

# Meeting Rules!

How to get the behaviours you need in your meetings.

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# Is this the present?

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You run, or chair a team meeting and carefully prepare each time, only to be disappointed by the level of progress you make. The disappointment is felt by others at the meeting too, and they talk one-to-one with you about poor behaviours in the meeting.

Perhaps you are wondering.

How do I approach making a change in the meeting behaviours?

You are passionate about the team working well together, so you want the approach to be decisive, constructive and beneficial for the team.

# A step into the perfect world

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Imagine that each person in the meeting has their voice heard. The ideas flow, the team build upon each other's ideas and are constructive in their challenges.

Everyone arrives on time; they give their full attention to the meeting and constantly demonstrate respect as they speak to each other.

And they do this with little or no intervention from the leader of the meeting.

# Not in That World yet?

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The problem is that we each have our own natural styles and preferences for how we behave in meetings, and sometimes these have become so automatic that, in the past, we haven't realised how we are behaving or how our behaviour is affecting others.

What we don't usually have is a set of clear expectations of meeting behaviours, designed to introduce the meeting culture we'd enjoy.

# 3 steps will take you closer

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Take the step of introducing meeting-behaviour expectations with the members of your meeting .

# 1.

**At the start of the meeting explain your meeting behaviour expectations, and describe them as rules. Explain their intended purpose: to help focus the group and achieve more from the time spent in the meetings.**

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# 2.

**Ask the meeting members to agree to keeping to the rules.**

**Check if there are other rules they feel will help.**

# 3.

**Ask the group to give each other permission to draw attention to any rules which are being broken.**

**When a rule is broken – draw attention to it immediately and constructively, making it clear that the desired outcome is to operate better as a group.**

**At the end of each meeting ask the group to reflect on which rules they will continue to maintain well, and which they will improve on next time they meet.**

# Meeting rules that work

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Create a large poster with your meeting rules – so that they are clearly visible to all the meeting members during the event.

This will keep them in the minds of the meeting members who can physically point to them when they want to draw attention to a helpful or not so helpful behaviour they have noticed.

The Meeting Rules on the following page are simple and have proven very effective in clearly setting expectations and improving meeting behaviours.

## Meeting Rules

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- **Stop digging in the past**
- **Don't argue**
- **Don't interrupt**
- **Don't be judgmental**
- **No personal attacks**
- **No outside interruptions, e.g. mobile phones**
- **Be punctual in arriving at the meeting location: respect your own and the other participants' time**

At the end of each meeting, note which behaviours are strong and should continue, and which behaviours the group want to improve. Ask the group to be specific about the improvement so that it is described positively: what the group wants to experience next time.

At the start of the next meeting, draw attention to the meeting rules again and remind the group of the strong behaviours they want to continue, and the improved behaviours they will be demonstrating at this meeting.

# Explain

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When first introducing the rules explain:

**Stop digging in the past** means it is ok to learn from the past as a way of taking the conversation forward, but not ok to stifle progress by repeatedly referring to what happened previously.

**Don't argue** means it is ok to have constructive and creative discussion and challenge, but not ok to simply swap disagreements like “yes it is”; “no it isn't.”

**Don't interrupt** means listen more. Raise a hand to signal you'd like to talk then listen to the speaker finishing.

**Don't be judgemental** means don't make decisions before you've heard all the information. We all say things for a reason, so ask for the reason someone is placing such importance on a subject, before you develop or communicate your own view.

**No personal attacks** means make the meeting a safe environment for everyone to express themselves. Don't use humour to disguise personal verbal attacks.

# Take action

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Now you are aware of how to improve meeting behaviours with some simple rules, you can begin to practice using this approach in the meetings you lead. Or consider inviting a facilitator to help you start.

## **And perhaps there is more you can do ... ?**

- Have you been frustrated by the behaviours in a meeting someone else is chairing?
- How could you use this simple set of rules to catalyse change in those behaviours for the benefit of the meeting outcomes?
- Will you feel you have permission to take constructive action immediately you recognise poor behaviours in a meeting, or will you work with the owner of the meeting to make change happen?

## **Finally, imagine how you will feel when you experience:**

- Each person in the meeting keeps to time commitments and has their voice heard.
- The members give their full attention to the meeting, build upon each other's ideas and are constructive in their challenges.
- Everyone demonstrates respect for each other.
- And on the rare occasions when there are exceptions to these behaviours, the meeting members remind each other of the behaviours they are committed to, and take ownership for making the necessary adjustment to get back on track.

## **The Author**

David M Smith is a Leadership Coach, Results Oriented Management Consultant and a Business Educator. He specialises in developing individuals and teams to achieve stretching results and change behaviours while strengthening a culture of innovation.

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## **About CCMR Consulting**

With the support of CCMR Consulting, leaders, teams and individuals achieve their purpose through personal development, disciplined focus, and enthusiasm for an enduring culture of innovation and excellence.

## **Where to find out more**

Talk to us at CCMR Consulting about designing and delivering a meeting facilitation package, or a coaching and education programme, to generate the results you need.

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