

# **CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS WORKBOOK**

**A BASIC BUSINESS VICTORY GUIDE**

## This book was developed by James H. Saylor

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# FORWARD

This book is part of the VICTORY Basic Business series. For over 30 years, the pursuit of a simple, easy-to-use, proven, inexpensive management system for any organization has been my focus. MANAGING FOR VICTORY™ is this system. The MANAGING FOR VICTORY™ system includes:

**V**isioning creates a common focus

**I**nvolving everyone establishes a superior organization

**C**ontinuously improving achieves excellence

**T**raining, educating, coaching, facilitating, mentoring develops a learning culture

**O**wning the work fosters empowerment

**R**ecognizing and rewarding builds high performance

**Y**earning ensures success

Customers drive VICTORY

Progressive Leaders guide VICTORY



# MANAGING FOR VICTORY

A PRACTICAL MANAGEMENT GUIDE

JAMES H. SAYLOR

HOW TO MAKE YOUR ORGANIZATION A SUCCESS

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James H. Saylor is the founder of The Business Coach, an organization focusing on helping other organizations achieve their specific VICTORY. He has assisted many organizations in discovering, designing, developing and doing successful management systems. In addition, he has led, managed, coached, trained and facilitated many individuals and organizations in achieving their specific VICTORY. Jim has over 30 years experience in operations, organizational development, sales, marketing, training, project management, quality and logistics. He has prepared and presented many highly proclaimed training seminars and workshops globally. Jim is a widely recognized leading champion of Total Quality Management in the 1980s and 1990s. Jim is the author of *TQM Simplified*, and co-author of *Customer-Driven Project Management* published by McGraw-Hill. Jim's latest book is *MANAGING FOR VICTORY™*. For further information about Jim's books, guides and workshops see websites: [www.managingforvictory.com](http://www.managingforvictory.com) or [www.thebusinesscoach.org](http://www.thebusinesscoach.org) or email [coachjim@thebusinesscoach.org](mailto:coachjim@thebusinesscoach.org).

# CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

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Meetings are a technique of bringing a group or team together to work for a common purpose. Effective meetings are an important aspect of making a group or team successful. Meetings allow the team to perform beyond the potential of each individual member. In meetings, the individual contributions are synergized to maximize the potential of the team. By bringing together members in meetings to pursue a common focus, better decisions, commitment, support, and implementation can result. The key is making the meeting effective. Effective meetings require an action-oriented focus. All members must share the focus, understand each others role, and use a common process geared toward specific outcomes.

Meetings can be more efficient through the use of meeting tools. These tools include:

- ☞ Focus statement
- ☞ Agenda
- ☞ Code of conduct
- ☞ Meeting roles and responsibilities
- ☞ Meeting critique

In addition to the meeting tools, meetings can be more effective if all participants understand a common meeting process:

- Prepare before the meeting
- Participate during the meeting
- Perform after the meeting

## Meeting Considerations

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**M**ake a focus statement.

**E**nsure that meeting roles are understood.

**E**nsure the group/team uses an agenda.

**T**ake time to prepare, participate, and perform.

## When To Conduct A Meeting

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A meeting should be conducted whenever a group of people need to get together to work toward a common focus. The focus could be to accomplish some action, or to provide some information.


A meeting should only be conducted when there is a specific action needing to be accomplished by the group, or for passing information.

An action meeting should be conducted when:

- Forming a new group or team
- Starting a new project
- Needing to accomplish an objective beyond the scope of one individual
- Solving a problem or improving a process
- Making a group/team decision


An informational meeting should be conducted when:

- Presenting a management message
- Advising of a change in focus, policies, procedures, etc.
- Motivating group/team members
- Welcoming a new leader or member
- Recognizing outstanding performance
- Learning from mistakes

 **Activity** Identify reasons when a meeting may be appropriate for your group/team.

# What Does It Take To Make A Meeting Effective?

In order for your group/team to be able to conduct an effective meeting in your organization, the group/team needs to agree on the elements of an effective meeting. The following exercise will help the group/team determine “what it takes to make an effective meeting in your organization.” In addition, the exercise will assist the group/team in identifying the potential barriers to conducting an effective meeting.

