

Compare successful and unsuccessful meetings

You have undoubtedly already experienced many meetings of all kinds. However, you have almost certainly not enjoyed all of them. Before talking about how to facilitate a successful meeting, we will have two brainstorming exercises. For both brainstorming exercises, it is important that you think of concrete examples of your experiences. You do not have to use names, but please include details about what happened, how that made you feel, how you reacted, and anything else that was important for this experience.

First, think back on a particularly bad or boring meeting in which you participated. What made it bad? What made it boring? Take notes in the blank space below.

Second, think of a particularly good meeting. What made it good? How was it different from an ordinary or bad meeting? Take notes in the blank space below.

Based on our experience, some of the elements that differentiate a successful and unsuccessful meeting are listed below. How do these items compare to the examples you listed above?

Successful meeting

- Clear agenda
- Punctual
- Active discussion
- Introduction of new ideas and concepts
- Encourages participation
- Everyone can speak
- Decision-making
- Interesting and inspiring

Unsuccessful meeting

- Not punctual
- A lot of sidebar conversations
- Endless discussions
- Conflicts (*e.g.*, personal attacks)
- Only some participants speak
- Lack of new information

Facilitator's Responsibilities

Given the elements described above, the facilitator largely determines whether the meeting is successful or not. Good facilitators use a few key skills to ensure the participation of everybody and the overall success of a meeting.

The facilitator's responsibilities include:

- Asking the advice of staff in making meeting agendas;
- Organizing the meeting and setting meeting ground rules (you can refer to [How to Set Meeting Ground Rules](#));
- Introducing topics and the background;
- Making sure the meeting proceeds and encouraging people to participate;
- Resolving conflicts (you can refer to [How to Resolve Conflicts in Meetings](#));
- Refraining from imposing his or her own ideas on the whole group;
- Leading participants in reaching a consensus (you can refer to [How to Reach Consensus](#)).