



Knowledge to lead

■ Planning meetings as learning opportunities

As part of the daily working schedule, face-to-face meetings and discussion groups can become powerful learning opportunities for sharing knowledge and learning at the workplace. For this to happen, it is necessary to plan them with learning in mind.

Before the meeting:

- Set the meeting goals;
- Set the target audience: select only people interested in the topic and willing to actively contribute to accomplish the goal;
- Consult with any colleague whose cooperation is necessary in order to meet the goal;
- Plan and agree on a mutually convenient time;
- Establish a meeting environment (including style, location, room size and seating) consistent with your goal;
- Reduce the number of issues to be discussed and tasks to only those necessary to accomplish the goal;
- Identify a moderator;
- Plan the meeting to be interactive to allow both speakers and audience to contribute by e.g. allotting time limits for discussion on agenda topics. Think back to previous meetings and recall how long it took to go through similar agenda items. Once the discussion goes over, move on. If the topic warrants further discussion, assign someone the task of scheduling a separate meeting;
- Think about integrating visuals in your meeting: images will allow capturing and organizing key points instantly because they can be processed better by the human brain than text or numbers alone;
- Most people learn by doing. Whenever possible, include hands-on activities, live demonstrations, games, role-playing, etc. Variety will help you keeping people interested;



unitar

United Nations Institute for Training and Research



- Circulate the necessary information among colleagues: send an e-mail stating there will be a meeting and provide an outline including the topics for discussion, the presenter for each topic and time allotment for each topic. This can be used as a checklist to ensure that all information is covered and lets participants know what will be discussed well in advance. This gives them an opportunity to come to the meeting prepared for the upcoming discussions or decisions;
- Send a reminder e-mail thirty minutes before the meeting begins and encourage meeting participants to arrive on time.

During the meeting:

- Ensure that you begin the meeting at the scheduled time;
- Make introductions and be clear about the objectives and who is going to speak;
- Limit the duration of the meeting according to the topic that is going to be approached;
- Make it interactive by using e.g. the "talking stick" technique. The only person able to speak is the person holding the talking stick (feel free to substitute a tennis ball or stapler for an authentic talking stick). When a person has finished speaking, they pass the stick on. This ensures that everyone has their say and the meeting isn't dominated by one or two vocal participants. You'll also find that your meeting flows more smoothly when participants are forced to listen to one another instead of interrupting at will.

After the meeting:

- Always send a follow up minute
- To improve meeting skills, try to review the effectiveness of the moderator, participation of colleagues and clarity of objectives by collecting feedback from your colleagues. This can be done either by e-mail or through discussion.



unitar

United Nations Institute for Training and Research