 **Activity:** Determine barriers to an effective meeting and identify the elements of “best” meetings.

 **Instructions:**

1. Each person visualize their experience in “best” meetings.
2. Brainstorm the elements of “best” meetings. Write this list in the left column below.
3. Agree on a list of elements for “best” meetings for your group/team.
4. Brainstorm possible barriers to “best” meetings in your organization. Write this list in the left column below.
5. Use the information in this workbook to remove the barriers and work toward conducting “best” meetings.

Goal: Conduct effective meetings.

“Best” Meetings	Barriers to “Best” Meetings

## Focus Statement

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The focus statement provides the purpose of the meeting. This provides the common focus for the meeting content. Each meeting must have a written purpose statement. If the group/team cannot write a focus statement, there is no need to hold a meeting.

### Focus Statement

**F**ocus for the meeting

**O**utput expected from the meeting

**C**lear, concise, simple statement

**U**nderstood by everyone on the group/team

**S**tart for the agenda

### EXAMPLES

#### Informational Meeting Focus Statement

The purpose of this meeting is to gain insight into the requirements of an effective meeting.

#### Action Meeting Focus Statement

The purpose of this meeting is to create a mission statement for this group/team.



**Action:** Write a focus statement.



**Instructions:**

Identify the focus statement for this meeting or for the next meeting. The focus statement is:

### Focus Statement

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# Agenda

An agenda acts as the meeting guide. The agenda provides the focus for the meeting process. It gets the group/team to target on the meeting's desired outcome(s). An agenda encourages an effective and efficient meeting because it provides a meeting process. It documents key group/team activities and it acts to stimulate progress. An example of a format for an agenda is shown on the next page.

## Agenda

**A**cts as the group/team's meeting guide

**G**ets the meeting's desired outcomes

**E**ncourages effective and efficient meetings

**N**urtures a focused group/team meeting

**D**ocuments key group/team activities

**A**cts to stimulate progress



**Action:** Prepare meeting agenda.



**Instructions:**

Formulate an outline for an agenda for your next group/team meeting based upon the focus statement you wrote on the previous page.

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Owner</u>

## QUALITY COUNCIL AGENDA

**Date:** September 10, 2005  
**Start Time:** 10:00 AM  
**End Time:** 1:00 PM

**FOCUS STATEMENT:**

The purpose of this meeting is to form the Quality Council.

**ITEMS:**

- Item: Senior Manager's Message      Owner: Joe
- Item: Quality Management System      Owner: Mary
- Item: Leading the Quest for Quality      Owner: Jim
- Item: Forming the Quality Council      Owner: Leader
- Item: Meeting Critique      Owner: Leader
- Item: Next Steps.      Owner: Group/team

ACTION ITEM	OWNER	STATUS

**Comments:**

## Code of Conduct

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The Code of conduct provides guidance for the group/team's behavior. The code of conduct considers "how" meetings will be conducted. Each group/team makes their own unique rules. These rules are determined during the first meeting by consensus. The code of conduct opens communications for the group/team in a non threatening situation. They are posted during every group/team activity. Although they are established during the first group/team meeting, these rules can be changed at any time the group/team determines it is necessary.

**C**onsiders “how” meetings are conducted

**O**pens communications

**D**one by consensus

**E**ach group/team makes its own

## Code of Conduct Considerations

---

**C**ommitment of group/team members

**O**wners of meeting roles

**N**egotiation process

**D**ecision making process

**U**nity issues

**C**ommunications

**T**ime management

## Code of Conduct Example

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**R**ely on facts, not opinions

**U**nderstand others' points of view

**L**isten actively to all ideas

**E**ncourage others

**S**ubmit assignments on time

**O**pen communication of all issues

**F**ocus

**C**ome to meetings on time

**O**rient toward customer satisfaction

**N**ever gossip about the meeting or group/team

**D**ecide everything by consensus

**U**se and build on everyone's ideas

**C**onduct the meeting using an agenda

**T**ake time to self-critique the meeting

## Using the Code of Conduct

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The code of conduct is posted at all group/team meetings in plain view of all participants. This can be posted on the wall or it can be placed in front of each participant. When a member notices a code of conduct issue, the item is pointed out. At that time the group/team takes action to resolve the code of conduct issue.

