

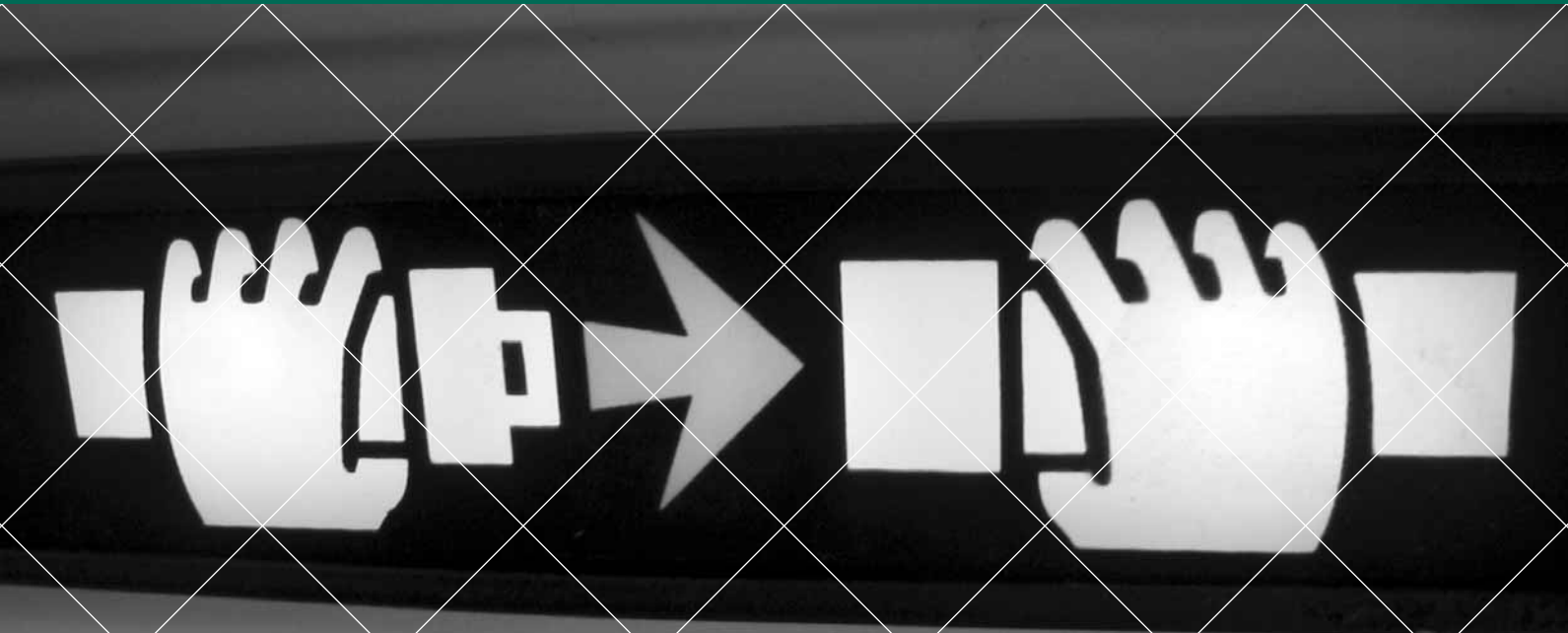
Meetings Management

Meetings Management

The Productive Leader
Releasing time to lead™



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Meetings Management: introduction

This module is typically delivered as a facilitated session to focus on the issues you face in managing meetings and the impact this has on your productivity.

The meetings model is based on best practice guidelines and will challenge you to consider '*do I really need a meeting?*' You will also be encouraged to think about alternative ways of running meetings. During your facilitated discussions, you will consider what changes you need to make to transform the way you manage your meetings and reclaim valuable leadership hours.

