Training & Executive Coaching on:
- Building Better Decision Making Bodies
- Making Meetings Work Better
- Demystifying the Rules of Order
- Minute Taking Standards

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- "101 Boardroom Problems & How to Solve Them"
- "The Guide to Better Meetings – NPO Directors"
- "Mina’s Guide to Minute Taking"

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“101 Boardroom Problems & How to Solve Them”

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2013
1. Goals of Shared Decision-Making

The overall goals of shared decision-making are to achieve quality decisions, to achieve them together, and to do so at a comfortable pace (not too fast, nor too slowly).

Substantively, a collective decision should be:

- Proactive (advancing the mission, vision and strategic plan).
- Balanced, fair and objective (balancing legitimate needs and interests).
- Informed (Taking into account professional expertise and member input).
- Realistic and affordable.
- Legal and enforceable.
- Smart and creative.

Process-wise, a decision-making process should be:

- Measured and gradual: Sufficient time is allocated to scrutinizing proposals.
- Efficient: The decision is reached within a reasonable amount of time.
- Inclusive and transparent: Members are engaged in the process as active partners. The community is kept informed (early, and not just after the fact), and – where required or prudent - is invited to comment or help shape the decision in some way. Inclusiveness tends to improve the quality of a decision, boost support for it, and reduce opposition to it.

Team Dysfunctions

A team dysfunction is a personal behavior or systemic condition that reduces a team’s ability to make quality decisions, together, and at a comfortable pace. Examples:

1. A rush
2. No preparation for meetings
3. Motions phrased “on the fly”
4. Pre-meeting promises
5. Short tempers
6. Late start & late arrivals
7. Laptops, blackberries and cell phones in meetings
8. Leaking confidential data
9. Too many items behind closed doors
10. Withholding feedback
2. Potential Vision for an Organization

1. **The organization**: A clearly focused and highly relevant organization, which is reputable for delivering quality services/products to its community and stakeholders. It adapts to reality and makes necessary changes in a measured yet timely manner. Its mission is clear, compelling, and relevant to current realities.

2. **Structure**: The governance structure (Board, committees, administration) is effective and efficient, with a clear and logical allocation of decision-making powers. The structure provides checks and balances to ensure accountability, but without stifling progress.

3. **Culture**: The organization is knowledge-driven and draws on the wisdom and talents available among its members, leaders, staff and partners. It has a culture that values, demands and rewards excellence, service orientation, appetite for learning, team work, honesty, democracy, transparency and accountability. Trust is abundant, but no one takes it for granted.

4. **Community**: Citizens/members/shareholders served by the Board are engaged and committed to the organization’s mandate. They expect excellence from elected leaders and do not tolerate dysfunction. They shift their focus from self interest (entitlement-based) to collective interests, from short term to long term goals, and from material values to holistic values.

5. **Leadership**: The Board is fully dedicated to its mission. It is educated, informed, and cohesive, and is solidly committed to knowledge-based decisions. Board leaders are selected with care, based on their knowledge, skills, attitude, ability to work as team members, and an unwavering commitment to the organization’s mission. They receive the orientation, continuing education, and necessary feedback to help them excel as leaders.

6. **Management and Staff**: Day to day operations are carried out by competent staff. The organization attracts and retains executives, managers and staff who are effective, efficient and passionate about the organization and its mission, and who work as partners in a cohesive staff team. It maintains a safe and supportive work environment that encourages staff to excel.

7. **Stakeholders**: The organization is reputable and well respected within the field/industry and among government agencies for the quality of its work. It maintains strategic alliances with external stakeholders, to collaborate in advancing its mission.

8. **Funding**: A successful business model is in place which assures the organization of steady and sustainable funding and optimizes the use of resources. The organization is fiscally prudent and spends money in a smart manner that optimizes the delivery of its mandate.

9. **Holistic Approach**: Multiple bottom lines are achieved: social, environmental, financial, and others. Short term goals are balanced with a long term outlook. Every partner in decision-making places the organization’s interests ahead of personal or constituency interests.