As the group/team progresses, the code of conduct should be revised as necessary. As the group/team moves through the stages of group/team development, the behavior of the group/team changes. This requires the group/team to re-evaluate the code of conduct to minimize and manage the potential conflicts.

## How to Develop a Code of Conduct

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The process for developing a code of conduct involves brainstorming items for consideration and then reaching consensus on the items included in the code of conduct.

The code of conduct action process is as follows:

1. Review background information for a code of conduct.
2. Write “Code of Conduct” along the top of a flipchart.
3. Review meeting and group experiences.
4. Brainstorm ideas for code of conduct.
5. Clarify ideas and focus on consensus.
6. Get consensus on code of conduct items.
7. Finalize the code of conduct.

## Developing a Code of Conduct Worksheet

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1. **Review background information for a code of conduct.**

Introduction to Code of Conduct	<input type="checkbox"/>
Code of Conduct Considerations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Examples of Code of Conduct	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using Code of Conduct	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. **Write “Code of Conduct” along the top of a flipchart.**

3. **Review meeting and group/team experience.** Each group/team member mentally reviews their past experiences with meetings and working in groups. In addition, each group/team member analyzes their past interactions with the other members.

4. **Brainstorm ideas.** During the brainstorming session make sure the group/team follows the rules for brainstorming.

### Brainstorming Rules

**R**ecord all ideas

**U**se creative, innovative thinking

**L**imit judgment until discussion

**E**ncourage participation by everyone

**S**olicit quantity



**Action:** Brainstorm code of conduct items.



#### **Instructions:**

1. Each member takes five minutes to write items for code of conduct consideration on a blank sheet of paper.
2. The group/team conducts a round robin brainstorming session to list items on the flipchart.
3. Add items to the list by a freewheeling brainstorming session. This opens the list to everyone to add more items.



## **Determining Meeting Roles and Responsibilities**

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Besides normal functions, meetings involve additional roles for group/team members. It is important to define specific meeting roles and responsibilities. For instance, the leader guides the team to mission accomplishment. However, the leader or members may guide certain parts of the meeting. Often a group/team needs a facilitator, this can be someone from outside the group/team or it can be a role of the leader or a specific member. In addition, the group/team may require various administrative assistance during the meeting. This could include such tasks as: charting, recording information, monitoring action items, documenting the agenda, keeping assumptions and glossary, and preparing reports.

### **Responsibilities**

#### **Meeting Leader**

The role of the meeting leader is to guide the group/team to achieve the focus statement. The leader balances process and content with the emphasis on the meeting process. The leader oversees the preparation for the meeting, leads the meeting process, and ensures action and follow-up after the meeting. The meeting leader requires assistance from others to perform his or her role.

#### **Meeting Leader Responsibilities**

**L**eads by example

**E**mpowers the group/team

**A**cts to guide the group/team to achieve the focus

**D**evelops balanced participation of all members

**E**ncourages teamwork

**R**ecognizes and rewards appropriate behaviors

## **Member**

The role of the member is just to do it. The group/team members must balance relationships and tasks. They must prepare for the meeting by doing research on agenda items. During the meeting, members must participate to their maximum potential. After the meeting, they must complete assignments.

### **Group/Team Member Meeting Responsibilities**

**M**aintain focus

**E**xpect to contribute your ideas

**M**aximize the participation of others

**B**uild constructive relationships with other group/team members

**E**ncourage open and honest communication

**R**equire win/win solutions

**S**upport the group/team's decisions

## **Recorder**

The recorder(s) serves as the memory. In some groups/teams, one recorder is sufficient. However, many teams, especially project, process improvement, or problem solving teams, use more than one recorder for assumptions, glossary terms, and action items. In addition, many groups appoint a chart scribe to capture ideas on flipcharts. Note: It is recommended that detailed minutes need not be taken. The agenda provides a record of the group's progress. It should be sufficient to inform people outside the group about the groups activities. Typically, members take sufficient notes to be able to actively participate and to inform other team members.