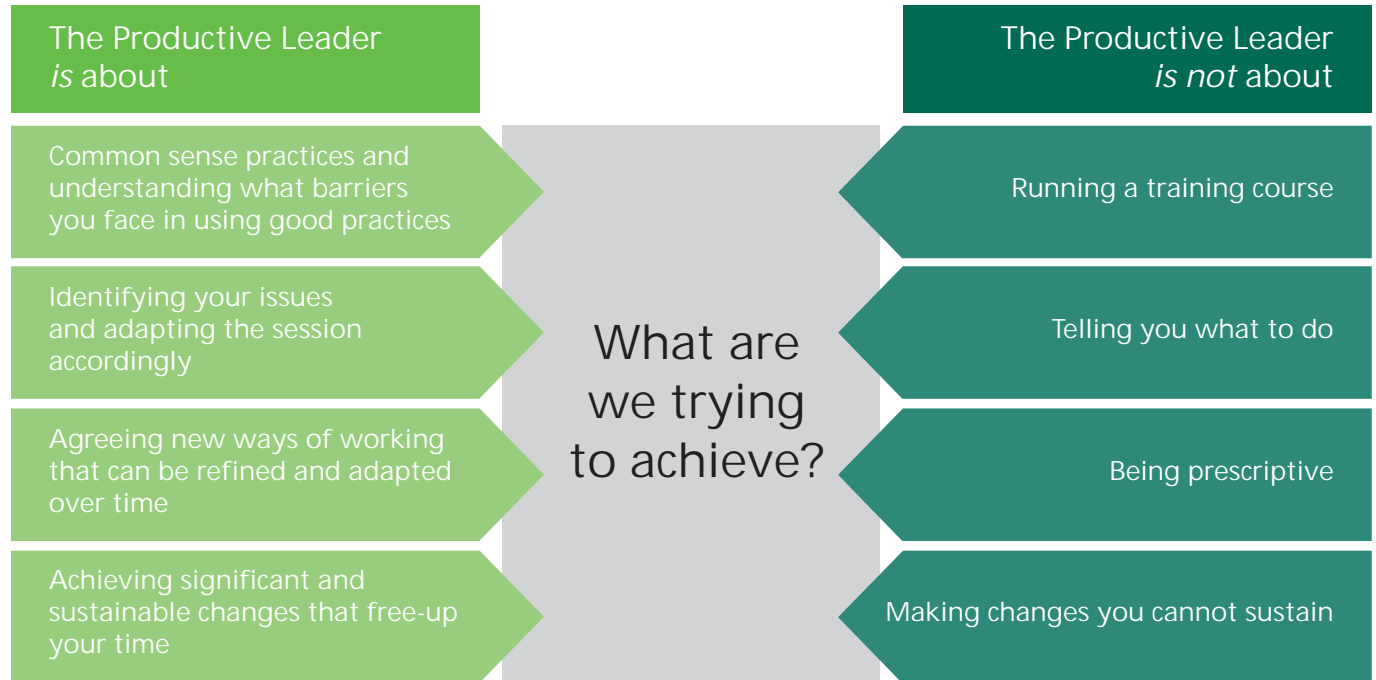
The session concludes with you making personal and team commitments aimed at improving your meetings practice and your performance.

Purpose, objectives and context

- What The Productive Leader sets out to achieve
- What issues do you face with meetings management?



What is The Productive Leader trying to achieve?





How are you currently performing?

- The impact of inefficient meetings management
- The benefits of managing your meetings more effectively



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NHS leaders do not typically follow good practice when they manage meetings

Research undertaken within the NHS as part of the development of The Productive Leader found that:

- meetings are not conducted with a complete agenda
- only 28% of meetings are reviewed or kept to an agenda
- only 27% of meetings start and 18% end on time
- quieter participants are not encouraged to contribute and only 36% of participants in the meetings observed made a contribution
- actions are not assigned to individuals with agreed timescales for completion
- leaders often arrive late for meetings
- leaders often seem to attend meetings through routine rather than necessity.

Most leaders know the basics of how to manage meetings effectively, but few follow them. In this respect, NHS leaders are no different from leaders in any other sector.

The benefits of managing your meetings more effectively

- You will attend fewer unnecessary meetings.
- Your meetings will achieve more.
- Participants will actually follow up on actions.
- People will prepare more effectively.
- The quality of conversation in meetings will improve.
- Participation will improve/increase.

The four Ps of productive meetings

- The four key stages in managing a productive meeting
- Key planning questions for a productive meeting



What are you trying to achieve by meeting?

This is an example of an executive team meeting agenda. The meeting is held every week for five hours for a team of nine executives (45 hours). The following table outlines current ways of using the meeting and suggests more productive options.

Agenda	What were they trying to achieve?	How else could this have been achieved?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing for seminar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three people to create a plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A planning session for 3 people (1 hr x 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This year's financial position and progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide an update 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Via a status report sent via email (1hr x 1)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Next year's plan – next steps following review meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To update people on the next steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Via an email (30min x 1)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities at organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To discuss pros/cons of a new opportunity and gain consensus on a decision to proceed with the opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorming session with smaller team followed by update and decision making session with wider group (2 hrs x 3 + 1hr x 9)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on the CEO meeting at a local organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide an update 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Via an email (30min x 1)
<p>Was 45 work hours</p>		<p>Could be 20 work hours</p>

The supplementary and implicit objective of this meeting was to get the team together to network. This could have been more effectively achieved by having regular networking sessions over lunch.

- Understanding what you are trying to achieve is key to understanding whether a meeting is needed and how long the meeting should be.
- In most cases other communication mechanisms are more effective and productive.

Stop. Think. Is a meeting really necessary?

Have a meeting?	What are you trying to achieve?	Things to consider
Definitely	Decision making	Have you got all the decision makers in the room?
	Ideas creation	Have you provided enough stimulus to get ideas going?
	Problem solving	Have you invited the right people (different perspectives really help)?
Worth thinking about	Gaining support	What level of support do you already have?
	Reviewing a strategy	Are you brainstorming or presenting the strategy?
	Consulting parties	Have you asked the parties how they want to be consulted?
	Planning	Are you using effective techniques to achieve this objective?
Not as an individual objective	Seeking advice	Are you clear on what you need advice on?
	Providing an update	Is it necessary to hold this meeting face-to-face?
	Team building	Are you holding the meeting in an effective environment?
	Information sharing	Are you utilising other communication channels effectively?

There are four key stages in managing a productive meeting

The four Ps of productive meetings are underpinned by the idea that the objective of the meeting dictates every stage of the process.



There is no point holding a meeting if it does not help you get closer to achieving your objective. You have a responsibility to yourself and others to run productive meetings, maximising everyone's time.

