve people sit around a table.
    - The group leader states the problem in a clear manner so that all participants understand it.
    - Members then suggest as many alternatives as they can in a given length of time and write them down on a blackboard, whiteboard, flip chart, or a piece of paper.
    - No criticism is allowed, and all the alternatives are recorded for later discussion and analysis.

ORGANIZATIONAL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- Brainstorming

  - There are two types of brainstorming technique:

    - **Storyboarding**
      In storyboarding, participants identify major issues and brainstorm each of them. It is often used to solve complex problems.

    - **Lotus blossom**
      In the lotus blossom technique, a core thought is presented and participants provide eight ideas surrounding it like the petals of a lotus blossom, as it were. Then each of these ideas becomes a core thought to be surrounded by a further set of eight ideas and so forth, until participants can no longer generate ideas or until decision makers feel that they have a good grasp of the problem and potential creative solutions.

    - Brainstorming, however is mainly a process for generating ideas.

    - The other two techniques, 'the nominal group technique', and 'the Delphi technique' go further by offering methods to actually arrive at a suitable solution.

ORGANIZATIONAL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

□ Nominal Group Technique

- ▪ The nominal group technique restricts discussion or interpersonal communication during the decision-making process and hence the term nominal group.

- ▪ In other words, in this technique, though group members are all physically present as in a traditional committee meeting, they operate independently.

ORGANIZATIONAL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Nominal Group Technique

- The problem is presented and then the following steps take place:
  - Members meet as a group, but before any discussion takes place, each member independently and silently writes down his or her ideas on the problem.
  - Each member takes his or her turn, going around the table and presenting a single idea until all ideas have been presented and recorded (typically on a flip chart or chalkboard). No discussion takes place until all ideas have been recorded.
  - The group now discusses the ideas for clarity and evaluates them.
  - Each group member silently and independently rank-orders the ideas.
- The final decision is determined by the idea with the highest aggregate ranking.
- The **chief advantage** of the nominal group technique is that it permits the group to meet formally but does not restrict independent thinking, which an interacting group might do.

ORGANIZATIONAL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- Delphi Technique
  - *The Delphi technique* is a more complex and time consuming alternative in group decision making.
  - It is *similar to the nominal group technique except that it does not require the physical presence of the group members.*
  - In fact, this technique never allows the group members to meet face to face.

ORGANIZATIONAL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- Delphi Technique

  The following steps characterize the Delphi technique:

  - The problem is identified and members are asked to provide potential solutions through a series of carefully designed questionnaires.

  - Each member anonymously and independently completes the first questionnaire.

  - The results of the first questionnaire are compiled at a central location, transcribed, and reproduced.

  - Each member receives a copy of the results.

  - After viewing the results, the members are again asked for their solutions. The results typically trigger new solutions or cause changes in the original position.

  - Steps 4 and 5 are repeated as often as necessary until consensus is reached.

ORGANIZATIONAL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- Delphi Technique
  - Like the nominal group technique, the Delphi technique insulates group members from the undue influence of others.
  - Because it does not require the physical presence of the participants, the Delphi technique can be used for decision making in geographically scattered groups.
  - For instance, a company having branches in Tokyo, Brussels, Paris, London, New York, Toronto, Rio de Janeiro, and Melbourne can use the technique effectively to query its managers on the best global price for one of its products.
  - By following this technique, business enterprises can avoid the cost of bringing their executives together at a central location.

ORGANIZATIONAL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- Delphi Technique
  - Of course, the Delphi technique has its **drawbacks**. Because the method is extremely time-consuming, it is frequently not applicable where a speedy decision is required.
  - Additionally, the method may not develop the rich array of alternatives that the interacting or nominal group technique does.
  - Ideas that might be inspired by face-to-face interaction may never arise.
  - An organization can decide upon the type of group discussion it needs to have mainly on the basis of availability of time, urgency of the situation, location of the group members, and also the complexity of the decision to be made.

GROUP DISCUSSION AS PART OF A SELECTION PROCESS

☐ Group discussions conducted for the selection of candidates for a job or for admission to any professional institutions are well-formulated devices for judging the personality of candidates, their communication skills, knowledge, and their ability to work as a team.

☐ *Group discussions have become an integral part of most selection processes today.*

GROUP DISCUSSION AS PART OF A SELECTION PROCESS

- Characteristics
  - Typically, in group discussions conducted for job selection, candidates are given a topic or case for discussion.
  - Normally groups of eight to ten candidates are formed into a leaderless group, and are given a specific situation to analyse and discuss within a given time limit of about 30 minutes.
  - They may be given a case study and asked to come up with a solution or they may be given a topic and asked to discuss the same.

GROUP DISCUSSION AS PART OF A SELECTION PROCESS

- Characteristics
  - Depending upon the infrastructure at the venue, the group is asked to sit in circle, block, or U-shaped arrangement.
  - The group members may either choose their seats or be asked to take the seat allotted by the selection panel.
  - This panel, which normally comprises the technical executives and human resources executives of the company, will observe and evaluate the members of the group.
  - The rules of GD—time limit, panel's expectations, etc. are explained after the initial introduction by the panel.
  - Thereafter, the panel throws in the topic or case to be discussed.
  - The selection panel observes the discussion either directly or from behind a screen.

GROUP DISCUSSION AS PART OF A SELECTION PROCESS

- Characteristics

  - The panel may, at its discretion, provide some time for thinking over the topic or case.

  - Each candidate is supposed to voice his/her opinion and offer supporting and counter arguments as required.

  - On directions from the panel, the discussion starts and carries on till they signal the termination time.

  - Though the panel specifies an approximate time for the GD, it may cut short or extend the time at will.

  - Group discussion is an important aspect of the recruitment process especially for management trainees and executive positions.

□ Characteristics

- Employers look for candidates who have the potential to shoulder responsibility and provide leadership.

- Hence, *the objective of a selection GD is to mainly check your team playing skills*.

- As a team leader, you would be working with people.

- In such a setting, an independent approach does not always work.

- You have to understand the other person's point of view while making your point and ensure that your team as a whole reaches a solution or agreement that is both feasible and accepted by all team members.

- To this end, group discussion is a simulated managerial setting.

- *Most group discussions for selection purposes assess your individual traits, group behaviour, and leadership qualities that are needed to succeed in your profession.*

Evaluation Components

- During a group discussion, employers evaluate your potential for leadership and also your ability to work in a team.

- The four components generally evaluated in a group discussion are:
  - Knowledge
  - Communication skills
  - Group behaviour
  - Leadership potential

Evaluation Components

Knowledge

- This refers to the *depth and range of your knowledge as well as your analytical and organizational abilities.*

- You should be able to *grasp the situation and analyse it not just at a mundane level, but from the widest perspective.*

- For instance, assume that the participants are asked to discuss the topic All tests and examinations should be abolished from the university education system'.

- Whatever be their stand, they should discuss not only the benefits or problems at their own institutions, but also at the national and international level.

- This approach will give a wider scope for the topic to develop and become more interesting. As a member of a group, you are expected to con tribute substantially to the discussion. The originality of your ideas, your knowledge and initiative, and your approach to the topic or case contribute to your success in the group discussion.

Evaluation Components

Knowledge

- Some knowledge of the topic concerned, supported by common sense, will enable you to win laurels.

- The greater your knowledge of the subject, the more interested, enthusiastic, and confident you will be, and also the more fluent and forceful your contribution will be to the discussion.

- Of course, your contribution must be relevant, rational, convincing, and above all, interesting and appealing to the selection panel.

- The panel will observe the of ideas put forward, their originality; the depth of analysis and their relevance to the topic.

- If you can exhibit a range of ideas or give a wider perspective to the topic, this is appreciated.

- Do not beat about the bush or limit yourself to one particular perspective.

Evaluation Components

□ Knowledge

- ◘ If you are well versed with the topic or understand the case study well and are able to conceptualize it adequately, you will not lag behind in taking initiative.

- ◘ In other words, if you are able to form a concept or an idea of the given topic, you will feel comfortable and come up with many points for discussion.

