

Preparing a Meeting Agenda

Situation

You are leading a small team to prepare the agenda for a staff meeting.

Rational Objective

To create an agenda that will enable the group to deal with its upcoming issues and other items

Experiential Aim

To release anxiety and create anticipation about the meeting

The Beginning Point

The concrete beginning point for this conversation is an upcoming meeting and the people who will be involved.

The Conversation

Opening

We need to develop an agenda for the upcoming meeting, a list of items we need to deal with.

Objective Questions

What suggestions have we heard from the staff about agenda items?
What items are carried forward from the last meeting?
What do we think needs to be dealt with?

Reflective Questions

Which items are simply designed to pass on information?
Which items will be easy to deal with?
Which items will generate the most active discussion?
Which items require decisions at this meeting? Which do not?
Which items are designed to initiate thinking, planning or decision-making which will not be completed at this meeting?
Are there any items that could be best addressed in another way or a different setting?

Interpretive Questions

What do our answers reveal about the necessary agenda?
Which of the initial list belong to future meetings?
Which items can we deal with quickly?
Which will take more time?
Approximately how much time will be needed to deal with each item?
Are there items that need to be addressed first in order to deal with others?

Decisional Questions

So, what do these answers reveal about the order of the items?
What method will be most effective in dealing with each item? e.g., announcement, report, discussion, workshop?
Who will lead the meeting?
Is there anything else that needs attention relative to this meeting?

Closing

Clarify any assignments for preparation or leadership.

Hints

This format can be used to plan a staff meeting. The initial objective question may require a survey of participants or conversations with several people in order to generate a list. The length of the meeting is an important factor. A short meeting may consist of several brief items or a single item with a few important announcements. A longer meeting requires more careful orchestration. The organization may have developed an understanding of what kinds of items are appropriate to discuss in staff meetings. It will be important to consider the common understanding of the group in designing the discussion.

It is helpful to list the items on a flip chart as they are said, so that the group is dealing with one list.

Following is a possible scheduling rationale. It will be necessary to create a rationale that is appropriate for the group involved.

1. Welcome
2. Reports or presentations
3. Easy items to be brought to conclusion
4. A major workshop or discussion
5. New topics that require initial input or guidance
6. Announcements
7. A closing reflection.

Other Applications

While a staff meeting has been used as an example, this format can be used for many other kinds of meetings, such as service club dinners or church committee meetings.