A meeting is not the only way to achieve your objectives.

The four Ps of productive meetings: plan



If you do need a meeting to achieve your objectives, these are the key planning questions

What am I hoping to achieve by holding the meeting?

What is the main aim of your meeting?

Have you considered if you have implicit, supplementary objectives that you are trying to achieve, eg team building?

Are you trying to achieve too many objectives in one meeting?

Who needs to attend the meeting?

Who are the key people needed to achieve the meeting's objectives?

What do I know about the meeting's participants?

Do I need to adapt the format of the meeting to meet the participants' learning styles?

How can I make sure I get the best out of the participants?

What are the participants expecting from the meeting?

Do I need to challenge their expectations?

What is the most appropriate forum for the meeting?

How can I change the environment to achieve the meeting's objectives?

Can I hold the meeting outside of the office environment?

What would happen to the dynamics of the meeting if I didn't hold the meeting around a table?

Could the meeting be held via conference call to reduce travel time?

Could I change the time and duration of the meeting to make it more productive?

What are the most appropriate tools and techniques to use?

What techniques could be used for each agenda item to ensure objectives are achieved? For example, brainstorming, mind mapping, affinity diagrams.

What tools can I use to make the meeting more effective? (flip charts, sticky notes, templates.

Once you have answered these questions and you are happy with your meeting structure, you can begin to create an agenda.

A productive meeting needs an effective agenda

Order the agenda according to the importance of the objectives

Agenda Template

Meeting title and no:		Date:	
Time:		Venue:	

Agenda No	Item description	Objectives/ Desired outcomes	Process	Item presenter	Time allocated per item	% Achieved

Next meeting title/ no	Time	Date	Venue	Chair

Assign realistic timings to each item

Assign presenters to each item

At the end of the meeting review the extent to which the objectives have been achieved

Schedule breaks for meetings that last over an hour as the average adults attention span is only 40 minutes

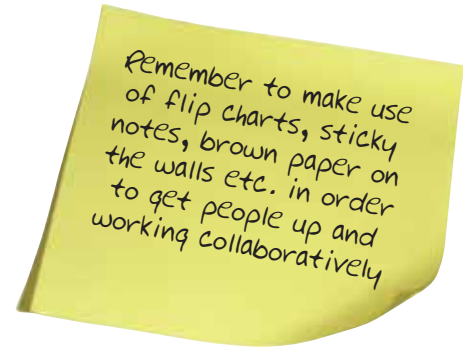
The agenda template is available to download at www.institute.nhs.uk/productiveleader from the templates section.



- Each item on the agenda should have a description, objective, process, presenter and time assigned to it.
- If necessary, start with easier items first so that latecomers will not miss vital discussions.
- Place controversial items in the middle of the agenda.
- Finish on less important items, allowing for rescheduling if the meeting runs over.
- Use the agenda as an assessment tool at the end of the meeting.
- Ensure there is time in the agenda to review whether objectives have been reached and to gather feedback on how the meeting went.
- Agree which meetings are formal to understand which must contain minutes.

Define the objectives for each agenda item and tailor your approach accordingly

Define the objective of each agenda item	Typical objectives	Techniques to use			
	To create a plan	Project mapping			
	To gather information	Presentations & Q&A session			
	To update on progress	Timed presentations			
	To solve a problem	Mind mapping	Brainstorming	Fishbow diagrams	Six thinking hats
	To come to a decision	Mind mapping	Affinity diagrams	Six thinking hats	
	To come up with ideas	Mind mapping	Brainstorming	Affinity diagrams	Six thinking hats



There are several techniques that can be used to achieve the desired outcomes of a meeting (see page opposite).



Tools and techniques guide

Meeting techniques and formats		Objectives of the meeting						
		Creating ideas	Sharing information	Giving progress updates	Solving problems	Making a decision	Gaining consensus	Planning
Format of meeting	Round	✓			✓			✓
	U shape	✓			✓		✓	✓
	Board style					✓	✓	
	Banquet style	✓					✓	
	Theatre style		✓					
	Classroom style		✓					
	Standing			✓				
	Outside	✓		✓	✓			
	Gallery style	✓		✓	✓			
	Informal setting	✓		✓				
	Rapid one-to-one			✓				
	Video conferencing	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	Web meetings	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
	Teleconferences		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Tools & techniques	Mind mapping	✓			✓			✓
	Six thinking hats	✓			✓			✓
	Brainstorming	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
	Affinity diagrams	✓			✓			
	Fishbow diagrams		✓	✓			✓	✓
	Five whys	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
	Project mapping	✓			✓			
	Metaphors	✓			✓			

Consider the format of your meeting



Rapid one-to-one

Rather than holding a long update meeting with all your team, hold separate 10-minute sessions with each of them.

Standing meetings

Hold a 15-minute stand-up meeting at the beginning of the day. This is a good way to reiterate objectives for the team and to share updates.



Video conferencing/WebEx

If the meeting involves people who are based in different locations, but the meeting needs to be held face-to-face, try video conferencing or WebEx. This will need prior participant training.



Meeting in an informal setting

If you want to encourage team bonding or create a more intimate atmosphere, try taking participants out of their everyday working environment. For example, you could have a meeting in a coffee shop. This is best suited for one-to-ones.

