AGENDA
SURVIVING MEETINGS
BOTH LEADERS AND MEMBERS
SEPTEMBER 14, 2011
1:00 – 2:00 P.M.
CP 700
JOHN BEDELL, PH.D.
S. IRENE MATZ, PH.D.

I. WELCOME

II. REVIEW .. PLANNING MEETINGS
   a. Pre-meeting preparations
   b. Meeting
   c. Post meeting

III. DISCUSSION
   a. What works and what doesn’t work

IV. ROLE PLAYING – KEEPING THE MEETING ON TARGET
   a. Dealing with diverse personalities.
      i. Silent
      ii. Loquacious
      iii. Keeping Focus

V. DISCUSSION

VI. CLOSE

Handout from: Excellence in Business Communication, Ninth Edition
(Thill, John V. & Bovée, Courtland L.)
SURVIVING MEETINGS
John Bedell, Ph.D.
S. Irene Matz, Ph.D.

PREPARATION
- Check out meeting room accommodations
  - Technical equipment
  - Room set up – table, chairs, tables
  - Obstacles
- Reserve room
- Send agenda and attachments to members before the meeting (one week)
  - Include: date, time and location
- Prepare name plates for members
- Have extra agendas and handouts available at the meeting
- Assign a minute taker/scribe

MEETING
- Quorum
- Begin meeting promptly
- Parliamentary procedure – Robert’s Rules of Order
- Agenda and goals for meeting
- Approval of minutes from previous meeting
- Old business
- New business
- Inclusiveness of all members
  - Encourage input from all members
    - i.e., I’m interested in hearing your thoughts and opinions;
      all voices are important and the least talkative may have the best idea
- Regulate the flow of conversation
  - Talkative members although important may block or discourage others
    from participating
    - i.e., thank you for your remarks, we have a lot to cover and need to
      move on
    - i.e., let’s hear from some of the other members
- Move through agenda in a timely manner
  - Encourage conversation if crucial and enhances the issue and agenda
  - Regulate the flow if conversation appears to be less meaningful

CLOSE
- Review meeting action items
  - Who is responsible for what
  - Goals accomplished
- Discuss time and location for next meeting if not determined

POST MEETING
- End of semester, send thank you letters or notes
  - Important for RTP file
  - Shows gratitude for their time and efforts
  - Encourages more participation for future committees
- Small gift
  - If not reimbursed by department of college, you can use as a write off
EXCELLENCE IN
BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION

Ninth Edition

John V. Thill
Courtland L. Bovée
are informal and “organic,” springing up and growing as employees connect with one another. In other companies, including Caterpillar, they are planned and managed in a more formal fashion. The huge advantage that social networking brings to these team efforts is in identifying the best people to collaborate on each problem or project, no matter where they are located around the world or what their official roles are in the organization.

**MAKING YOUR MEETINGS MORE PRODUCTIVE**

Well-run meetings can help you solve problems, develop ideas, and identify opportunities. Much of your workplace communication is likely to occur in small-group meetings; therefore, your ability to contribute to the company and to be recognized for those contributions will depend on your meeting skills.

Unfortunately, many meetings are unproductive. In one study, senior and middle managers reported that only 56 percent of their meetings were actually productive and that 25 percent of them could have been replaced by a phone call or a memo. The three most frequently reported problems with meetings are getting off the subject, not having an agenda, and running too long. You can help ensure productive meetings by preparing carefully, conducting meetings efficiently, and using meeting technologies wisely.

**Preparing for Meetings**

Careful preparation helps you avoid the two biggest meeting mistakes: (1) holding a meeting when a blog posting or some other message would do the job and (2) holding a meeting without a specific goal in mind. Before you even begin preparing for a meeting, make sure holding a meeting is truly necessary. Once you’re sure, proceed with four preparation tasks:

- **Identify your purpose.** *Informational meetings* involve sharing information and answering audience questions. *Decision-making meetings* involve persuasion, analysis, problem solving, and planning. Whatever your purpose, identify what the best possible result of the meeting would be (such as “we carefully evaluated all three product ideas and decided which one to invest in”). Use this hoped-for result to shape the direction and content of the meeting.

- **Select participants for the meeting.** Be sure to invite everyone who needs to participate—but don’t invite anyone who doesn’t need to be there. The more people you have, the longer it will take to reach consensus. Meetings with more than 10 or 12 people can become unmanageable if everyone is expected to participate in the discussion and decision making.

- **Choose the time and prepare the facility.** Morning meetings can be more productive than afternoon sessions because people are fresher and not yet involved in the various problems and concerns of their working days. After selecting the time, plan the facility and layout carefully. For instance, if you want to encourage interaction, arranging chairs in a circle or U-shape is more effective than seating in rows. Plus, give some attention to details such as room temperature, lighting, ventilation, acoustics, and refreshments; any of these details can make or break a meeting. If the meeting will take place online, you need to consider a variety of other factors (see page 459).