- ◘ Those who do not take initiative would not get an opportunity to speak.

- ◘ Once you have under stood the topic or problem, you should be able to generate ideas as well as organize them so that your fellow participants understand you readily.

Evaluation Components

- Knowledge
  - Problem-solving skills are essential to your future career, be it academic or professional.
  - In a group discussion, you should be able to come up with divergent and offbeat solutions using your creativity.
  - Do not be afraid to propose novel solutions.
  - This is a high-risk, high-return strategy Your approach to the topic or case study is being observed.
  - Remember you are being evaluated on how you think and not what you think.

Evaluation Components

- Communication Skills
  - Listening
    - Listening is as important as speaking in a GD.
    - Unless you listen to others, you may not be able to continue the discussion in the right direction.
    - As participants are interdependent in a GD, it is extremely necessary to listen very carefully.
    - Only then will you be able to pick up the thread of discussion and continue.
    - It is easy for the selection panel to identify poor listeners as their discussion lacks continuity.
    - The selection panel may also pose questions at the end of the discussion to find out whether group members have been good listeners.

Evaluation Components

- Communication Skills

  - Clarity of Expression

    - The panel's perception of a candidate's personality and his/her ability to influence and convince others depends greatly on using the right tone, voice, and articulation.

    - It is not sufficient to have ideas. They have to be expressed effectively.

    - More than words, it is the tone in which they are spoken that conveys the message. For example, if a tone that orders is abrasive, it may hurt the listeners' self-esteem.

    - So it is essential to cultivate an appropriate tone.

    - Similarly, a lively and cheerful voice with appropriate modulations is likely to be appreciated.

    - Clarity of speech, achieved through phonetic accuracy, is very important.

Evaluation Components

- Communication Skills

  - Clarity of Expression

    - In addition, fluency of speech and good delivery are also expected.

    - Slang, jargon, and an artificial accent are to be avoided in a group discussion.

    - Given below is a brief list of the aspects of your oral communication which you need to be aware of and develop to their fullest potential in order to be a successful communicator:

      - **Tone:** Quality or character of the voice expressing a particular feeling or mood

      - **Voice:** Correct projection of voice

      - **Articulation:** Act of speaking or expressing an idea in words

      - **Fluency:** Speaking or writing in an easy, flowing style

      - **Modulation:** Variations in tone or volume of voice

      - **Good delivery:** Ideas expressed fluently in the right voice, right tone, and right articulation.

Evaluation Components

☐ Communication Skills

  ☐ Apt Language

    ■ Apt Language Your language should be accurate, free of grammatical errors.

    ■ Also, it should be direct, clear and precise, with your ideas flowing in an organized fashion.

    ■ Do not use long, winding sentences. Rather, you should try to keep your language simple and unambiguous.

    ■ Do not use jargon which neither your group mates nor you understand. It does not strengthen your case.

Evaluation Components

Communication Skills

Apt Language

- On the contrary, you may end up in trouble during the interview that usually follows the group discussion if the same panel is evaluating both!

- If you have used the term 'competitive advantage' indiscriminately during the group discussion and are asked to explain it in the interview, you shouldn't be caught on the wrong foot!

- Moreover, using too much of Jargon, high-sounding words, or ambiguous expressions may project you as a show-off and will certainly not endear you to your group members.

- Remember, complication does not create impact, content does! Your main objective is to create an impact and that too in a positive manner.

Evaluation Components

□ Communication Skills

▫ Apt Language

'... hence the core competence of the company lies in its sources of competitive advantage gained through systems integration following the staggered approach'.

Evaluation Components

□ Communication Skills

  ▫ Appropriate Body Language

  - Your score at a group discussion depends not only on your verbal communication skills, but also on non-verbal skills.

  - Your body language says a lot about you.

  - Your gestures and mannerisms are more likely to reflect your attitude than what you say.

  - Panelists keenly observe the body language of the candidates and give weightage to this aspect in their assessment of candidates.

  - Emotions such as anger, irritation, frustration, warmth, excitement, boredom, defensiveness, and competitiveness are all conveyed through body language.

Evaluation Components

☐ Communication Skills

 ❑ Appropriate Body Language

  ■ The selection panel observes your appearance, frequency of eye contact, postures, gestures, and facial expressions. A candidate who appears professional (that is, not too overbearing) is more likely to be noticed favourably by the panel.

  ■ A confident posture, appropriate facial expressions, and meaningful eye contact with other members will all create a positive impression.

  ■ Take care of your appearance and try to be as natural as possible.

  ■ You should not appear to be self-conscious. For this, you must practise well so as to send the appropriate non-verbal signals during group discussion.

Evaluation Components

☐ Communication Skills

　　☐ Appropriate Body Language

Some useful tips for the effective use of body language:

- Look keenly at the speaker and nod your head to reveal that you are listening actively.
- When you speak, make sure that you do not ignore any of your group members. Try to look at everybody.
- Avoid overt gestures.
- Avoid pointing out fingers or raising your hands while speaking.
- Change your posture occasionally by shifting yourself slightly in the chair or placing your arm on the back of your chair.
- Do not show lack of interest or dislike of the topic. Even if you do not like the topic, try to develop interest and reveal your enthusiasm through appropriate facial expression.

Group Behaviour (Team Spirit)

- Your group behaviour is reflected in your ability to interact with other members of the group on brief acquaintance.

- Emotional maturity and balance promotes good interpersonal relationships .

- You are expected to be more people-centric and less egocentric.

- For example, when someone provokes you with a personal comment, do you keep cool or do you react with anger? Does your behaviour come across as objective, empathetic, and non-threatening? These are the traits of a good team player.

- Participating in a group discussion involves coordination and cooperation among the various members.

Group Behaviour (Team Spirit)

- The selection panel notes the differences in the amount of participation by members.

- There may be members who participate more and members who participate less.

- Some members may exhibit a shift in participation.

- That is, initially they might participate very actively, but as the discussion proceeds, they might keep quiet or vice versa.

- Further, the panelists observe how the silent members are treated, who talks to whom, and who keeps the ball rolling, etc.

- The successful candidate is the one who shows an active interest in the proceedings by being involved throughout the group discussion.

- Your success in a group discussion depends on how well you play the role of an initiator, informer, illustrator, leader, coordinator, and moderator.

- The ideal candidate will share time with others, listen, and react to their views.

- You should be seen as one who opens, rather than closes, gates.

Group Behaviour (Team Spirit)

- Your ability to analyse a problem and persuade others to see it from multiple perspectives without offending group members is under scrutiny.

- While appreciating other points of view, you should be able to effectively communicate your own view without obviously contradicting others' opinions.

- Also, do not speak just for the sake of doing so.

- Try to build up your argument from the point where the last speaker left off.

- In case you do not agree with what your predecessor has just said, by all means feel free to disagree, but do so in a modest and amicable manner.

- Have some facts ready to justify your point.

- You can persuade your group by using valid arguments and appropriate verbal and non-verbal means of communication. Your ability to convince others is important towards achieving success in a group discussion.

Leadership Skills

- The success of any team depends, to a large extent, on its leader.

- A group cannot carry on its assigned work effectively without a leader.

- Though there is no appointed leader in a group discussion for selection, a leader will emerge as the discussion proceeds.

- *The candidate who possesses both functional ability and coordinating ability will emerge as the leader.*

- Functional ability involves knowledge, mental and physical energy emotional stability objectivity communication skill, integrity, and emotional intelligence.

Leadership Skills

- Coordinating ability involves traits such as group *adaptability* and *motivation.*

- Group adaptability means the ability to adjust with other individuals in the group; to serve as a cohesive force that binds the group into a single unit rather than a collection of people.

- Group motivation means the ability to motivate and influence others; to bring out the best participation from the members; to nurture cooperation, understanding, and team spirit among the team members.

- Hence, leadership means influencing the proceedings by constructive participation, rational arguments, convincing other participants of a particular point of view, building support by working with supporters in the group, logically weakening the opponent's point of view, etc.

Leadership Skills

- The selection panel observes your leadership style during the group discussion.