Gallery meetings

Put slides on a wall and get your attendees to walk around together and make changes directly onto them. This helps to engage people with the information you are sharing.



Meet outside

Why not hold the meeting outside? A change of scenery can help shake up a meeting that may otherwise be set in an unproductive format.

Reasons for introducing new meeting formats

If you want to energise people

Try holding your meeting in a different environment, or brainstorm to get people up and active.

If travel time to meetings is a large component of your week

Think about holding a conference call or another technology-enabled solution.

If your meetings overrun because participants talk for longer than necessary

Try holding the meeting standing up.

If you need groups to review material

Try a gallery meeting.

If you have a large meeting

Think about how you could use the breaks to facilitate networking. You could try having lunch during the meeting or have a separate Friday informal working session.

If you need to get updates from your team

Try having rapid one-to-one sessions rather than calling the whole team together.

If you always do what you have always done, you will always get what you have always got!



A time-space matrix can also help you decide the format of a meeting

	Same time	Different times
Same place	Face-to-face meetings	Electronic bulletin boards
Different places	Tele conferences Video conferences Web meetings Instant messenger Chat rooms Collaborative real-time editor Virtual environments	Notification systems Internet forums Wikis Blogs

Source: Phil Hadridge

There are many new technologies that can be used to facilitate alternative ways of collaborating, communicating, sharing ideas and networking.

The four Ps of productive meetings: prepare





Preparing for your meeting

Meeting preparation checklist



- Schedule the meeting for a time and place that is convenient for everyone.
- Book the venue and make sure the room is suitable for everyone's requirements.
- Book equipment – a projector, flip chart, refreshments, etc.
- Assign a note-taker to capture minutes and actions.
- Notify participants (these should only be essential participants).
- Send the agenda and any pre-reading materials 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

Meetings Management



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You should be aware of the preparation needed before a meeting

Follow these preparation principles to make sure your time is used effectively:

- never accept a meeting request without knowing the purpose of the meeting
- question the need for your attendance at a meeting if you are unsure of your involvement
- consider whether attending the meeting could be delegated to a member of your team
- make sure that any pre-reading for the meeting is received at least 48 hours in advance and that you have time in your diary to read it
- book diary time to prepare for the meeting
- make sure you are clear on the status of any actions assigned to you.

It is important that leaders and PAs discuss and agree these principles, to best manage attendance at meetings.

The four Ps of productive meetings: participate



Everyone at the meeting has a part to play

There are two main roles in every meeting – and both have an important part to play in making the meeting successful.

Meeting owner (chair)

Responsible for the smooth running of the meeting:

- setting the objectives and providing information
- agreeing attendees
- assigning accountabilities
- ensuring adherence to the agenda and timings
- ensuring full participation from all members
- making it 'safe' for everyone to participate
- recording any issues, ideas, decisions and most importantly actions

Team members

A selection of people positively identified as having knowledge to input. They are responsible for:

- practising good meeting behaviours
- coming prepared
- actively listening – contributing ideas, raising concerns constructively, sticking to agenda topics
- helping the chair ensure the smooth running of the meeting
- arriving on time.

Additional roles

Other roles can be assigned if needed. These include timekeeper, scribe, expert, facilitator and decision maker. Allocating roles to meeting attendees can also be an effective way to structure a meeting.

Effectively chairing meetings

As the chair of the meeting, you should send out the right signals to participants when starting a meeting.

- Always begin on time, even if participants are late.
- Always be prepared for the meeting.
- Always begin with an opening statement to focus the meeting.

An opening statement should include:

- a brief overview of the purpose of the meeting
- what content will be covered and what will not
- how the content will be covered
- what will be accomplished
- a review of the minutes and actions from the previous meeting.

There are individual and group responsibilities which impact on the effectiveness of meetings

Individual responsibilities

You need to take responsibility for these things in a meeting:

- turn off your phone/PDA or put it on silent
- come prepared for your meeting and on time
- focus on the meeting at hand and not on the next activity
- participate in a constructive way
- if conducting the meeting in your office, do not sit behind your desk. Turn off your email alert, close your door and divert the phone.

Group responsibilities

Group behaviour standards are agreed. They are designed to:

- provide guidelines to help a team get its work done and maintain focus
- create agreements on how team members will work and interact with each other
- be used throughout the meeting to keep it on track and challenge difficult behaviour
- be used at the end of the meeting to assess how effectively the team worked together.

Examples of group responsibilities

Do

Start and finish on time

It is important to start on time, and to regroup promptly after breaks.

Respect other people's ideas

Everyone has the right to contribute and a meeting should be a safe environment to do so.

Headline

Even if it is a complex statement or idea, explain it and then summarise.

Keep on the subject

Make sure that your contributions help to move the meeting forward.

Do not

Have side meetings

Do not have more than one discussion happening at one time.