### **Recorder Responsibilities**

**R**emember group/team meeting content

**E**mphasize recording of ideas

**C**ommunicate internal and external

**O**rganize correspondence

**R**eport progress

**D**ocument meeting

## **Facilitator**

The facilitator drives the meeting process as a neutral observer. It is a role that can be assumed by the group/team meeting leader, a group/team member, or an person not part of the group/team. If the role of facilitator is assumed by group/team leader or group/team member, the facilitator role must take precedence over the group/team role. The role of the facilitator is to make it easier to accomplish the mission of the group/team by ensuring the group/team does the right things right.

### **Facilitator Responsibilities**

**F**ocus on the mission, objectives, and goals

**A**pply appropriate principles, methodology, tools, and techniques

**C**oach the leader and the group/team

**I**ntervene when appropriate and necessary

**L**et the leader lead and the group/team perform

**I**nitiate action to help the group/team manage conflict

**T**rain specific skills

**A**ssess performance

**T**ake the initiative to ensure doing right things right

**E**ncourage open and honest communication and active listening



**Action:** Determine and assign meeting roles.



**Instructions:**

In the table below, there are suggested group/team meeting roles. If your group/team decides not to use a certain group/team meeting role, just write “N/A” in name column. In some groups/teams, each meeting role is assigned to a primary and an alternate. In this case, write the primary name first and alternate second under the name column. Note: It is recommended that each group/team member owns a group/team meeting role.

Meeting Role	Primary	Alternate
Meeting Leader		
Recorder		
Assumption Recorder		
Glossary Recorder		
Chart Scribe		
Action Item Monitor		
Meeting Facilitator		



**Action:** Determine meeting responsibilities.



**Instructions:**

For each meeting role selected above, write the specific responsibilities.

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## Preparing for the Meeting

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The success of the group/team depends on the active involvement of all of the members. Members should participate fully in all meetings. The following are some meaningful guidelines to assist the group/team in conducting an effective meeting.

**Brainstorm ideas.** Review the focus statement and write your ideas of everything you know about the focus.

**Evaluate what you know.** Start with the ideas you brainstormed and gather any additional information you may need. Analyze the information trying to determine the specific opportunity, problem, or root cause.

**Formulate alternatives.** Generate a list of alternatives to accomplish the focus.

**Orient toward one alternative.** Determine one alternative you can support. This is your starting position based on the information you know. During the meeting, you may change your alternative based on additional information provided by other group members.

**Review the agenda.** Ensure that you are prepared with information, status, or assignments.

**Ensure that you complete any assignments.** The group depends on you to accomplish your specific actions. Even if you cannot make the meeting, try to make sure your assignments are on time.

### Before the Meeting

**B**rainstorm ideas regarding focus statement

**E**valuate what you know

**F**ormulate alternatives

**O**rient toward one alternative

**R**evue the agenda

**E**nsure that you complete assignments

## Meeting Preparation Checklist

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- Determine meeting date
- Schedule meeting room
- Arrange for outside assistance for meeting
- Prepare Meeting Notice
- Prepare Meeting Focus Statement (attach to notice)
- Prepare Meeting Agenda (attach to notice)
- Send Meeting Notice prior to meeting
- Prepare meeting handouts
- Set-up meeting room (chairs, overhead, easel, etc.)
- Arrange seating (circle or U-shape seating)
- Ensure equipment operates properly
- Check equipment supplies i.e. spare bulb
- Have meeting materials (handouts, chalk, markers, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Participating in the Meeting

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During the meeting, obey the code of conduct and the principles of teamwork. In addition, speaking, listening, and cooperation are the key activities of all members. Speak to make your point and to present and clarify ideas. Listen actively to learn from others. Cooperate with all other participants.

**Display teamwork.** In all actions, work to build the team. Pursue an environment of trust. Reward and recognize both the individual and the team. Involve all team members. Nurture the self-esteem of all team members. Communicate freely and openly. Include individuality. Pursue constructive relationships. Lead by example. Encourage all team members ideas. Stay focused on the mission.