- Some leaders are authoritative in nature. They attempt to impose their will or values on the other group members or try to push them into supporting their decisions.

- They also pass judgement on other members and their views.

- Further, they block action when it is not moving in the direction they desire.

- Some leaders are amiable.

- They consistently try to avoid conflict or unpleasant feelings from being expressed and always try to maintain a peaceful environment during the GD.

Leadership Skills

- There is yet another type of leader who follows a democratic style.

- They try to include everyone in the discussion and express their feelings and opinions openly and directly without judging others.

- When there is a conflict they try to deal with it as a problem-solving exercise.

- Obviously, the selection panel would prefer the democratic leader.

- Leaders should also know how to handle hostility and deal with the 'bulldozers', *individuals who are high on lung power and low on logic.*

- If you wish to assume the role of a leader, you should be able to control the occasional fish-market environment of the group discussion.

- In addition, you should also be able to cut down exuberant speakers to size if they deviate from the topic or if they try to dominate the discussion without allowing others to speak.

- Further, you should try to include everybody in the discussion.

Leadership Skills

Aspects of group behaviour assessed in a group discussion:

- Consistency in participation
- Keenness in listening and observing
- Time sharing and orderly conduct
- Ability to handle turbulent situations
- Ability to cut excessively exuberant participants down to size
- Ability to dominate the proceedings without bullying others
- Avoiding personal comments

Approach to Topics and Case Studies

- When you are presented with a topic for group discussion, take a minute or two to think about the topic with an open mind and note down the major issues that come to your mind.

- Don't jump to any conclusions. Instead, arrive at a stand after examining all the issues in a balanced manner. Only then begin to speak.

- When you do speak, outline the major issues first and then state your stand.

- In other words, give the justification first and the stand later.

- If you state your stand first, chances are that participants who disagree with your stand will interrupt to contradict you before you can elaborate on your reasons.

- In this situation, the evaluator will only get an impression of what you think and not how you think.

- You can use the guidelines given below to handle the topic-based group discussions and case study-based group discussions.

Group Discussions Based on a Topic

- Topic-based group discussions are generally more difficult to handle than case studies as there is no starting point for a candidate's thought process, particularly when the topic is unfamiliar.

- The panel may or may not allow time for thinking.

- The dynamics in the first couple of minutes are generally chaotic.

- First you have to generate some ideas on the topic.

- You have to then prioritize them so that your presentation is coherent.

- At this point you will not have time to fully develop the ideas.

- In order to pre-empt the possibility of other participants starting off first the same ideas that you have thought of, you have to start speaking as early as possible.

- While speaking, not only must you develop the idea, but also think ahead for subsequent ideas.

- A weakness in any of these steps will lead to poor presentation.

- *As a rule of thumb, you should not speak unless you have content for a speech of at least one minute.*

Group Discussions Based on a Topic

- Secondly, *listening carefully to what the other participants have to say will trigger off fresh ideas.*

- A healthy discussion can take place only when there is an exchange of ideas and these ideas are subjected to analysis.

- Therefore, it is *not necessary for you to keep on generating new ideas for the entire duration.*

- You also need to carefully examine each word of the topic, noting it down if possible and there are no words which can have different interpretations.

- If some ambiguity exists, it makes sense to define the terms first.

Group Discussions Based on a Case Study

- If your analytical skills are good, then case studies are easier to handle than topic-based group discussions because there is a starting point in the form of a particular situation.

- Cases are discussions of situations (in business or other organizations), calling for an appraisal of past action, a decision on future action, or both.

- Virtually every case calls for both analysis and decision-making.

- Logical analysis and a firm grasp of the facts are crucial.

- Judgement is needed to sift through available information and find the relevant facts, and so is imagination, for developing an action plan.

Group Discussions Based on a Case Study

- A framework for a case analysis is provided below to ensure that the process is as orderly as possible.
  - Understand the situation from different viewpoints
  - Work out alternative courses of action
  - Explore the pros and cons of each alternative
  - Make a decision
  - Work out an implementation plan
  - Work out a contingency plan to be used in case the first implementation fails
- In real life, the success or failure of any decision cannot be forecast.
- What can certainly be done is to have a logical decision-making process and a practical implementation plan.

Tips for Success in Group Discussions

- Be thorough with current issues.

- Always enter the room with a piece of paper and a pen.

- Listen to the topic carefully.

- Jot down as many ideas as you can in the first few minutes.

- Try to dissect the topic and go into the underlying causes or consequences.

- Organize your ideas before speaking.

- Speak first only if you have something sensible to say. Speaking first is a high-risk, high-return strategy

- Try to contribute meaningfully and substantially every time you speak.

- Don't speak just for the sake of saying something.

- Identify your supporters and opponents and allow your supporters to augment your ideas.

Tips for Success in Group Discussions

- Keep track of time and share time fairly.
- Have an open mind and listen to others' views.
- Maintain eye contact while speaking and listening.
- Do not indulge in parallel conversations.
- Use tact, humour, and wit.
- Display a spirit of cooperation and an accommodative nature.
- Draw out the silent members and encourage them to speak.
- If things get chaotic, take the initiative to restore order by providing a fresh direction to the discussion.
- Attempt to arrive at a consensus though your ultimate aim is to reach a conclusion.

- Within the specified time, your group may not be able to arrive at a consensus.
- But working towards consensus will reveal your capability and inclination towards being a good team player.

MEETINGS

- Meetings are an important facet of corporate today.

- Every time you say hello, you start a meeting.

- A group of people from an organization participate in a meeting because people performing different functions may have to come together to get a specific task done.

- Major projects demand that knowledge and expertise from several sources be pooled for successful implementation. Massive organizational, techno logical, and social changes have taken place in our time.

- There is an ever greater need for people in an organization to cooperate and share knowledge in the era of burgeoning information, increased pressure to innovate, and a pace of change so rapid that a product may be obsolete by the time it is introduced.

- Meetings also serve as vehicles for individual advancement and organizational achievement.

MEETINGS

- They act as a showcase for managerial talent, a forum in which employees get to audition before peers and senior management.

- They give participants an excellent opportunity to become opinion leaders in their organization, irrespective of their position in the hierarchy.

- Beyond serving the professional purposes of individuals and organizations, meetings fulfil a more fundamental human need for socializing and communicating.

- They help employees to bond with one another and communicate the values of the organization letting the employees know what behaviour is allowed and what is considered unacceptable.

- They reflect the organizational culture.

MEETINGS

☐ Meetings are often poorly conducted, with many people considering them a waste of time.

☐ Due to lack of open communication among members, poor chairing of meetings, and ineffective use of time, the opportunity for people to share their knowledge and expertise and interact productively is lost.

☐ Above all, meetings, if effectively managed, can become a potentially powerful tool for transforming the organization.

☐ This unit discusses the purposes of meetings, then proceeds to discuss the preparatory steps for a meeting, and finally presents an assessment form for gauging the effectiveness of a business meeting.

MEETINGS

- **Purposes**

- Every meeting is called for a purpose and it is this purpose which gives form to the meeting. In general, the purpose of a meeting is either informational or decision making.

- Meetings for informational purposes:

  - To communicate important or sensitive information (to inform about the rejection of a major proposal)

  - To explore new ideas and concepts (to bring in change in the work pattern)

  - To provide feedback (to share the employees' reaction to the newly introduced bonus scheme)

  - To present a report (accounts for the year Board Meeting)

  - To gain support for an idea, or project (about the new product designed by the research division)

- An informational meeting is called so that the participants can share information and possibly coordinate action. This involves individual briefings by each participant or a speech by the leader followed by questions from the participants.

MEETINGS

☐ **Purposes**

☐ Decision-making meetings are mainly concerned with persuasion, analysis, and problem solving. They often include a brainstorming session which is followed by a debate on the alternatives.