Throw *curve balls*

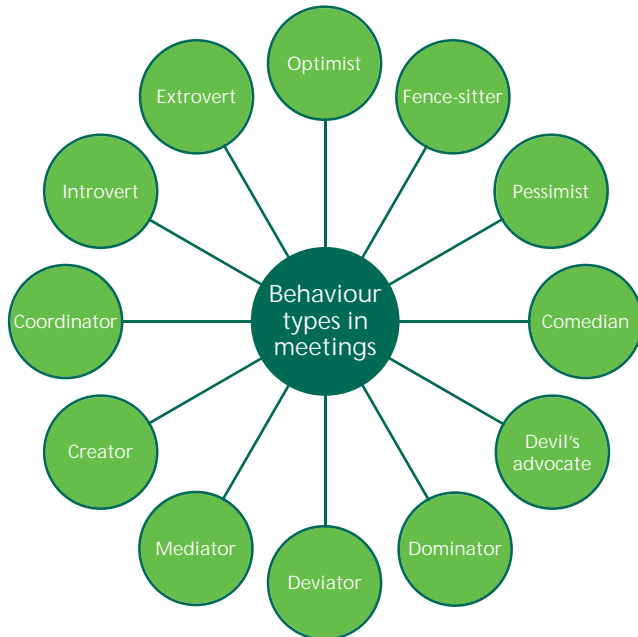
Do not use the meeting to highlight an issue you want to air, but that is not on the agenda. Do not disrupt the meeting.

Dominate the conversation

Make sure that others at the meeting can contribute. Make sure that you encourage quieter participants to contribute.

Behaviours to observe in meetings

Meetings are powerful forums where these common behaviours can often be observed.



- You need to recognise different types of behaviours in meetings.
- You need to know how to deal with them.

Recognising and dealing with behaviours in meetings

Behaviour type	Characteristics	How to best manage them
The introvert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiet • Good at analysing and absorbing information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask open ended questions like, 'How do you feel about this?' or, 'What are your ideas?'
The extrovert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talks incessantly • Helps provide content to generate discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to interject and direct questions to other people in the group. For example, '<i>John, I think you had an interesting view on that?</i>' or, '<i>We all recognise your expertise in this area, but let us hear from others in case some new ideas emerge</i>'
The optimist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive thinker • Finds it difficult to make tough decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use them as an ally to help gain support from others • If they are over-committing, help them to say 'no'
The fence-sitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambivalent • Unable to make decisions or move action forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind them, '<i>You have a valid contribution, can you tell us what your opinion is on matter X?</i>' • Try to bring out what their reservations are in making a decision
The pessimist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on why something will not work or cannot be done • A blocker; tries to defeat the discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge them to embrace the other side's view • Ask them to suppose that things could work and argue that side's position
The comedian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lightens the atmosphere by making jokes • Can be disruptive and distract others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to find merit in their points, express agreement and move on • When humour is disruptive, control it and refocus the meeting on the purpose in hand
The devil's advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes the opposing view • Questions and challenges others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praise their ability to express a different view • If appropriate, draw attention to the topic being discussed on the agenda and ask them to try to stick to that topic in the interests of time



Behaviour type	Characteristics	How to best manage them
The dominator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects themselves as an expert Thinks their idea and views are more important than others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw attention to established behaviours for meetings which allow everyone to contribute Use a method to go around the room giving each participant three minutes to talk
The deviator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes the discussion off at tangents unrelated to the object of the meeting Stirs up emotional hot buttons for others in meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be direct. Say, <i>'Let us avoid tangents'</i> Suggest you 'park' extraneous items on a designated flip chart to ensure they are noted to be addressed later/outside the meeting
The mediator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good at defusing conflict Aim to find common ground and create atmosphere of peace and calm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep them involved, especially if you detect tensions rising Ensure that they are not trying to mediate when constructive debate, rather than conflict, is happening
The creator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good at creative thinking, idea generation and being imaginative Good at initiating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look to them for ideas, but do not expect them to pay attention to detail Try to give them boundaries to work within to help them focus their creativity
The coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good sense of direction, stays on track Well organised Promotes decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk to individuals prior to meeting, to make sure they help to keep the meeting progression in line with the agenda Monitor them to make sure that the agenda is not pushed through regardless of the quality of discussion

Additional information on these behaviour types is available at the back of this document on pages 53 to 60.

Bringing meeting behaviours to life

- Take a card.
- Take three to four minutes to consider the behaviour described.
- Think about a time when you have come across an individual in a meeting, like the one described on your card.
- Be ready to share your experiences with the group.

- The group comedian.
- Can be helpful, or a hindrance.

- The participant who is quiet and withdrawn.
- Does not contribute ideas to meetings.

- The person who is keen to please others and support ideas.

- The person who likes to stir up emotion in others.
- Enjoys taking opposite views to everyone else and provoking others.

- The loud person who talks incessantly.
- Continually interrupts others and goes off on tangents.

- The person who has only one view.
- Thinks their view is the correct one and will not give up.
- Thinks they are the expert.

- The person who is very creative
- Full of ideas but lacks attention to detail.

- The person who is very negative.
- Constantly states why ideas will not work or cannot be done.

- The person who like to stay on track.
- Articulates objectives and promotes decision making.

Bringing meeting behaviours to life

Tell us about your experiences:

- how did you feel to be in a meeting with the person whose behaviour is described on your card?
- how did this person's behaviour affect the meeting?
- how did you help the chair manage this person's behaviour?
- what strategies or techniques did you try to manage this person's behaviour?
- what could you have done differently?



