

Chairing Meetings

A good chairperson can make the difference between a productive and motivating meeting and a frustrating waste of time. Being a good chairperson requires skill and leadership to ensure the best use of everyone's time. Very few people receive adequate training or support in chairing meetings and yet adopting some fairly simple techniques and practices can fulfil this important role.

What is it?

Meetings are generally most effective when there is a purpose and reason to bring people together. They help teams reach their goals and ensure projects stay on track.

Some meetings are very formal and associated with strict terms of reference and a constitution that nominates the position of Chair. Others are small and informal but still require leadership and order through a meeting representative in the role of Chair.

Before the Meeting

The chairperson's role starts before the meeting takes place. The chairperson must be clear on the purpose and logistics of the meeting (where, when etc), attendees, areas of discussion and what the desired outcome of the meeting is.

Depending on the size and type of meeting, the Chair might want to assign roles to others to help facilitate the smooth running of the meeting. The sorts of roles to consider include secretary (or minute taker) and who the lead speakers on certain agenda items are.

It might be helpful to work through the agenda in advance with these key people to agree what and how information is going to be recorded as well as identify what the important tasks are to ensure they are fulfilled during the meeting.

Agenda

In its simplest form, the agenda will be a list of things that need to be discussed. Adding timings to an agenda will help with planning, can sharpen people's minds in getting through a particular item of business and will help set expectations so that the meeting can be helped to run to time.

It is normally valuable to circulate an agenda in advance, as part of helping participants to prepare for the meeting. For small and informal meetings, you may decide to agree an agenda at start of the meeting itself.

Here is a list of items that are usually included in an agenda but you may want to write your own:

- Apologies for absence
- Minutes of the last meeting – agree these are a correct record
- Matters arising from the last meeting including a review of action points
- Issues to be discussed
- Any other business
- Date of next meeting

At the Meeting

The Chairperson should always arrive early. The meeting room set up can be checked, attendees welcomed, speakers introduced and ensure that all have the agenda and any papers.

Call attendees to attention at the start of the meeting to set out timings of the meeting, any planned breaks (for refreshments for examples) and any safety announcements or general housekeeping rules. These rules may or may not be explicitly stated but can include items such as mobile phone use, how to make a contribution to the meeting and acceptable behaviours towards fellow meeting attendees.

When it comes to the main body of the meeting itself, you have a number of key objectives as chairperson:

Get through all of the agenda, on time. Introduce each item, keep conversations on track, have a method to deal with points made off topic that you want to return to later (if time allows) and don't allow

private conversations.

Make sure everyone is able to contribute. Maintain eye contact, acknowledge those who have indicated they want to speak, encourage all to speak, monitor more dominant personalities to allow all to contribute, listen and summarise points made, remain neutral.

Steer the meeting to make decisions. When introducing agenda items outline what decisions need to be made, keep a list of key points, summarise these to guide decision making, summarise decisions taken with detail of who will do what and by when.

Deal effectively with any disruptions or difficulties. Managing conflict is the most challenging aspect of being a Chairperson but your role will give you legitimate authority to deal with these situations. Remind people of the ground rules, treat people consistently, keep summarising points to reassure participants they have been heard to enable the meeting to move on, involve others to see if the particular topic needs more time to discuss, suggest that the issue being debated can be taken outside the meeting and in extreme examples, adjourn the meeting if it becomes too heated and emotional.

Close the meeting. Thank all the participants, agree that minutes and actions will be circulated and if possible, agree the next meeting date. After the meeting ends, speak to people after the meeting to gather feedback from participants.

Chairing meetings is an important role and one that takes skill. Like any other skilled activity, you will get better with practice and by listening to people's views on how you performed and how you can improve.

Why is it important to me?

You may find that you need to organise and run meetings for all sorts of reasons within your day-to-day work. Knowing how to chair meetings will help you to make sure that time is well spent and that your meetings are productive and motivating.

IQ believes that running effective meetings is an important skill for professionals working in the quarrying and minerals products industry. It features on our **Skills Wheel** which captures all the key skill and knowledge areas we believe are vital to successful career development in the industry.

Where Next?

For short clips on how to chair effective meetings, take a look at these YouTube videos:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvLDIPIxaRg

www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPhKhTI0Lss

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCpcqdggF-0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rFeA-pM0o8Y>

www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQW1fEwYZVA

Skills You Need:

<https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/conduct-meeting.html>

For guidance on how to manage conflict:

Find the IQ Factsheet '**Managing Conflict**' in the 'Managing Conflict' segment of the Skills Wheel.

Institute of Quarrying

IQ supports professionals working within the quarrying and minerals products industry through membership and training. These factsheets are produced across a range of topics to share ideas and best practice. Further information can be found via the resources section on the IQ website www.quarrying.org.