☐ Meetings for decision-making purposes:

- ☐ To reach a group decision (to decide promotions for employees)

- ☐ To solve a problem (emergency meetings to solve crisis)

- ☐ To reconcile a conflict (to decide strategies)

- ☐ To negotiate an agreement (meet to decide the course of action before the actual negotiation)

- ☐ To win acceptance for a new idea, plan or system (to explain the benefits of a new scheme to convince others)

Meetings can serve many other legitimate purposes. For example, they can be used to build morale, confer awards or recognition, plan projects and strategies, or provide training to employees, suppliers, and customers.

The common denominator in any meeting is the group. *If there is a clear need for a group of people to assemble, a meeting is called for.*

MEETINGS

☐ **Preparation**

☐ 1. Before you call a meeting, ask yourself the following questions:

- ☐ What is my objective?
- ☐ Is the timing right?
- ☐ How much will the meeting cost?

☐ 2. If you decide to call a meeting, then determine the following:

- ☐ time
- ☐ duration
- ☐ agenda
- ☐ participants
- ☐ venue
- ☐ set-up

MEETINGS

□ Preparation

   ◘ Time

   ■ If a meeting is mooted by a crisis or some emergency, you will not have much choice in terms of scheduling. But whenever possible, carefully consider the timing of your meeting because it can have a significant impact on the outcome. Given below are some scheduling guidelines:

   ◘ Choose a time during which participants are at their best.

   ■ Do not call a meeting on Monday mornings or Friday afternoons when participants are likely to have little motivation. Do not schedule a meeting for the hour immediately after lunch when most people feel lethargic.

   ◘ Start at an unusual time and end at a natural break point.

   ■ There is no law that says a meeting must start on the hour or half hour. If you select an unusual starting time, participants are more likely to show up punctually, especially if the meeting is scheduled to end at a natural break point, such as lunch or the close of the workday.

MEETINGS

- Preparation
  - Time
  - Allow ample time for preparation.
    - Make sure you allow participants sufficient time to prepare. This will vary according to the nature of the meeting. The longer or more involved the meeting, the more time required to prepare the related materials.
  - Avoid surprise meetings.
    - Nobody appreciates a surprise meeting. On-the-spot meetings interrupt the flow of the workday, leave people insufficient time to prepare, and ensure that most participants will enter the meeting room with a negative attitude.

MEETINGS

◻ Preparation

◻ Duration

- The appropriate length for a meeting depends on the type of meeting it is and on the number, complexity, and sensitivity of agenda items. The more complex or controversial the items, the fewer you can address in a given time period.

- If you have more topics than you can effectively cover in a single meeting, schedule a second meeting rather then trying to cram too much information into the first.

- The greater the number of participants, the shorter the meeting should be. In a small meeting, a high level of interaction is possible and this makes the time pass quickly. In a large meeting, interaction is restricted, and it is more difficult to maintain interest. Five people working on a problem may be absorbed for hours, five hundred people listening to a lecture can become distracted within minutes.

- When scheduling long meetings, allow sufficient time for breaks. For all-day meetings, allow at least an hour for lunch, but preferably an hour and a half or two hours. This gives participants time to recover from post-lunch fatigue and ensures more productive afternoon sessions.

MEETINGS

- Preparation
  - Agenda
    - A written agenda, the list of the individual items that need to be discussed in the meeting, should be distributed in advance. It is the single best predictor of a successful meeting. The agenda keeps the meeting on course and helps to ensure that the stated objectives are accomplished. It also serves as a planning tool for participants and a control tool for the leader.
    - With the meeting objectives clearly defined, you can begin to develop an agenda, keeping the following guidelines in mind:
    - Limit the number of agenda items.
      - Focus on a few critical items—three to six is a good rule of thumb. Separate the 'need to know' from the 'nice to know' and include only the former. The remaining topics can be summarized and included with the agenda as supplementary material or held back for a future meeting. Also determine the order in which items will be discussed, arranging them logically.

MEETINGS

- Preparation
  - Agenda
  - Don't dwell on the past.
    - If a meeting is to be productive, it must focus on actions and decisions that will affect the future. The meeting agenda should reflect this future orientation.
  - Present opportunities, not problems.
    - Keep the agenda upbeat. Instead of focusing on problems, recast them as opportunities. Every problem represents an opportunity of some kind—to improve a process or prevent a future problem, for example. If it is presented in this light, there is a better chance that it will be resolved.
  - Allocate ample time.
    - An agenda should be well organized, but not so rigid that it inhibits creativity or discourages full participation. Allocate some extra time for questions, creative discussion, etc.

MEETINGS

◻ Preparation

- ◻ Agenda

- ◻ Include sufficient detail.

  - ■ An agenda item should give participants the specific information they need to prepare for the meeting. It should enable them to understand exactly what you want to accomplish. For example, instead of an agenda item 'advertising budget', you can have 'allocate the advertising budget among direct mail, print, radio, and television'. With this level of information, participants can gather the appropriate data for the meeting and prepare their arguments for or against each advertising medium.

- ◻ Include the following details in your agenda:

  - ■ Name of the organization, department/committee

  - ■ Number of meeting (this helps in maintaining a record)

  - ■ Date, time, venue

  - ■ Items to be discussed

MEETINGS

- Preparation
  - Agenda
    - If possible, deliver the agenda to participants one week before the meeting. The more the preparation required for the meeting, the further in advance you should distribute the agenda.
    - You can also send a copy through e-mail well in advance in addition to a written memo.
    - If the agenda has less number of items, it can be included in the notice itself Otherwise the agenda has to be circulated separately. Exhibit 7.1 is a sample notice that includes an agenda containing five items.

MEETINGS

JUPITER GROUP OF HOTELS
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

April 9, 2003

You are invited to attend the fifth meeting of the Management Committee of Jupiter Group of Hotels to be held at 6 p.m. on Wednesday 16 April 2003, in the Venus Hall, 58, Park Avenue, New Delhi-110 005.

Agenda

5.01   Minutes of the last meeting
5.02   Recruitment of management trainees
5.03   Opening a branch in Nagpur
5.04   Innovations in travel packages
5.05   Any other matter

(Vivek Pai)
Secretary

Exhibit 7.1:   MEETING NOTICE AND AGENDA

MEETINGS

- Preparation
  - Participants
    - One of the primary causes of unproductive meetings is not having the right people in attendance. An invitation to a meeting should always be based on purpose rather than on politics.
    - In addition to inviting the right people, it is important to invite the right! optimum number according to the type of meeting. See Table 7.3.

MEETINGS

Identify the right people to attend a meeting:

- those who have enough knowledge of the subject to make a meaningful contribution to the meeting
- those with the power to make decisions or approve projects
- those responsible for implementing decisions made in the meeting
- those who will be affected by the decisions made, or their representative
- those who need information that will be presented in the meeting, in order to perform their jobs more effectively

MEETINGS

Table 7.3: OPTIMAL MEETING SIZE

Meeting Type	Maximum No. of Participants
Problem solving	3–5
Decision making	6–10
Problem identification	6–10
Informational	20–30
Review or presentation	20–30
Motivational	No limit

MEETINGS

- Preparation

  - Venue and Setting

    - Where people meet is as crucial as why and when.

    - The choice of a meeting room has a significant impact on the overall quality of the meeting. Among other things, a meeting room can enhance or inhibit productivity encourage or discourage communication, promote or stifle creativity, and make participants feel relaxed or tense. Because the room plays such an important role in meeting productivity, it is important to take great care in its selection and set-up.

    - Take care of the aspects of a conference room shown in Table 7.4.

    - Once you decide on a room, whether it is within the company premises or outside the office, reserve it early. If the room you want is not available, locate a similar site or consider postponing the meeting.

    - The type of meeting affects not only the choice of a meeting room but how it is set.

MEETINGS

- Preparation

  - Venue and Setting

  - Given below are some layouts for arranging a *room set up to improve access, heighten interaction, and increase visual contact*:

    - *Boardroom s* (Figure 7.1) is suitable for most meetings that involve sitting round a table.

    - *Conference or theatre style* (Figure 7.2) is suitable for Annual General Body Meetings or any other meetings which involve a large number of participants, presentation, and a question-and-answer session.