Dealing with difficult behaviours

Strategies for dealing with disruptive behaviour in meetings

Indirect levelling

Form a phrase that says exactly what's going on but make it non-accusatory and non-directive: *'I think the discussion is getting a little off-track here...'*

Gently force an entry into the discussion. This can be achieved by sitting forward, raising a hand, or raising your voice slightly.

When you speak, do not look at the person responsible for getting the meeting off-track, and try to keep your tone neutral and light.

Direct levelling (sometimes referred to as 'calling')

Agree with the meeting participants that any member of the team can directly level the behaviour of another member.

The idea is to create a safe environment where anybody is able to comment on the meeting.

To directly level the behaviour of someone, use his or her name: *'Robert, I think you are taking us off-track here.'*

When you directly level someone's behaviour be firm but not be accusing.

Closing a meeting effectively

- Try to end on time – pick up the pace if necessary
- Review the actions captured and ensure that timescales and roles allocated are understood
- Review if and how the objectives of the meeting have been met (using the agenda template)
- Agree the date and time of the next meeting
- Gather feedback on the meeting process using the meeting evaluation techniques on the next page

Evaluating the effectiveness of a meeting

Why you need feedback on how the meeting runs:

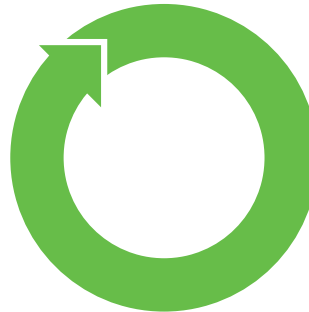
- to direct behaviour and motivate performance
- to improve future performance
- to clarify whether or not an activity is having the desired effect
- to enable individual and team behavioural change
- to increase self-awareness.

How to undertake a meeting review

- At the end of each meeting undertake a review (no more than five minutes)
- Meeting attendees are asked the two questions
- Someone in the meeting leads the review (this role should be rotated)
- This person has the responsibility to document the responses, summarise the key points and identify the actions for improvement
- The notes from the review should be included in the meeting notes and should be used to ensure that the next meeting is more productive.

The questions

What worked well?



Even more effective if?



Example of a meeting review

What worked well?	Even more effective if?
Good discussion	More creative approach is used
Moved forward in thinking	Use handouts rather than a projector
Achieved objectives	Ensure that breaks are scheduled into agenda
All participated	

The four Ps of productive meetings: pursue



Follow-up actions after a meeting

After a meeting you should always:

- make sure that any lessons learned are communicated to the team
- type up the meeting actions and decisions using the action-decision template
- send the meeting actions and decisions out within 48 hours of the meeting
- follow up on the actions
- conduct follow-up meetings if needed.

A meeting is only as productive as its outputs

You should capture the meeting's outputs using this template.

No.	Actions captured	Owner	Timescale	Resources required	Measurement
1					
2					
No.	Decisions captured	Owner	Time	Details	
1					
2					
3					

The agenda template is available to download at www.institute.nhs.uk/productiveleader from the templates section.



Setting the standard: agree your meetings team improvement plan



Example of a meetings team improvement plan

Aim

Ensure we consider all alternatives before deciding to call a meeting.

If a meeting is necessary, consider if the format of the meeting is appropriate for what we want to achieve.

Use outcome-focused agendas and assess at the end of meetings if objectives have been achieved.

Agree together to consider the behavioural roles that each team member plays in meetings, but undertake regular reviews.

Use the What Worked Well/Even More Effective If format for reviewing meetings. Ensure these are attached to the next minutes.

Implement the action-decision template and always send it out to attendees within 48 hours of the meeting.

Measurement

The number of meetings attended by leaders is reduced.

Audit of agendas.

Assess whether the agenda has been used and completed.

Monthly reviews of the effectiveness of meetings.

Assess the use of the agenda.

Audit the use of the action-decision template and how quickly it is sent out.

Example of meetings team improvement plan - Stockport NHS Foundation Trust

Aim

Delegate appropriate meetings to staff to aid their personal development and free up leaders' time.

Ensure that all meetings start and end on time even if people are running late.

Use the action-decision template and always send to attendees within three days.

Agree which meetings are formal and must contain minutes and which meetings can just use the action-decision template.

Measurement

Reduced number of meetings attended by leaders.
Increased number of meetings delegated.

Increased number of meetings attended by leaders starting and ending on time.

Increased number of meetings using the action-decision template. Action-decision template received within three days.

Meetings identified as requiring formal minutes separate to those requiring action-decision template.

Supplementary information



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More tips to recognise and deal with behaviours in meetings

Behaviour type	Characteristics	Hints and tips for effective meetings management	Typical quotes
The introvert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically quiet • Good at listening, watching, analysing and absorbing information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage them to take part (their silence can cause others to feel awkward or be silent themselves) • State that their opinion is valid and ask them directly for their opinion to arouse their interest • Get them to express their ideas and preferences before asking others • Ask for their view after indicating respect for their experience • Compliment them after the first time they speak • Ask open-ended questions like, <i>'How do you feel about this?'</i> or <i>'What are your ideas?'</i> or, <i>'I know you have undertaken something like this before, what were your experiences?'</i> • Work to foster an atmosphere in meetings where everyone feels equal, valued and able to participate • If the meeting is large, break into smaller groups to develop input 	<i>'Umm, err, maybe'</i>

