

### What it is

A comprehensive checklist for planning important meetings

### What it can do

This checklist can assist you to ensure thorough and excellent preparation to position your meeting for success by clarifying:

- Purpose and desired outcomes for the meeting
- Attendees and their roles in the meeting
- Information and context needed for creating the meeting agenda
- Logistical considerations
- Needed pre-work
- Processes and norms for the meeting

### How it works

This tool was developed as a companion to *The Art of Facilitation* by Robert Gass. For further clarification about any of the items on this checklist, please consult the paper.

NOTE: Given the widely varying nature of meetings, some of the items on this checklist may be more or less relevant.

<b>Prior to the Meeting</b>	
<b>CONTRACTING</b>	
	Who is the person(s) ultimately responsible for the outcomes and success of the meeting (to whom you are accountable as facilitator) <sup>1</sup> ?
	What is the overall purpose of the meeting?
	What are the specific desired outcomes for the meeting (process or developmental outcomes as well as substantive output)?
	What would success look like for each of these outcomes? For each outcome, how will you know if the meeting has been successful in achieving it?
	Probe for underlying issues, concerns, hidden agendas, etc.
	What do you need from the client to be successful?
<b>ATTENDEES</b>	
	How many?
	Who are they?
	Among participants, are there particularly critical stakeholders? Who?
	How well do the participants know one another? What is the overall quality of relationship and trust among participants?
<b>DATA COLLECTION/PRE-MEETING ASSESSMENT</b>	
	What kind of data might you need in order to plan the agenda? What do you need in terms of context, history, and understanding who's coming?
	With whom can you speak to obtain good intelligence for determining the potential success factors and derailers for the meeting?
	How will you go about collecting this information (e.g., interviews, surveys, review of materials, etc.)?
<b>LENGTH OF MEETING</b>	
	How long is the proposed meeting?
	Is it adequate to meet the purpose and outcomes?
	Is the length of the meeting pre-set, or is there flexibility depending on how the agenda evolves?

<sup>1</sup> Referred to in this tool as "the sponsor."

<b>Creating the Agenda</b>	
<b>BUILDING THE LIST</b>	
	<p>What are the goals for the meeting?</p> <p>Make sure to test for non-content-related goals such as building trust or creating a shared sense of purpose.</p>
	<p>What are non-negotiables? (i.e., What <i>must</i> be included in the meeting?)</p>
	<p>Based on the program goals, the non-negotiables and the data you have collected, what are all the elements that should be considered for inclusion into the agenda?</p>
	<p>For each proposed element:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the purpose and outcome(s)?</li> <li>• What process will best achieve these outcomes?</li> <li>• How much time should be allocated to complete the process and achieve the outcomes for this agenda item? Be realistic!</li> <li>• Assess each agenda item as to its quality of energy and participant engagement.</li> </ul>
<b>FINALIZING THE AGENDA</b>	
	<p>Review the total amount of time needed to complete the agenda (including breaks). How does this compare to the proposed length of the meeting?</p>
	<p>Is there a particular need for some items to precede or follow other agenda items? (Items that build off each other, availability of presenters, logistical concerns, etc.)</p>
	<p>Are certain activities better suited for certain times of the day? (e.g., Content heavy items work better in the morning, not right after lunch or in the evening.)</p>
	<p>Try to keep energy fresh by alternating items with different qualities of energy and engagement.</p>
	<p>Make sure there is some breathing room. Don't over-pack the agenda!</p>
	<p>In longer meetings, especially multi-day, make sure there is some time for integration, sufficient breaks, and time (if needed) for participants to check emails, etc.</p>
	<p>"Walk your body" through each step of the agenda. Imagine yourself in the room with the participants, and as you "experience" each part of the meeting, sense what the flow and pacing will actually feel like.</p>
	<p>Make adjustments until you are satisfied with the draft agenda.</p>
	<p>Review the draft agenda with sponsor (and key stakeholders, as appropriate). Adjust as needed until there is agreement.</p>

<b>Preparation for the Meeting</b>	
	Determine who is the right person to lead each item on the agenda.
	Assess each item on the agenda for needed pre-work by those playing roles in the meeting in order to ensure maximum efficient and effective use of time in the meeting. Create assignments as needed.
	Assess each item on the agenda for potential pre-work by meeting participants in order to ensure maximum efficient use of time in the meeting (pre-reading, filling out surveys, etc.).
	Assess each item on the agenda for possible additional facilitation support needed (small group facilitators, etc.).
	Review above lists to see what, if anything, you as facilitator need to do to support those responsible for pre-work and ensure quality completion of tasks (assistance with talking points, creating discussion questions, etc.).
	Arrange to mediate or address any interpersonal relationship issues that could derail the meeting in advance of the actual meeting.
	If appropriate, negotiate ground rules for the meeting with the sponsor(s).
	What do you as facilitator need to do to be fully prepared for the meeting? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information-gathering</li> <li>• Walking through the agenda numbers of times</li> <li>• Further planning</li> </ul>
	Identify possible challenges to the success of the agenda. What can you do in advance of the meeting to increase the likelihood of successfully meeting these challenges? (e.g., pre-meetings with one or more individuals)
	Ensure that pre-meeting communications to participants set clear expectations (including but not limited to circulating the agenda).
	Plan for your own energy management. How will you ensure that you are well rested before the meeting? How will you get centered and grounded just before the meeting?
	Anything else that needs tending prior to the meeting?

<b>Logistics</b>	
<b>ROOM</b>	
	Size and layout adequate to number of participants and nature of activities
	Breakout rooms (if needed)
	General room/location ambience supportive of meeting objectives, participant focus, and ease
	Seating comfort
	Set-up of chairs
	Good lighting (some natural light preferable)
	Quality of sound (high ceilings, echo, and background noise can all detract from ability of participants to hear)
<b>EQUIPMENT</b>	
	Assess each item on the agenda for equipment needs: projector, video, flip charts, white board, etc., and add to room check list
	Printed materials: Assess each item on the agenda to determine if handouts are needed
<b>Day of the Meeting</b>	
	Prepare yourself mentally, physically, and spiritually. Your own state of being will be a major determinant to your performance.
	Turn off your Blackberry or other message devices for the period in which you are stewarding the meeting in order to ensure your own focus and presence.
<b>After the Meeting</b>	
	Debrief with client(s)
	Formal evaluation by participants
	Coordinate any follow-up and next steps by participants
	Complete any deliverables to which you may have agreed: meeting notes, recommendations, etc.