- A less formal layout is more appropriate for informal meetings. Consider dispensing altogether with a table and sitting 'in the round.' However, please remember to provide some form of writing surface for the Minutes Secretary, if you have one.

- A popular form of current office layout is to have a 'teardrop' (Figure 7.3) end to a standard desk around which two or three chairs can be placed, providing the meeting area.
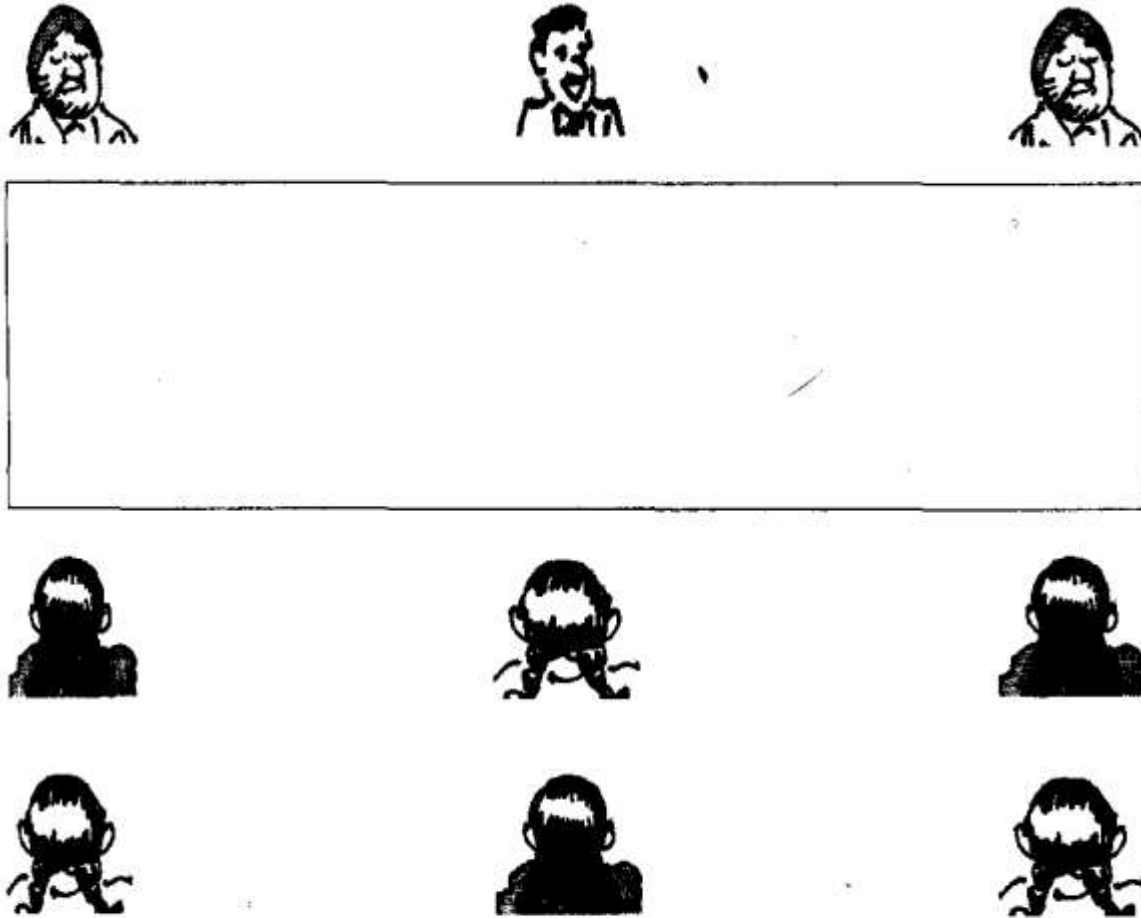
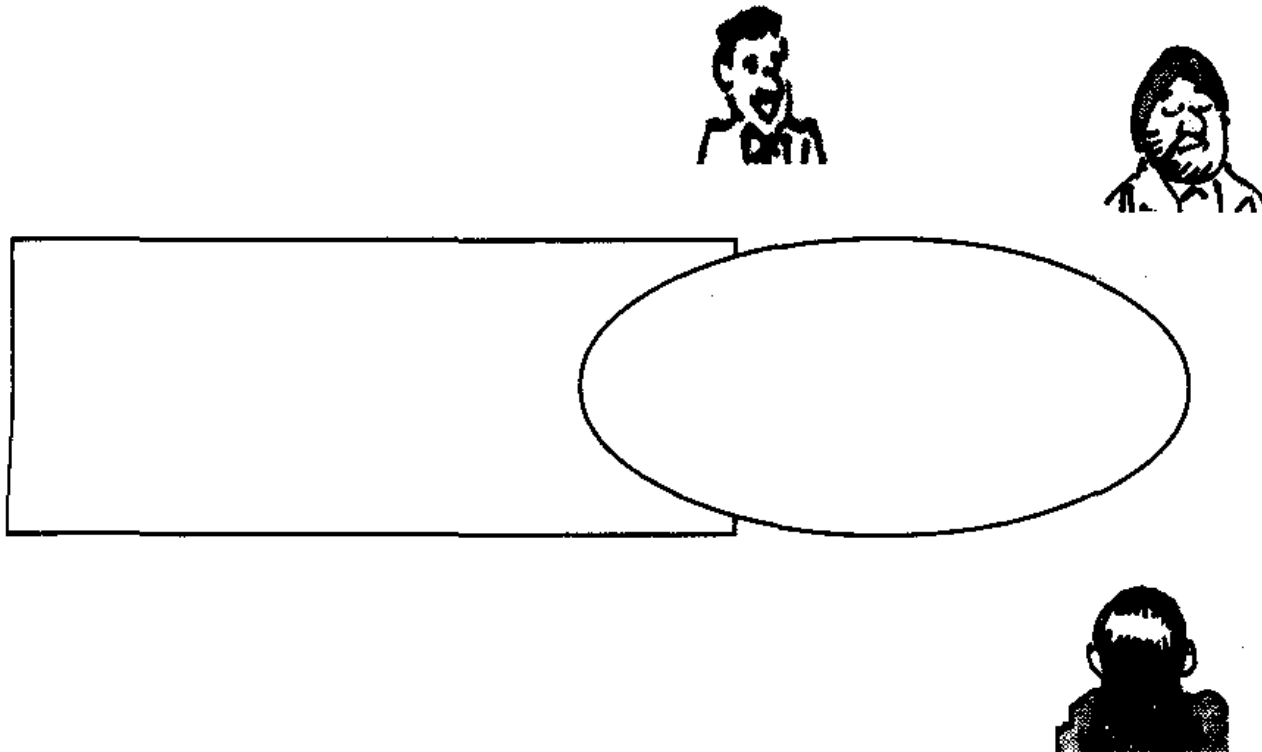# MEETINGS
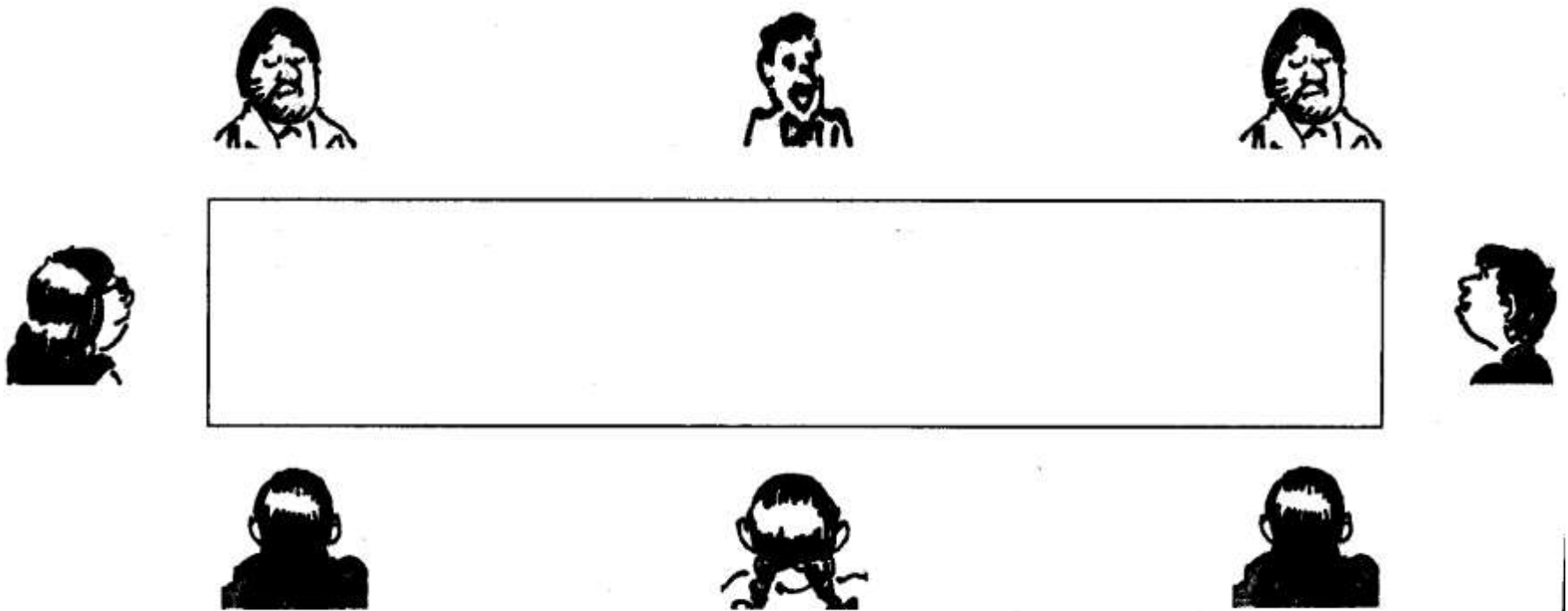
Figure 7.1: BOARDROOM STYLE SEATING