Continued >

Meetings Management

Behaviour type	Characteristics	Hints and tips for effective meetings management	Typical quotes
The extrovert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always has something to say and talks incessantly • Often seen as someone who likes to hear the sound of their own voice • They often interrupt others, talk over others and have to have the last word • Help provide content to generate discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut the talkative person short and move the discussion on by thanking him/her and say, <i>'Let's hear from someone else now,'</i> or, <i>'We recognise your expertise in this area, but let us hear from some others in case some new ideas emerge'</i> • Try reminding the person what you are meant to be focusing on and drawing the whole group back to the key area of focus by asking other members of the group and easy question and recapping what has just been discussed • Suggest you <i>'park'</i> extraneous items in a <i>'parking lot'</i> where they are noted to be addressed later/outside the meeting • Remind the group that there are time restrictions • Before the meeting, establish equal distribution by all members as a team goal • Encourage participants to help monitor and manage personal participation 	<p><i>'That reminds me of'</i></p> <p><i>'Guess what I heard'</i></p>

Meetings Management

Behaviour type	Characteristics	Hints and tips for effective meetings management	Typical quotes
The optimist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have something supportive and positive to say on all subjects • Finds it difficult to face up to difficult problems or situations, make tough decisions, or say no • Often over-commits • Can turn into 'yes people' who tell you what they think you want to hear, rather than what they really feel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use them as an ally – use their positivity to gain support from others • If they are over-committing, help them say no by thanking them for volunteering, reaffirming they already have a lot on the go and ask others to sign up/volunteer to share the load 	<i>'That is a great idea'</i>
The fence sitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to make decisions or move action forward • Ambivalent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind them that they have a valid contribution to make and ask them for opinions • Try to bring out what their reservations are in making a decision • Help them look objectively at the facts and put some solutions in order of priority 	<p><i>'I don't know'</i></p> <p><i>'I'm not sure'</i></p>

Continued >

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Behaviour type	Characteristics	Hints and tips for effective meetings management	Typical quotes
The pessimist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees the downside of everything • Skilled at deflating and defeating the discussion • Believes their view is the only right way • Negative, always complaining • Full of reasons why something will not work or cannot be done • Opinionated and quick to jump to conclusions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point out that the purpose of the meeting is to find better ways to do things by constructive cooperation • Challenge them to embrace the other side's view as if it were their own, and suppose that things could work and argue that side's position • Refuse to be drawn into arguments with them and stick with the facts • Point out successes in solving similar situations in the past • Do not let them control the discussion, ask others to comment on the potential problems and ask how potential problems can be overcome • Their criticisms may be valid, so probe the apparent negativity to clearly articulate and validate concerns. Ask, <i>'Can you explain why you feel that way?'</i> and direct discussion to other members by saying, <i>'What do others think?'</i> 	<p><i>'It won't work'</i></p> <p><i>'They will never buy into it'</i></p> <p><i>'I told you so'</i></p> <p><i>'Tried that before, failed'</i></p>
The comedian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lightens the atmosphere of the meeting by making jokes • Produces witty one-liners which can be funny, but not necessarily helpful • Their humour can be disruptive, distracting others and may diminish other serious ideas or suggestions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to find merit in their points, express agreement and move on to something else • When humour is disruptive, control it and refocus the meeting • Speak to them in private 	

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Behaviour type	Characteristics	Hints and tips for effective meetings management	Typical quotes
The devil's advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes the opposite view to everyone else and provokes others • Often good at highlighting problems, both real and perceived, but less likely to offer any practical solutions • Always ready to question and challenge others with vigour • Often seen as having a confrontational style • Good at pushing others' buttons and creating conflict • Only hear what they want to hear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point out there is value in looking at issues from multiple viewpoints and move the discussion on by restating time restraints, or previously agreed issues • Refocus them to be positive and avoid using an adversarial approach 	<p><i>'Just for the sake of argument, I believe the opposite is true'</i></p> <p><i>'Well let me play devil's advocate'</i></p>

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Meetings Management

Behaviour type	Characteristics	Hints and tips for effective meetings management	Typical quotes
The dominator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes the opposite view to everyone else and provokes others • Often good at highlighting problems, both real and perceived, but less likely to offer any practical solutions • Always ready to question and challenge others with vigour • Often seen as having a confrontational style • Good at pushing others' buttons and creating conflict • Only hear what they want to hear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw attention to established behaviour standards for meetings about allowing everyone to contribute • Work to bring the rest of the group back into discussion by indicating interest in hearing from others and asking them a question • Go around the room giving each participant a turn to talk • Divide the group into pairs for preliminary sharing of ideas, and then ask each pair to give a summary report for discussion • Avoid the temptation to argue and use facts and information to move discussions along • Capitalise on what they know by asking questions • If debates get too heated, compliment the individuals on their enthusiasm and participation, but ask them to focus on constructive solutions. Emphasise points people agree on 	<p><i>'I know all about that'</i></p> <p><i>'Let me tell you what I think'</i></p>