**Understand the viewpoint of others.** Try to see their point of view.

**Remain focused.** Pay attention to the specific desired outcomes. Don't try to jump ahead or push your own agenda.

**Involve yourself.** Actively participate and provide your expertise.

**Nurture others' ideas.** Look for ways to build on other team member's ideas.

**Go for win/win solutions.** Foster the synergy of all ideas rather than one idea over another.

### During the Meeting

**D**isplay teamwork

**U**nderstand the viewpoint of others

**R**emain focused

**I**nvolve yourself

**N**urture others' ideas

**G**o for win/win

## Participating in the Meeting - Speak

---

During the meeting speak to make your point, and to present and clarify ideas.

**Share information, but be short, simple, and concise.** It is important to contribute to the meeting by ensuring the group/team knows your ideas, opinions, and position. This should be done while building credibility within the group/team. This will give you the best chance to actively participate.

**Plan what you are going to say before you say it.** This will help you focus and save valuable time. If possible write down your ideas then organize them to make your point.

**Encourage the building of ideas.** This stimulates interest and involvement. Although you or others may not have anything to initially contribute, many people can add their ideas to others.

**Avoid personal remarks.** Remember, it is not personal. Also, avoid any words that may trigger an emotional reaction. These types of words may refer to race, sex, religion, politics, etc.

**Keep remarks focused on the mission, goal, problem, and issue.** This keeps the group/team aimed in the right direction.

### Speak

**S**hare information, but be concise

**P**lan what you are going to say

**E**ncourage building of ideas

**A**void personal remarks

**K**eeP remarks focused on subject

## Participating in the Meeting - Listen

---

Listening is essential during a meeting. In fact, it is the most important part of communication during a meeting.

**Let the other person convey his/her message.** Do not interrupt others while they are speaking.

**Involve yourself in the message.** Look for ideas you can support. Determine the central theme or concepts.

**Summarize and paraphrase frequently.** This provides the speaker with feedback on the success of the communication. It also is the only way to confirm your understanding of the information. Further, there may be another member who does not understand. All critical ideas must be repeated by another member and discussed to ensure clarity of ideas necessary for consensus decision-making.

**Talk only to clarify while you are listening.** Effective listening requires your full concentration.

**Empathize with other people.** In other words, put yourself in their shoes for awhile. You do not have to sympathize with them. Empathy helps you understand; sympathy may actually be a barrier.

**Nurture active listening skills.** Active effective listening is not natural. It requires a dedicated concentration of effort.

### Listen

**L**et other person convey his/her message

**I**nvolve yourself in others' message

**S**ummarize and paraphrase frequently

**T**alk only to clarify

**E**mpathize with other people

**N**urture active listening skills

## Participating in the Meeting - Cooperate

---

Cooperation makes a meeting work. **Consider the self-esteem of others.** This will give them the confidence to participate. Operate with the team--give others a fair chance. Do not go outside the team to seek action or talk about other members. **Observe others' reactions.** This provides feedback on true reactions. Use this to find common ground for negotiations for win/win solutions. **Pursue a common focus.** As long as the team focuses on a common goal, the team can work. Many times a common focus overcomes conflicts. Peer pressure to achieve a shared result overshadows the personal agenda of team members. **Establish open communications.** This is necessary for any cooperative effort. **Recognize individual contributions.** This helps stimulate more participation. Allow positive conflict. This leads to consensus decision-making. The team will support a decision better if positive debate was endorsed during the meeting. **Trade-off ideas with the group.** This distributes ownership to the whole team. **Encourage trust.** This is the most important ingredient to developing and keeping cooperation in the team. Without trust, there can be no real cooperation during the group/team meeting.

### Cooperate

**C**onsider the self-esteem of others

**O**perate within the group/team

**O**bserve others' actions

**P**ursue a common focus

**E**stablish open communications

**R**ecognize individual contributions

**A**llow positive conflict

**T**rade off ideas of the group/team

**E**ncourage trust

## Performing After the Meeting

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Once the meeting is over, the real group actions are performed.

**Act to perform assignment.** This is when the group/team members act to perform assignments and action items.

**Find support and resources.** This may be necessary after the meeting. A member coordinates with management, or a support function, to ensure the group can complete actions or implement a solution.

**Talk up group/team activities.** All members must talk up group/team activities to develop pride for their team in the organization. This gives all group members a feeling of belonging to a worthwhile group. It also helps promote teamwork throughout the whole organization.

