

Professional Manager Magazine provides practical tips on successfully chairing meetings.

## CHAIRING MEETINGS

This month, in a follow-up to our top tips on planning meetings (PM January), we focus on the task of successfully chairing meetings.

When you are in the hot seat you can strongly influence the outcome of the meeting. The following tips should help you achieve all the objectives you set on the agenda for the meeting and ensure that all participants get the chance to contribute.

First of all, it is important to arrive in good time. This will enable you to check that all the arrangements, including equipment, seating and refreshments, are in order and that you are all ready to welcome participants as they arrive, especially any newcomers or VIPs.

Always start meetings promptly. Deal efficiently with introductions, thank you's and apologies for absence. -

Introduce each agenda item, putting emphasis on the objectives. This helps to clarify the purpose of the discussion at the outset.

A good chair person should shape and control the discussion by:

- Encouraging the shy
- Restraining the verbose and opinionated. Allowing only one discussion topic at a time
- Keeping the meeting to time
- Employing visual aids where they may help. Summarising at intervals. Seeking clear decisions
- Suggesting a majority vote, where appropriate, when differences of opinion on key issues arise
- Agreeing the date and time of follow-up meetings
- Ensuring that those who have taken responsibility for further action are clear about what is required and when
- Thanking everyone for their contributions.

After the meeting, if not already minuted and recorded, write down immediately the decisions taken, the tasks agreed with the persons responsible for action and the dates by which action should be taken. Distribute the minutes/notes to all participants and take responsibility for monitoring the progress of any subsequent action.

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