

Everyone,

Over the years I have participated in thousands of meetings. For the most part you do not need to follow any of the parliamentary rules, so long as everyone follows the rules, and our Chairperson is allowed to manage us through the topics and conversations. Keep in mind Mark needs to be brutally honest with us whenever conversations become too lengthy, un-productive or not substantive.

Meeting Rules

1. Run your meetings as you would have others run the meetings that you attend.

This is the most rule of Meeting Management. Running an effective meeting, or being a good meeting participant, is all about being considerate of others. All the other rules of meeting management flow from this primary principle.

2. Don't hold unnecessary meetings.

Carefully assess how often routine meetings really need to be held. For example, if you have daily staff meetings, how productive are they? Can they be held less frequently? Or, perhaps, can they be held standing up someplace and kept to a few minutes? Staff meetings are crucial vehicles for maintaining good communication in the office, but it is important to find the right balance between good communication and productive uses of time.

3. Do not be late.

Being on time is an important aspect in consideration for others and company expense. If you do arrive late, do not make excuses to everyone while the presenter is speaking. Step in quickly and quietly while taking your seat. The less interruptions the better.

4. Stay on topic.

Most groups have at least one person who tends to go off on a tangent or tell stories during meetings. Whether this is the organizer or one of the participants, all meeting members have the responsibility of gently guiding the meeting back to the substantive agenda items. Keep in mind that deviation with stories humor or correlations can be important at times if it fits with the situation. As a rule though, someone needs to guide the discussion back to the agenda if the meeting becomes clearly off track.

5. Stick to a schedule.

Start the meeting on time and end it on time (or even early) if at all possible. Starting on time requires discipline by the organizer and the participants. If all participants know that the organizer is going to start the meeting right on time, there is a much greater likelihood that everyone else will make the effort to be punctual.

Finishing in a timely manner is also crucial. If everyone agreed that the meeting would last an hour, the meeting should best not run any longer than that. Remember that people's lives do not revolve around your schedule.

6. Do not bring your cell phone or computer to a meeting if they are going to be a distraction.

What does this do? Every time an text message is received it causes a vibration that is echoed through the table for the whole room to hear. It causes as much a distraction as if the phone rang. Turn it off, put it away, get it out of sight. If you are seeing it then your mind will be concerned

with it and not the meeting at hand. On the other hand, these can be useful tools in a meeting especially when a question needing to be answered can only be done so by "googling it".

7. Do not carry on a side conversation while someone else is talking.

It can be very annoying to a people in a meeting when a side conversation between participants takes place in the middle of a presentation. This is not only rude, but it also demonstrates disrespect for others.

8. Do not come to the meeting unprepared and be ready to leave with Action Items.

Prepared means in the way of carrying a pen, pencil, paper, notepad; whatever it takes for you to be ready if information is shared.

Wrap up meetings with a clear statement of the next steps and who is to take them.

If any decisions are made at the meeting (even if the decision was to "study the issue more") the meeting organizer should clearly summarize what needs to be done and who is going to do it. This is crucial. If the participants leave the meeting and no one is accountable for taking action on the decisions that were made, then the meeting will have been a waste of everyone's time.