MEETINGS

Figure 7.2: CONFERENCE STYLE SEATING

MEETINGS

Figure 7.3: TEARDROP

MEETINGS

- Procedure

  - The quality of a meeting is largely determined by how well the players act out their roles. By playing the three primary roles of leader, facilitator, and participant, the chairperson can direct the meeting towards achieving its specified goal.

  - Listed below are the responsibilities of the chairperson towards making a meeting effective:

    - Getting the meeting off to a good start
    - Encouraging participation
    - Drawing silent types into the discussion
    - Joining the discussion
    - Managing emotions
    - Dealing with late comers
    - Managing conflict
    - Injecting humour
    - Ending the meeting

MEETINGS

- Getting the Meeting Off to a Good Start
  - The chairperson/leader must establish control of the meeting from the start by setting the tone and stating the ground rules and objectives.
  - A brief orientation speech by the chair can get rid of the needless talk that typically occurs at the start of the meeting.
  - The chair must set up the meeting, state the problems, general objectives and procedures, provide the relevant information base for the discussion, and note the boundaries and constraints of the discussion.

MEETINGS

☐ Getting the Meeting Off to a Good Start

T – I – S Approach to Introductions

1. Introduce the topic the speaker will address.
2. Clarify why the topic is of interest or value to the group present at the meeting.
3. Explain why the speaker is qualified to address this topic.

MEETINGS

☐ Encouraging Participation

- Encouraging participation is one of the leader's main obligations. Unfortunately not all meeting leaders know how to go about this. Here are some tips for encouraging participation in a meeting:
  - Don't monopolize the discussion.
  - Don't show verbal or non-verbal disapproval of ideas, even if you disagree with them.
  - Ask open-ended questions to stimulate discussion.
  - Frame problems in positive terms (e.g. 'How can we achieve our goal?' rather than 'Is it possible to achieve our goal?').
  - Identify the introverts\ and make a point of asking for their input.
  - Do not let extroverts monopolize the discussion.
  - Control participation by reminding people of the purpose of the meeting and by bringing discussions to an end. Sometimes, it is necessary to remind participants of the time, so you can move on to the next topic.
  - Recognize differences in individual styles.
  - Change the seating arrangement.
  - Rotate leadership.

MEETINGS

- Drawing Silent Types into the Discussion
  - Silence can be divided into three categories:
    - the silence of general agreement and no contribution
    - the silence of diffidence (shyness)
    - the silence of hostility
  - Among these three categories, the leader need not worry about the first type. But he should bother about the other two.
  - In the second case, diffidence, the leaders should gently bring the participant into the discussion and make it clear that the person's input is valuable.
  - The silence of hostility signals that a person is detached from the whole proceedings and usually indicates that the person is experiencing some feeling of affront. (offend) The chairman should try to get to the root of the problem and encourage participation.

MEETINGS

- Joining the Discussion

  - In most cases, it is better for the leader to stay out of the discussion and remain in the neutral, facilitative role.

  - If the leader wants to advocate a point, it is best for him or her to do so later in the discussion, when others have introduced the point, so as not to unduly influence the group's thinking.

  - However, there is an exception: if the leader has relevant knowledge or experience, the group may feel the leader is obliged to share it with them. He or she cannot remain aloof from the proceedings as an impartial moderator, but can show himself or herself to be a fair-minded, even-handed participant who contributes significantly for the common good.

MEETINGS

- ## Managing Emotions

  - The meeting leader should be conscious of not only the written agenda of the meeting but also the hidden and emotional agenda of the participants.

  - The term 'hidden agenda' is given to the unspoken motives and aspirations of the group members, which could often conflict with the main goals of the group.

  - Hidden agendas indicate what people really want as against what they say they want.

  - The leader should realize that meetings also have the goal of creating and maintaining positive emotions that promote working together effectively. This does not mean that the leader should ignore negative emotions.

  - A person's anger over a budget cut, for example, may be a legitimate expression of concern.

  - By exploring the reasons behind the anger the leader can work with the group to address the problem productively. Acknowledging the existence of these emotions and creating trust will help people voice their feelings more openly.

  - Apart from recognizing obvious displays of emotion, the leader must also be alert to subtle signs of emotional distress, using his own feelings as a guide.

MEETINGS

☐ Dealing with Latecomers

  ◻ The only way to ensure that a meeting starts on time is to start it on time.

  ◻ In addition, the leader should not try to find out why certain people are habitual latecomers.

  ◻ He should make them realize their importance and their valuable contribution to the meeting.

  ◻ If people feel important and can anticipate achievement, they will be motivated to come on time.

MEETINGS

- Managing Conflict

  - Some conflict is inevitable when people with varying views meet. This is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it is a mistake to discourage conflict because it can improve the qualities of decisions, stimulate creativity and innovation.

  - Controversy promotes objectivity and enquiry, and enables thorough discussion and effective problem-solving (Johnson and Johnson, 1975).

  - The best solutions and plans often develop from contrary points of view within the meeting group.

  - Of course, not all conflict is productive. Whether a given conflict is constructive or destructive depends on how skilfully the meeting leader manages it.

MEETINGS

□ Injecting Humour

- ▪ One effective way to dissolve tension in a meeting is to reframe a problem or conflict in a humorous light.

- ▪ Humour can be a valuable asset in many meeting situations.

- ▪ For example, humour can be used to help put people at ease, make bad news easier to accept, or introduce a sensitive subject.

- ▪ Personal anecdotes about funny, embarrassing, or ironic things that happened in college, on the job, etc. are a good source of humour.

- ▪ They often work better than jokes because the fact that they're real gives them added impact.

- ▪ In addition to using humour, it is important for the leader to acknowledge others' appropriate use of humour and to discourage inappropriate jokes.

MEETINGS

- ## Ending the Meeting
  - When all items on the agenda have been covered, or the group has gone as far as it can without gathering more information, it is time to bring the meeting to a close, whether or not the scheduled time has run out.
  - In closing the meeting, the leader should sum up what has been accomplished and what remains to be done. He or she should recapitulate what action is expected of each participant.
  - If another meeting on the subject is to be scheduled, the leader should set a tentative date and time.
  - Even if the group has not reached an agreement, solved a problem, or met some other objective, the meeting leader can acknowledge any progress that has been made. This sets a positive tone for future meetings and helps to impart a feeling of control.