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Behaviour type	Characteristics	Hints and tips for effective meetings management	Typical quotes
The deviator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hijacks the topic by taking discussion off on tangents • Stirs up emotions, tackling issues that are likely to get others fired up • Leads meetings into areas that provoke frustration – such as salaries, promotions or personal styles • Often reopens issues from earlier meetings or from earlier in the meeting that have already been resolved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be direct and say, <i>'Let us try to avoid tangents,'</i> or <i>'Let us not go there,'</i> or label certain subjects out of bounds • Challenge them directly, by asking what the relevance of a suspicious remark has in the context of the formal agenda • If they are complaining about a policy of the organisation, point out the policy cannot be changed at that meeting, but you would be happy to discuss it later • Draw attention to established behaviour standards for meetings about allowing everyone to contribute 	<i>'I think our salary review has been really unfair. We are paid well under market'</i>
The mediator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good at diffusing conflict, using humour or clarification to avoid confrontation or • Emphasises the importance of the main meeting objective • Aims to find common ground and create atmosphere of peace and calm 	Keep them involved, especially if you detect tensions rising	<i>'Let's calm down and look at this rationally'</i>

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Meetings Management

Behaviour type	Characteristics	Hints and tips for effective meetings management	Typical quotes
The creator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good at creative thinking, idea generation and being imaginative • Good at initiating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look to them for ideas but do not expect them to pay attention to detail 	<i>'I have got a fantastic idea. Why not...'</i>
The coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of direction, stays on track • Good at refocusing the attention of the group • Lacks creativity • Clarifies goals, promotes decision making, well organised • Not easily distracted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to individual prior to the meeting to ensure they help to keep the meeting in line with the agenda 	<i>'Shall we revisit what it is we are trying to achieve here?'</i>

Further tips for dealing with disruptive behaviour in meetings

These techniques can help to move the meeting forward:

- Focus on agreement
For each agenda item, summarise what has been accomplished, decided on or agreed to – even if there are points of contention.
- Get full participation
Remember only the people necessary to achieve the objectives of the meeting should be there.
- Right back at you
When a participant questions the process or wants to take the group in a different direction, it can be useful to turn their questioning to the group.
- Refer to group behaviour and responsibilities
Keep people working with the process and behaviour standards that the group agreed to.
- Use your signposts
Use the goals, agenda, outcomes or activities to refocus the group on the purpose of the time.
- Break
Have a stretch, play a short game, or have an icebreaker.

Information and links

de Bono, P. Edward de Bono's authorised website – home page [online]. Oxford: de Bono, P. Available from <http://www.edwdebono.com/index.html> [accessed 20th October 2008].

Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats® is a technique which helps with decision making as it pushes people to think outside of their box. It can help meeting participants to fully understand the complexity of decisions, and to spot issues and opportunities.

SMART Technologies ULC. (2004). Effective meetings, your meeting resource centre [online]. Calgary: SMART. Available from <http://www.effectivemeetings.com/> [accessed 20th October 2008].

This website is a resource centre that offers hands-on meeting advice for every possible situation. The site includes hints and tips to successful meetings as well as an online 'sage advisor' who can help answer your meeting dilemmas.

WebEx Communications, Inc. WebEx: Web conferencing & meetings, video conferencing, net meeting, webinar solutions [online]. San Jose, Cisco Systems, Inc. Available from <http://www.webex.co.uk/> [accessed 20th October 2008].

This website provides on-demand collaboration, online meeting, web conferencing, and video conferencing applications.

Cleese, J., Jay, A. (1976). Meetings, Bloody Meetings [DVD]. Video Arts

This award-winning programme is aimed at anyone who chairs meetings. The programme shows how meetings can be shorter, more focused, and more productive.

NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement. (2007). Thinking Differently. Coventry: NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement.

If we – the staff, clinicians, managers and leaders of the NHS – continue to think as we have always thought, we are likely to get the same results we have had before, regardless of the new structures and priorities that surround us. *Thinking Differently* provides tools, examples and inspiration, demonstrating how different perspectives can help to fundamentally change the way care is delivered. It provides a practical process that can be followed from initial ideas through to implementation.

Hoffman, R., Parker, G M. (2006). Meeting Excellence: 33 tools to lead meetings that get results. Jossey-Bass. A comprehensive resource that provides a wide range of ready-to-use tools that have been developed and tested. It is based on years of observing team meetings and conducting interviews. This book provides tools for preparing, facilitating, and following up on meetings.

Snair, S. (2003). Stop the meeting I want to get off! How to Eliminate Endless Meetings While Improving Your Team's Communication, Productivity, and Effectiveness. McGraw-Hill.

This book discusses the issues involved in meetings and offers managers a proven system for running a department, or an entire enterprise, without unnecessary meetings. The book outlines one-on-one management methods that can improve a manager's ability to gather input, streamline communications, and increase productivity, without stifling openness and job satisfaction. Snair's system has been successfully used with clients such as Johnson & Johnson, GE, McKinsey & Company, MetLife, and Verizon.

Tropman, J E. (2003). Making meetings work – achieving high quality group decisions. Sage Publications.

Meetings occupy so much time, relate to so many key functions, and cost so much money that improving their efficiency should be a vital issue for managers. Often humorous, this down-to-earth guide covers everything you need to know about meetings including agenda preparation, what happens behind the scenes before and after meetings, handling the flow of ideas and proposals, making high quality decisions, managing emotion, and dealing with conflicting values and personalities. Based on extensive studies of people who run successful meetings, this book is an excellent practical resource. (Source: Amazon).

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