UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

do: Organise your meetings more effectively!

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It's not just the meeting itself…

- Planning
  - Objectives & outcomes
  - Agenda & papers
- Place
  - Directions
  - Accessibility
  - Environment
- Timing, chairing, minutes, technology, follow-up

Fail to plan…

- Really important to plan and prepare properly

- Meetings are expensive

  - An average grade 8 costs £50k p.a.

  - Assume 46 weeks of work at 37.5 hours that's 1725 hours per year

  - A 2 hour meeting with 10 people is 20 hours

  - Cost is £50k/1725*200 = £579

- You can buy a decent laptop for that

- People will respect you for not wasting their time

Know what the meeting is for

- Are you:

  - making plans?

  - generating ideas?

  - sharing updates?

  - communicating something?

  - wanting a decision?

- Be clear on objectives and outcomes

- All are valid so tell people which it is so they are not left guessing!

- If you don't know what it's for don't have it!

Agenda is all-important

- It MUST include
  - Date, time location
  - Invitees (essential & optional)
  - Topics (and order)
  - Identify priority for meeting
- Put actual item times on agenda
- Plan a break if longer than 90 minutes
  - Coffee, toilet, email, phone etc.

Pre-meetings increase meeting value

- Agenda input from key participants
- Test the water on tricky issues in advance
- Agree how much time items will take
- Think carefully about who & why you'll invite to the meeting
  - People who need to know about changes are not the same as those who are good at solving problems
  - Check up on last meeting's actions and nag if necessary
- Could take longer than the actual meeting

People are rubbish at reading papers

- You must get them out early (1 week)
- Use tricks to make them read
    - Short & interesting
    - Ask questions about them in invitation
    - Give people jobs to do and report at meeting
- Avoid sending a jumble of different file formats
- One PDF is good
- Offer hard copies and provide on request
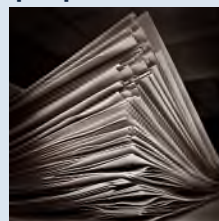
## Can they find it and access it?

- Give clear directions unless all have been to the venue before
    - Google map link
    - Signs in the building
    - Meet/greet
- What about wheel chair users?
- What about those with hearing or sight issues?
- What adjustments can you make?

Right environment = right behaviour

- Enough chairs?
- Place to hang coats etc.
- Temperature?
- Noise?
- Lighting?
- Decent table space
- Name badges/cards?
- Tea/Coffee/Water/Biscuits
- Is it lunchtime? Can you provide lunch?
- Where are the loos?
- Is there a fire alarm test scheduled?
  - What to do if it goes off
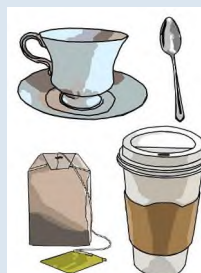
Technology can help or distract

- Some like to take notes on a tablet/laptop

- Others like to read email

- Don't be too directive – it's C21 !

  - Are there power sockets? WiFi?

    - Do people need access details?

- It's OK to ask people to use a quieter keyboard etc.

- Make sure confidentiality is agreed at start of meeting if tweeting etc. is likely

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Immediately before the meeting

- Get into the zone

- Don't rush into it

- Let people chat and catch up before the formal start

- Make sure everyone knows why they are there

- Work out who needs to be in which parts of the meeting

  - Give people choice about which bits they attend

Some tips for chairing

- Make sure you can see everyone

- Thank them for coming and introduce people

  - Ask for names and roles

  - Do a names map for your use

- Remind about speaking only when invited

  - Use eye contact to do this

- Note names as people indicate they want to speak then invite them in order *"I've got A then B then C then we'll move on"*

- Sense consensus – test and only vote if needed

- Keep to time

More chairing tips

- Much easier from a hard copy
- Have a pen/pencil to note comments and speakers
- Sit next to minute-taker so you can clarify points
- Don't chair and take minutes at the same time
- Watch body language: be informal but still directive
- If some are dominating invite others for their views
- If time is slipping ask meeting if they want to make changes to timetable but try to avoid this!
- Adjourn if meeting gets out of control

Good meeting behaviours make good meetings

- Avoid interrupting others
- Can't listen to more than one person at once
- Wait for chair to invite you to speak
- Avoid formulating what you want to say while someone else is speaking – you can't listen then!
- Pause between speakers to absorb and think
- Listen to and watch all meeting participants, even those who are not speaking verbally
- Make space for anyone who wants to speak a first time before you speak a second time

Make decisions carefully

- Listen to others properly
    - As important as speaking
- Speak for yourself
    - Express your own thoughts
    - Refer to your own experiences
- Avoid being hypothetical
- Only challenge others respectfully
    - Acknowledge their viewpoint

Plan A
Plan B
Plan C

Keeping to time

- Put actual time of each item on agenda
- Gather AOB (but don't discuss) at the start so you can leave time at the end for them
- Start on time
- End on time – then folk will come again!

- Follow up quickly while things are still in minds
  - Ideally same day - at most 48 hours
  - Always same week!
  - Diarise time to do this
- Remind people in a memo
  - Responsibilities given, tasks delegated
  - Actions accepted/given
  - Deadlines & next meeting date
- Captures meeting value

Reflection

- Ask one or two trusted meeting members how it went

- Plan how to improve meeting for next time

- Ask what you could have done better

- Note for next planning meeting

- Strive for continual improvement

Minutes

- Don't need to be a script
- No need to recreate the meeting
- Must record decisions and actions
- Must record presence and apologies
- Should use professional, business-like language only
- Can be used as evidence in the future so be careful of audience for them (some are public record)
- Need to be completed and circulated quickly while still relevant
- Should be presented and agreed at next meeting

Remember!

- Effective meetings are time-limited and know what they are trying to achieve
- Proper planning, chairing, and follow-up maximise the value realised by all parties
- People hate having their time wasted so run good meetings so you don't waste their time and they'll respect you and come again

THANK YOU FOR COMING TODAY

ANY QUESTIONS?