MEETINGS

- Follow-up

  - After the meeting is over, the secretary needs to work on the minutes of the meeting. Minutes are a record of what happened at a meeting. They serve as a useful tool to remind the participants what actions they need to take as a result of the discussion, show the process of arriving at certain decisions, and also serve as a repository of information for future reference.

  - In general, the secretary takes notes during the meeting and then prepares the minutes to be read out and signed by the chairperson during the next meeting.

  - Minutes can be classified into two types and various styles as shown in Table 7.5.

MEETINGS

- Follow-up
  - Depending upon the style, formal minutes can give:
    - the bare minimum of information, such as when and where the meeting was held and the decision arrived at (minimal);
    - a précis of what was said at the meeting in the form of a structured report (medium); or
    - a word-for-word account of what was said (verbatim).
  - Similarly, informal minutes can give:
    - a bullet point list of decisions taken, of work progress to date;
    - a list in table format, giving the topic, the decisions made or progress to date, and subsequent action to be taken; or
    - a narrative report of a conversation that took place between several people.

MEETINGS

- Follow-up

  - The following guidelines should be useful in preparing the minutes of a meeting:

  - Check whether you have

    - a list of participants;
    - a copy of the agenda and all the accompanying papers;
    - a copy of any formal resolutions being proposed;
    - a copy of any presentations being given;
    - a notebook and at least two pens;
    - a clipboard to balance your notebook on if there is no table;
    - two copies of the minutes of the last meeting, one for signature and the other for writing down amendments, if any;
    - copies of any suggested amendments already received;
    - notes of apology from any participants; and
    - a diary and a list of dates for future meetings.

MEETINGS

☐ Follow-up

▫ When putting together the minutes, ensure that you

- write up the minutes within a week from the date of the meeting;

- decide the style of your minutes and prepare a template with all the headings;

- fill up one section at a time;

- keep a list of all the abbreviations and acronyms you use and make a glossary of all these at the end of your document;

- make an action point list, noting down all the things that were agreed upon, who is to do them, and any deadlines agreed;

- make a note of all the items participants agreed to discuss at the next meeting and pass this on to the chair or committee secretary to include in the next agenda, and remember to add page numbers;

MEETINGS

- Follow-up
    - if using a word processor save your document at the end of each section;
    - do not start new topics or put headings at the bottom of a page;
    - re-read your minutes for errors some time after you have completed writing— read the printed version even if you have used a word processor;
    - circulate the minutes to the chair and appropriate participants for their comments; give them a deadline to send in amendments if they have any; and
    - wait until you receive feedback from everyone before making changes.

    Though we have mentioned the different styles for recording the minutes of a meeting, Exhibits 7.2 and 7.3_show the most commonly followed styles.

MEETINGS

Table 7.5: MINUTES—FORMAL AND INFORMAL

Minutes	
Formal	**Informal**
• minimal	• bullet point list
• medium	• table format
• verbatim	• narrative report

MEETINGS

JUPITER GROUP OF HOTELS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the fifth meeting held
at 6.00 p.m. on Wednesday 16 April 2003,
in Venus Hall, 58, Park Avenue, New Delhi-110 005

Present: Rakesh Chawla (President)
               Navneet Arora (Vice President)
               Vivek Pai (Secretary
               Lakshmi Deshpande (Joint Secretary)
               Sunil Kishore (Treasurer)
               Amritha Saxena (member)

Absent: Narasimha Rao (member)

No. of Minutes	Subject	Details of Discussion
5.01	Minutes of last meeting	Minutes from March 10, 2003 meeting were read, approved and signed by the the president.
5.02	Recruitment of management trainees	Navneet Arora stressed the need for recruiting five management trainees, 2 for the Delhi branch and 3 for the Bangalore Branch. The committee discussed the matter at length. It approved the idea and decided that the secretary will place the advertisement in all leading details within a week.
5.03	Opening a branch in Nagpur	Lakshmi Deshpande presented the findings of survey conducted in Nagpur and opined that there is no need for a branch in Nagpur. The committee unanimously agreed with her.

MEETINGS

5.04	Innovations in travel packages	Rakesh Chawla proposed that certain innovations in the travel packages for this summer will promote revenue arising out of tourism. The committee discussed the issue; a three-member committee consisting of Vivek Pai, Lakshmi Deshpande and Sunil Kishore was formed and was asked to work out on this matter and report to Rakesh Chawla latest by 25 April 2003.
5.05	Complaints regarding room service	Navneet Arora expressed great concern over the complaints that he received regarding room service in Chennai Branch. He read out the complaints and the committee accepted that out of the ten complaints six appeared to be genuine. Hence the committee decided to call for explanation from Sheela Tiwari, the Manager of Chennai branch.

The next meeting of the committee will be on May 6, 2003.

Submitted by	Approved by
(Vivek Pai)	(Rakesh Chawla)
Secretary	President
April 18, 2003	May 6, 2003

Exhibit 7.2: SAMPLE MINUTES IN THE FORMAL STYLE

MEETINGS

- NA's proposal for recruiting five management trainees was accepted. Advertisement would be placed.
- ID reported that there is no need for a new branch in Nagpur. The committee accepted.
- To carry out RC's proposal for bringing in some innovations in summer travel packages, a three-member committee was formed.
- NA read out the complaints on Bangalore branch room service. Committee decided to call for explanation from the Bangalore Manager.

Exhibit 7.3: SAMPLE MINUTES IN THE INFORMAL STYLE

MEETINGS

- Evaluation
  - In addition to paying attention to all the aspects discussed in the preceding sections and assigning follow-up tasks, it is important to evaluate the quality of the meeting so that future meetings will be more productive.
  - Given below is a sample of meeting assessment/evaluation form (Exhibit 7.4). By answering the questions given in this form, the group can measure the success of the meeting and highlight areas that need improvement.

MEETINGS

MEETING ASSESSMENT FORM

Please fill in this form by providing the necessary details or encircling your preferred option:

Date: _____

Meeting Objectives _____

_____

Not at all	1
Not really	2
Somewhat	3
Pretty much	4
Very much	5
Not applicable	NA

1. Was the meeting necessary?	1 2 3 4 5 NA
2. Was the purpose clear?	1 2 3 4 5 NA
3. Was the meeting manager prepared?	1 2 3 4 5 NA
4. Were participants prepared?	1 2 3 4 5 NA
5. Were all needed people present?	1 2 3 4 5 NA
6. Were participants motivated?	1 2 3 4 5 NA
7. Was control of the meeting adequate?	1 2 3 4 5 NA
8. Were people involved in discussion?	1 2 3 4 5 NA
9. Was needed information available?	1 2 3 4 5 NA
10. Were your resources and ideas used?	1 2 3 4 5 NA
11. Were decisions reached on agenda issues?	1 2 3 4 5 NA
12. Was commitment to decisions obtained?	1 2 3 4 5 NA
13. Was the time used efficiently?	1 2 3 4 5 NA
14. Were follow-up work assignments clear?	1 2 3 4 5 NA
15. Were the room and facilities adequate?	1 2 3 4 5 NA

Use the back of this form for comments and suggestions.

Exhibit 7.4: SAMPLE OF A MEETING ASSESSMENT FORM

CONFERENCES

- *A conference also is a type of business meeting*. The level of formality of a meeting varies according to its size and purpose. When one or two people gather in an office to discuss a project, the meeting style will be much less formal than when 30—40 people assemble to learn about a new government ruling.

- In general, the level of formality increases with the size of the group. However, the level of formality also is an indication of the objective and climate of the meetings. When a serious matter is being discussed by a small group, the meeting will be very formal. In a large meeting, called to announce record profits and thank all the employees, the atmosphere would be fairly informal.

- *The purpose of a conference is to confer with people having similar interests and to pool their resources, i.e., experiences and opinions.* In this collaborative thinking process, discussion generally results in a set of suggestions or recommendations on the topic/theme of the conference. The number of participants is greater and the spectrum of subject matter wider than those of a seminar or symposium. There may be a wide range of activities such as formal lectures, exhibitions, and audio-visual presentations organized on the occasion of a conference.