**Ensure group/team integrity.** Members do not gossip about group activities or other group members.

**Review the agenda of the next meeting.** This starts the preparation before the next meeting.

### After the Meeting

**A**ct to perform assignment(s)

**F**ind necessary support and resources

**T**alk up team activities

**E**nsure team integrity

**R**evue the next meeting's agenda

## Meeting Critique

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Some teams find it useful to perform a meeting self-assessment at the end of each meeting. This is particularly beneficial during the early stages of forming a team. The use of a meeting critique provides a means to develop the effectiveness of the team during meetings. It also fosters teamwork through finding successes. The following is a sample meeting critique. The team uses this critique or it can design its own critique based on the team's past experience. The meeting critique should be conducted during the last few minutes of each team meeting.

### Meeting Critique

**C**ommunications - Was there open and honest communication?

**R**esults - Was the focus statement accomplished?

**I**nvolvement - Did everyone participate?

**T**raining - Does the team or any member require any training?

**I**ndividuals - Were individual contributions recognized?


**Q**uestions - Are there any items requiring further research?

**U**nity - Did the team work together? Any symptoms of conflict?

**E**scalate - Are there any issues requiring management help?

## Establishing a Process for Conducting Meetings

Establishing a process for conducting meetings involves deciding what to do before meetings, during meetings, and after meetings. In general, each team member should do the following before, during, and after team meetings.

 **Action:** Decide the meeting process.

It is important to decide how the meetings will be conducted. For instance, some teams have the team leader prepare the agenda before the meeting. In other teams, the team prepares the agenda for the next meeting at the end of the current meeting. For each of the “what” items, mark **B** for before the meeting, **D** for during the meeting, and **A** for after the meeting in the “when” column. Assign responsibilities in the “who” column.

<u>What</u>	<u>When</u>	<u>Who</u>
Meeting notice	_____	_____
Focus statement	_____	_____
Agenda	_____	_____
Code of conduct	_____	_____
Assign action items	_____	_____
Make decisions	_____	_____
Monitor progress	_____	_____
Meeting critique	_____	_____
Perform action items	_____	_____
Get resources	_____	_____
Escalate issues	_____	_____

## How to Conduct Effective Meetings

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The action process steps for conducting an effective meeting are as follows:

1. Establish foundation for effective meetings.
2. Determine the focus statement.
3. Review experience.
4. Brainstorm ideas for agenda items.
5. Prepare a list of agenda items and assign owners to the items.
6. Finalize the agenda.
7. Prepare for the meeting.
8. Participate in the meeting.
9. Perform assignments after the meeting.

# Conducting an Effective Meeting Worksheet

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## 1. **Establish foundation for effective meetings.**

- Understand elements of “best” meetings
- Use agenda with focus statement
- Develop and use a code of conduct
- Determine meeting roles and responsibilities
- Use a meeting critique
- Establish a meeting process

**Note:** This step is particularly important during the initial meeting. During subsequent meetings, appropriate information in this step should be reviewed and updated as necessary.

## 2. **Determine the focus statement.** What is the purpose for having the meeting?

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Is the purpose to seek action or convey information?

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Is a meeting the best method to accomplish the focus statement?

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Write the Focus Statement

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3. **Review experience.** Each meeting participant reviews his or her experiences with the focus statement ideas. What can the participant contribute to help achieve the focus statement?

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4. **Brainstorm ideas for agenda items.**

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5. **Prepare a list of agenda items and assign owners to the items.**

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6. Finalize the agenda.

**AGENDA**

**Date:**

**Start Time:**

**End Time:**

**FOCUS STATEMENT:**

**ITEMS:**

- Item: Owner:
- Item: Owner:
- Item: Owner:
- Item: Owner:
- Item: Owner:
- Item: Owner:

ACTION ITEM	OWNER	STATUS

**Comments:**

7. **Prepare for the meeting.** What can I contribute to achieve the focus statement?

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8. **Participate in the meeting.** How did I contribute to achieving the focus statement?

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9. **Perform assignments after the meeting.** What assignments must I complete before next meeting?

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