

Working Successfully With People During Meetings

Dealing with different people and problems during meetings requires skill and tact. The following outline of “meeting types” identifies common behaviours, why they may occur and suggests possible solutions.

1. Behaviour	Reasons Why	Possible Solutions
Person is overly talkative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eager beaver • wordy by nature • well-informed • show-off • lonely, needs to feel accepted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interrupt with...”That’s a point, what do other people think?” • interrupt and summarize • interrupt and indicate that comments are not related to discussion
2. Behaviour	Reasons Why	Possible Solutions
Person is argumentative, overly aggressive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feeling pressured, upset • aggressive personality • argumentative by nature • has not been acknowledged • has been dismissed or ignored in the past 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do not get angry as well • summarize valid points made, then move on • solicit group support by asking if others agree, then move on • talk to person privately, try to develop cooperation • seat beside you so that you can more easily control
3. Behaviour	Reasons Why	Possible Solutions
Person is dictatorial , wants own way, makes decisions without committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may not know how to delegate • believes own way is best • needs power • very controlling nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ask for input from other members • talk with person privately • do not establish eye contact • encourage expression of opinion, then move back to the group
4. Behaviour	Reasons Why	Possible Solutions
Person is a discourager , always responds negatively to new ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • long-time member may feel that all ways have been tried • may be threatened by new people, ideas • may want to cling to power of “tradition” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage person to share why it didn’t work • use humour to defuse discouragement • acknowledge past experience • be supportive of the other members’ ideas
5. Behaviour	Reasons Why	Possible Solutions
Two people have an argument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each believes other is wrong • strong/directing personalities • can split group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emphasize pts of agreement • refer to meeting objectives • request input from another member • ask a specific question related to topic • request personal issues withheld

6. Behaviour	Reasons Why	Possible Solutions
People having a side conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may be related to subject, but person has not been recognized to speak • may be personal comment • may be “Doubting Thomas” • may be the perennial “down putter” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct a question to one of the people involved • intervene and remind that only one person has the floor • encourage people to use a note pad so as not to lose thoughts • keep a pad to record order of speakers and enforce it • interrupt, restate last remark made by group and ask person’s opinion of it
7. Behaviour	Reasons Why	Possible Solutions
Person who promises to do something and does not follow through , often misses meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • procrastinates by nature • unable to set realistic goals • has good ideas, cannot put into practice • lack of confidence • may not know how to do task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be sure person understands what is expected • set guidelines/timelines mutually • offer support • talk promptly, one-to-one about attendance • inform person before meeting that a report is due
8. Behaviour	Reasons Why	Possible Solutions
Person who rambles , talks about irrelevant issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wants attention • loses train of thought 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thank person and summarize what was said • interrupt, remind what objective is and move on • appoint an observer to assess participation • ask person to briefly summarize • smile, comment that point is interesting, but must move on to topic being discussed • refer to time allowed for discussion of issue
9. Behaviour	Reasons Why	Possible Solutions
Person who is very quiet , does not contribute to the discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may be shy by nature • may simply not have anything to say • may be there but really “on holiday” • may not be clear about expectations regarding participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seat near you so that you are aware if body language indicates person may like to comment • check at break to affirm his/her opinions are sought • if aware of a helpful point made in another context, ask if person will share that with the group