- **Set the agenda.** The success of a meeting depends on the preparation of the participants. Distribute a carefully written agenda to participants, giving them enough time to prepare as needed (see Figure 2.4 on the next page). A productive agenda answers three key questions: (1) What do we need to do in this meeting to accomplish our goals? (2) What issues will be of greatest importance to all participants? (3) What information must be available in order to discuss these issues?
FIGURE 2.4 Typical Meeting Agenda
Agenda formats vary widely, depending on the complexity of the meeting and the presentation technologies that will be used. For an online meeting, for instance, a good approach is to first send a detailed planning agenda in advance of the meeting so that presenters know what they need to prepare. You can then create a simpler display agenda, similar to this one, to guide the progress of the meeting.

Conducting and Contributing to Efficient Meetings
Everyone in a meeting shares the responsibility for making the meeting productive. If you’re the designated leader of a meeting, however, you have an extra degree of responsibility and accountability. To ensure productive meetings, be sure to do the following:

• **Keep the discussion on track.** A good meeting leader draws out the best ideas the group has to offer and resolves differences of opinion while maintaining progress toward achieving the meeting’s purpose and staying on schedule.

• **Follow agreed-upon rules.** The larger the meeting, the more formal you need to be to maintain order. Formal meetings use parliamentary procedure, a time-tested method for planning and running effective meetings. The best-known guide to this procedure is Robert’s Rules of Order.

• **Encourage participation.** On occasion, some participants will be too quiet and others too talkative. The quiet participants may be shy, they may be expressing disagreement or resistance, or they may be working on unrelated tasks. Draw them out by asking for their input on issues that pertain to them.

• **Participate actively.** If you’re a meeting participant, try to contribute to both the subject of the meeting and the smooth interaction of the group. Speak up if you have something useful to say, but don’t monopolize the discussion or talk simply to bring attention to yourself.
CHECKLIST: Improving Meeting Productivity

A. Prepare carefully.
   - Make sure the meeting is necessary.
   - Decide on your purpose.
   - Select participants carefully.
   - Choose the time and prepare the facility.
   - Establish and distribute a clear agenda.

B. Lead effectively and participate fully.
   - Keep the meeting on track.
   - Follow agreed-upon rules.
   - Encourage participation.
   - Participate actively.
   - Close effectively.

Close effectively. At the conclusion of the meeting, verify that the objectives have been met or arrange for follow-up work, if needed. Summarize either the general conclusion of the discussion or the actions to be taken. Make sure all participants have a chance to clear up any misunderstandings.

To review the tasks that contribute to productive meetings, refer to “Checklist: Improving Meeting Productivity.”

For formal meetings, it’s good practice to appoint one person to record the minutes, a summary of the important information presented and the decisions made during a meeting. In smaller or informal meetings, attendees often make their own notes on their copies of the agenda. In either case, a clear record of the decisions made and the people responsible for follow-up action is essential. If your company doesn’t have a specific format for minutes, follow the generic format shown in Figure 2.5 on the next page.

Using Meeting Technologies

You can expect to use a variety of meeting-related technologies throughout your career. In some instances, technology is used to promote interaction among participants in the same location, such as electronic whiteboards that can print or e-mail information recorded on them during a meeting and a variety of electronic presentation tools (see Chapter 14).

The focus of most meeting technologies is to enable participation among people in two or more locations. These technologies have spurred the emergence of virtual teams, whose members work in different locations and interact electronically in virtual meetings.

The simplest of the long-distance meeting tools provide communication through a single medium, such as audio teleconferencing, in which three or more people are connected by phone simultaneously. IM chat sessions can also serve as virtual meetings, with people participating by typing instead of talking.

Videoconferencing combines audio communication with live video, letting team members see each other, demonstrate products, and transmit other visual information. Videoconferencing can take place using PC-based systems over the web or through dedicated networks with specially built rooms. The most advanced systems feature telepresence, in which the interaction feels so lifelike that participants can forget that the person “sitting” on the other side of the table is actually in another city.

Web-based meeting systems combine the best of IM, shared workspaces, and videoconferencing with other tools such as virtual
FIGURE 2.5 Typical Minutes of a Meeting

Intranets and blogs are commonly used to distribute meeting minutes. The specific format of minutes is less important than making sure you record all the key information, particularly regarding responsibilities assigned during the meeting. No matter what medium is used, key elements of meeting minutes include a list of those present and a list of those who were invited but didn’t attend, followed by the times the meeting started and ended, all major decisions reached at the meeting, all assignments of tasks to meeting participants, and all subjects that were deferred to a later meeting. Minutes objectively summarize important discussions, noting the names of those who contributed major points. Outlines, subheadings, and lists help organize the minutes; additional documentation is noted in the minutes and attached.

whiteboards that let teams collaborate in real time (see Figure 2.6). Using such systems, attendees can log on from almost anywhere in the world.