CONFERENCES

- There has been a long tradition of organizing seminars and conferences in academic instructions.

- Today businesses are also taking advantage of the excellent opportunities for learning and sharing new ideas and experiences.

- Often, academic institutions collaborate with business enterprises to organize conferences on various themes.

- These conferences serve as a forum for the experts from various organizations to meet, discuss, and acquire new knowledge and insight into the theme of the conference.

CONFERENCES

- ## Significance
    - Conferences play a significant role in developing an analytical and questioning attitude among the participants.
    - The participants in a conference make an attempt to define the issue and to ascertain its depth, scope, and related critical factors. They discuss all the factors
    - and offer suggestions at the end of their deliberations.
    - Since all the speakers are experts in their field, they suggest alternative solutions, which lead to the best decision.
    - Conferences have educational value in business and also in other fields where negotiation, collaboration, and collective thinking are essential. A corporate manager who participates in or leads a conference can develop his ability not only to define, analyse, and discuss a problem, but also to arrive at various solutions and take apt and sound decisions.

CONFERENCES

□ Significance

- ◻ Within organizations, conferences are held to give training to employees.

- ◻ Conferences can also be used for modifying attitudes, opinions, and feelings of participants.

- ◻ A conference within a business organization can provide necessary information on the policies, procedures, customs, traditions, and objectives of the organization to the conferees.

- ◻ New employees can share the practical know ledge and experience of seniors and superiors through conferences.

- ◻ The management can use conference tactfully to correct mistakes and misunderstandings among groups though not to warn or reprimand the individual participants.

CONFERENCES

- Significance

  - An employee who attends an in-house conference starts thinking in terms of the company as a whole. In a well-planned conference the employee observes that information is collected, facts are assembled and studied, problems are defined and analysed, all the advantages and disadvantages of the alternative solutions are discussed, and then attempts are made to arrive at the best decision. This demonstration of the problem-solving approach is bound to have a positive effect on the employee who attends the conference. His participation in the conference raises his morale and strengthens his confidence. He tends to give more thought to the coordinated activities of the organization.

  - Conferences lead employees to think more effectively and more often about the objectives and challenges of the organization as a whole. For example, a weekly conference of the sales department can help salesmen to develop an effective sales strategy for the next month. In addition, the sharing of each other's views and experiences helps them to improve their performance.

CONFERENCES

- ☐ Significance
  - ◻ At some industrial conferences, the experts and delegates with similar concerns are invited to discuss their common problems and prospects. Such conferences stimulate a creative flow of ideas and information, pooling of knowledge, views, and experiences. If the conference is hosted by an industrial concern, it enhances the host's prestige and goodwill. Industrial conferences can also promote public relations and direct the attention of the public as well as the government to the problems and prospects facing a particular industry

  - ◻ Conference sessions are very important as they can bring about a change in a conferee's attitude. An individual's attitude towards other persons and situations is governed by his or her past experiences and also by the varied impressions to which he or she is exposed. In conference sessions the individual listens to interpretations made by the other conferees about the same persons and situations. The different perspectives offered by the group broadens the individual's outlook and can often have the positive effect of dissipating misperceptions and doubts in his mind. While this may not happen with every individual, the general tendency for the average individual is to be influenced by the group's attitude.

CONFERENCES

- Planning and Preparation

  - Organizing a conference is a challenging task. It requires meticulous planning and systematic preparation. The following are a few guidelines to help you in conference planning:

    - Decide on a broad area and then narrow it down to a specific theme after consulting other members of your organization.

    - After deciding on the conference theme, identify related issues which have adequate scope for deliberations.

    - Identify and prepare a list of prospective conferees.

    - Decide the date.

    - Identify the chief guest and get his consent.

    - Work out the topics for various sessions and identify the chairperson, vice chairperson, and lead speaker.

    - Prepare a list of invitees.

    - Estimate the budget for each session and fix the registration fee.

    - the theme of the conference;

    - name of the sponsor/s, dates;

    - name of the organizer(s);

CONFERENCES

Planning and Preparation

- Prepare a brochure containing the following details:
  - an introduction to the theme and to the host organization;
  - related issues on which papers can be presented;
  - travel accommodator;
  - registration form, deadline for submission of abstracts of papers; and
  - address (both postal as well as e-mail) of the conference coordinator.
  - Prepare the format for a covering letter to be sent along with the brochure giving all necessary details.
  - Form an organizing committee and an advisory committee.
  - Allocate work to individual task groups of the organizing committee so that responsibilities are shared.
  - Plan well ahead (at least three months in advance) so as to give adequate time to the conferees to prepare.
  - Meet the committee members frequently to learn the latest developments and to share any other information.
  - Prepare a conference evaluation form.

CONFERENCES

- Procedure

  - As the convener of the conference it would be your duty to ensure that the required information reaches all the prospective conferees and invitees.

  - After receiving replies from the participants, get the relevant information tabulated, and make necessary arrangements for the following:

CONFERENCES

- Procedure

  - • transport
  - • accommodation
  - • reception
  - • timings and duration of the sessions
  - • lunch and tea breaks containing
  - • invitations for inaugural concluding sessions

-

  - • venue

- • seating
- • projection facilities
- • rapporteuring
- • identifying volunteers
- • preparation of a souvenir
- • abstracts of all papers to and be presented
- • production of required materials to be distributed

CONFERENCES

☐ Ensure that the participants are well received and have a comfortable stay.

☐ At the inaugural session, you as the convener of the conference should welcome all the guests and delegates and introduce the theme of the conference.

☐ Also briefly mention the arrangements that have been made for the conduct of various discussion sessions.

☐ Generally the duration of a conference can vary from one to three days.

☐ If the number of participants is large, you can organize parallel sessions so that conferees get adequate time to present their views.

CONFERENCES

- During the valedictory session, you can circulate the conference evaluation sheet among the participants and get them filled in. This kind of feedback will enable you to detect any flaws and hitches you were unaware of, and to include any worthwhile suggestions in your future conference planning.

- Once the conference is over, prepare a report containing the session details, names of participants, and summary of the discussion on each topic.

- This will enable you to bring out the conference proceedings later, which incorporate d the papers that have been presented.

- To facilitate your understanding of the preparation and procedure for a conference, samples of a covering letter (Exhibit 7.5) and a conference evaluation form (Exhibit 7.6) are given. A sample of brochure is given in Appendix F.

CONFERENCES

Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani

April 21, 2003

_____
_____
_____

Dear Prof./Dr./Mr./Ms._____

Sub.: International Conference details.

We are planning to hold an International Conference on 'Accessibility and Rural Development Planning' at our Institute during 25–26 November 2003. The International Forum for Rural Transport and Development, U.K., supports this conference.

We are enclosing a brochure containing the details of the Conference.

Your participation would add value to the conference deliberations. Kindly confirm your participation by sending us the abstract of your paper and the duly filled in registration forms as per the deadlines given.

Thank you and regards.

Yours truly

sd/——   sd/——

A.K. Sarkar   M.L. Dash
          (Convenors)

Exhibit 7.5: SAMPLE COVERING LETTER

CONFERENCES

CONFERENCE EVALUATION FORM

Name:

Designation:

Organization:

Please rate the following aspects of the conference on a scale of 1 to 5.

5=Excellent   4=Very Good   3=Good   2=Average   1=Poor

by putting a tick (✓) in the appropriate columns.

Aspects	Ratings				
	5	4	3	2	1
1 Theme					
2 Topics for various sessions					
3 Organization of sessions					
4 Quality of papers presented					
5 Duration of presentations					
6 Comments of session chairs					
7 Projection facilities					
8 Venue					
9 Board and lodging					
10 Transport					
11 Hospitality					
12 Overall impact					

Any other remarks which you would like to make on any aspect of the conference not mentioned before.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Convener

Exhibit 7.6:   CONFERENCE EVALUATION FORM

The End