Technology continues to create intriguing opportunities for online interaction. For instance, one of the newest virtual tools is online brainstorming, in which companies conduct “idea campaigns” to generate new ideas from people across the organization. These range from small team meetings to huge events such as IBM’s giant InnovationJam, in which 100,000 IBM employees, family members, and customers from 160 countries were invited to brainstorm online for three days.43

Companies are also beginning to experiment with virtual meetings and other communication activities in virtual worlds, most notably Second Life (www.secondlife.com).
FIGURE 2.6 Web-Based Meetings
You can expect to participate in many online meetings during your career. Web-based meeting systems offer powerful tools for communication, and you need to be proficient at using these tools to be effective during online meetings.

Features
- Live Video and Audio
- PowerPoint™ Slideshow Presentations
- Interactive Text Chat
- Multi-way Video/Audio Conferencing
- Hand-Raising - Real-time Interactive Polling
- Recording/Hosting with 24 hr. On-Demand Viewing
- Resizable & Customizable Interface
- Web-based Account Management System
- Automated E-mail Invitations
- Personalized website meeting address

the same way that gamers can create and control characters (often known as avatars) in a multiplayer video game, professionals can create online versions of themselves to participate in meetings, training sessions, sales presentations, and other activities (see Figure 2.7). To learn more about business communication in Second Life, you can read the Business Communicators of Second Life blog at http://freshtakes.typepad.com/sl_communicators.

For the latest information on meeting technologies, visit http://real-timeupdates.com/ebc and click on Chapter 2.

IMPROVING YOUR LISTENING SKILLS
Effective listening strengthens organizational relationships, enhances product delivery, alerts an organization to opportunities for innovation, and allows an organization to manage diversity both in the workforce and in the customers it serves.44 Companies whose employees and managers listen effectively stay in touch, up to date, and out of trouble. Some 80 percent of top executives say that listening is the most important skill needed to get things done in the workplace.45 In fact, many of the leading business schools in the United States have begun retooling their curricula in recent years to put more emphasis on “soft skills” such as listening.46

Poor listening skills can cost companies millions of dollars a year as a result of lost opportunities, legal mistakes, and other errors. Effective listening is vital to the process of building trust not only between organizations but also between individuals.47 Throughout your career, effective listening will give you a competitive edge, enhancing your performance and thus the influence you have within your company and your industry.
Recognizing Various Types of Listening

Effective listeners recognize several types of listening and choose the best approach for each situation. The primary goal of content listening is to understand and retain the speaker’s message. Because you’re not evaluating the information at this point, it doesn’t matter whether you agree or disagree, approve or disapprove—only that you understand. Try to overlook the speaker’s style and any limitations in the presentation; just focus on the information.48

The goal of critical listening is to understand and evaluate the meaning of the speaker’s message on several levels: the logic of the argument, the strength of the evidence, the validity of the conclusions, the implications of the message, the speaker’s intentions and motives, and the omission of any important or relevant points. If you’re skeptical, ask questions to explore the speaker’s point of view and credibility. Be on the lookout for bias that could color the way the information is presented and be careful to separate opinions from facts.49

The goal of empathic listening is to understand the speaker’s feelings, needs, and wants so that you can appreciate his or her point of view, regardless of whether you share that perspective. By listening with empathy, you help the individual vent the emotions that prevent a calm, clear-headed approach to the subject. Avoid the temptation to jump in with advice unless the person specifically asks for it. Also, don’t judge the speaker’s feelings and don’t try to tell people they shouldn’t feel this or that emotion. Instead, let the speaker know that you appreciate his or her feelings and understand the situation. After you establish that connection, you can help the speaker move on to search for a solution.50

No matter what mode they are using at any given time, effective listeners try to engage in active listening, making a conscious effort to turn off their own filters and biases to truly
hear and understand what the other party is saying. They ask questions to verify key points and encourage the speaker through positive body language.31

Understanding the Listening Process

Listening is a far more complex process than most people think—and most of us aren’t very good at it. People typically listen at no better than a 25 percent efficiency rate, remember only about half of what’s said during a 10-minute conversation, and forget half of that within 48 hours.52 Furthermore, when questioned about material they’ve just heard, they are likely to get the facts mixed up.53

Listening follows the same sequence as the general communication process model described in Chapter 1 (page 11), with the added challenge that it happens in real time. To listen effectively, you need to successfully complete five separate steps.54

1. Receiving. You start by physically hearing the message and acknowledging it. Physical reception can be blocked by noise, impaired hearing, or inattention. Some experts also include nonverbal messages as part of this stage because these factors influence the listening process as well.

2. Decoding. Your next step is to assign meaning to sounds, which you do according to your own values, beliefs, ideas, expectations, roles, needs, and personal history.

3. Remembering. Before you can act on the information, you need to store it for future processing. As you learned in Chapter 1, incoming messages must first be captured in short-term memory before being transferred to long-term memory for more permanent storage.

4. Evaluating. Your next step is to evaluate the message by applying critical thinking skills to separate fact from opinion and evaluate the quality of the evidence.

5. Responding. After you’ve evaluated the speaker’s message, you react. If you’re communicating one-on-one or in a small group, the initial response generally takes the form of verbal feedback. If you’re one of many in an audience, your initial response may take the form of applause, laughter, or silence. Later on, you may act on what you have heard.

If any one of these steps breaks down, the listening process becomes less effective or even fails entirely. As both a sender and a receiver, you can reduce the failure rate by recognizing and overcoming a variety of physical and mental barriers to effective listening.

Overcoming Barriers to Effective Listening

Good listeners look for ways to overcome potential barriers throughout the listening process (see Table 2.3). Selective listening is one of the most common barriers to effective listening. If your mind wanders, you may stay tuned out until you hear a word or phrase that gets your attention again. But by that time, you’re unable to recall what the speaker actually said; instead, you remember what you think the speaker probably said.55

One reason listeners’ minds tend to wander is that people think faster than they speak. Most people speak at about 120 to 150 words per minute, but listeners can process audio information at up to 500 words per minute.56 In other words, your brain has a lot of free time whenever you’re listening, and if you don’t focus, it will find a thousand other things to think about.

Overcoming interpretation barriers can be difficult because you may not even be aware of them. As Chapter 1 notes, selective perception leads listeners to mold messages to fit their own conceptual frameworks. Listeners sometimes make up their minds before fully hearing the speaker’s message, or they engage in defensive listening—protecting their self-esteem by tuning out anything that doesn’t confirm their view of themselves.

Overcoming memory barriers is a comparatively easy problem to solve, but it takes some work. One simple rule is: Don’t count on your memory. If the information is crucial,
### TABLE 2.3 What Makes an Effective Listener?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EFFECTIVE LISTENERS</th>
<th>INEFFECTIVE LISTENERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Listen actively.</td>
<td>• Listen passively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Take careful and complete notes.</td>
<td>• Take no notes or ineffective notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make frequent eye contact with the speaker (depending on the culture).</td>
<td>• Make little or no eye contact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stay focused on the speaker and the content.</td>
<td>• Allow their minds to wander; are easily distracted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mentally paraphrase key points to maintain attention level and ensure comprehension.</td>
<td>• Fail to paraphrase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adjust listening style to the situation.</td>
<td>• Listen with the same style, regardless of the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Give the speaker nonverbal cues (such as nodding to show agreement or raising eyebrows to show surprise or skepticism).</td>
<td>• Fail to give the speaker nonverbal feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Save questions or points of disagreement until an appropriate time.</td>
<td>• Interrupt whenever they disagree or don’t understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Overlook stylistic differences and focus on the speaker’s message.</td>
<td>• Are distracted by or unduly influenced by stylistic differences; are judgmental.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make distinctions between main points and supporting details.</td>
<td>• Are unable to distinguish main points from details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Look for opportunities to learn.</td>
<td>• Assume that they already know everything that’s important to know.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**REAL-TIME UPDATES**

**Learn More**

Are you a good listener?

Most of us believe we are good listeners, but frequent communication breakdowns in business and personal settings are evidence that we could all improve. This video can help. Go to [http://real-timeupdates.com/sbc](http://real-timeupdates.com/sbc) and click on “Learn More.” If you are using mycocommlab, you can access Real-Time Updates within each chapter or under Student Study Tools.

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**CHECKLIST: Overcoming Barriers to Effective Listening**

- Control whatever barriers to physical reception you can (such as avoiding interrupting speakers by asking questions or by exhibiting disruptive nonverbal behaviors).
- Avoid selective listening by focusing on the speaker and carefully analyzing what you hear.
- Keep an open mind by avoiding any prejudgment and by not listening defensively.
- Try to paraphrase the speaker’s ideas, giving that person a chance to confirm or correct your interpretation.
- Don’t count on your memory; write down or record important information.
- Improve your short-term memory by repeating information or breaking it into shorter lists.
- Improve your long-term memory by using association, categorization, visualization, and mnemonics.