10. **Decision-Making**: Meetings and decision-making processes are effective, efficient and strategically-driven, and lead to knowledge-based decisions. Everyone understands the decision-making process, respects it, and is prepared to defend it when needed. There is little or no tolerance of dysfunctions, especially when they increase risk and diminish effectiveness. Performance is monitored and evaluated and constructive feedback is exchanged regularly.
3. DECISION-MAKING PARAMETERS

Decision Making Models
1. General agreement (consensus): The decision is made collectively, after discussions of all relevant facts. Efforts are made to accommodate legitimate concerns before the decision is finalized. If unanimous support is not achieved, the group reverts to the majority-based model, and dissenting members agree to “live with” the decision.

2. Majority-based: Under this model, a decision is made by a formal vote, on the basis of “one-person-one-vote.” If a majority (more votes in favor than against) is obtained, the proposal is approved. If not, the proposal is defeated.

3. Unilateral action: The team’s leader or another individual may assume or be delegated the authority to take unilateral action in specific areas.

Balancing Constituency and Organizational Interests
Members of a decision making body who represent a constituency must remember that their primary duty is to serve the organization as a whole, and place its interests ahead of any other interests. They should proceed as follows:
- Share knowledge, insights and ideas from their constituent units.
- Listen to other views, with the full organization in mind.
- Vote with the interests of the organization as a whole, even if and when they may conflict or compete with those of the individual’s own constituent unit.
- The group’s decisions should be reported back to constituent units. An objective summary of the debate may be helpful in the case of a complex or controversial decision.

Duty to Accept Collective Decisions
In a well functioning group, decisions are based on knowledge and are often reached by consensus, after all relevant views and facts are considered.

When achieving unanimity is not possible, a formal vote may be needed to bring closure to an issue. In such instances, there will be a “winning side” (a majority) and a “losing side” (a minority). It should be clear that, once a decision is made, it is not a majority decision anymore. It is a collective decision, and the minority is duty bound to accept it as a legitimate decision and move on. If there is a need to revisit the decision later, individuals should do this within established processes.
4. ASSESSING A DECISION MAKING BODY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ineffective Team (0 means “as bad as it can get”)</th>
<th>Effective Team (score up to 10 points for each row)</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bogged down in small details.</td>
<td>Maintains broad focus and perspective. Operates “from the balcony” and not “the ground floor”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragmented and adversarial and driven by personal or narrow agendas, ignorance, fear, impatience and emotion.</td>
<td>Cohesive and collaborative and driven by the organization’s broad interests; knowledgeable, sophisticated, calm, confident and balanced.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerless, reactive, crisis driven.</td>
<td>Creates a clear vision of the future and is busy making it a reality; “Heads in the sky, but feet firmly on the ground”. Proactive, empowered.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Win-lose culture: “you against me”; Decisions are often forced by narrow majorities.</td>
<td>Win-win culture, “You and me against the problem”. Decisions are broadly supported and are usually reached by much more than narrow majorities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members advocate their own positions and don’t listen to others.</td>
<td>Members listen much more than they speak: “We were given two ears and one mouth, and we should use them in that proportion”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow pace, monotony, boredom. Routine, predictable and menial work.</td>
<td>Dynamic and engaging pace. Exciting progress made. Freshness maintained; Excellence and high quality work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low commitment levels. Members often have plenty of reasons, excuses and apologies for not keeping promises or missing meetings.</td>
<td>High commitment levels. Members keep their promises and deliver quality work. Reasons and excuses are replaced by RESULTS.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embracing the status quo and always playing “devil’s advocate”. The critics (opponents) outnumber the creators (proponents).</td>
<td>Being prepared to question the status quo and examine new or unusual ideas with an open mind. The creators outnumber the critics.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A sense of duty and obligation. Members are there because they “have to” be there.</td>
<td>A genuine enthusiasm and commitment for the job. Members are there because they truly “want to” be there.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members dread meetings and see them as “suffering and pain”.</td>
<td>Meetings are varied and engaging and are rarely missed. “Suffering is optional”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GRAND TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>Add up the numbers on the right hand column. Minimum = 0. Maximum = 100.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0 to 50: Dysfunctional  
51 to 70: Functional  
71 to 90: Effective  
91 to 100: Excellent
5. **PLEDGES FOR MEMBERS**

After each meeting, members should assess their participation in it. Score 0 to 10 on each of the following 10 questions and add up the numbers (total of 0 to 100).

1. I am guided by our mandate and mission, strategic plan, and core values. In words and in actions, I support the best interests of the organization and seek to make it successful.

2. I serve as an informed, objective, mature, level-headed, principled, trust-worthy and constructive leader and partner in decision making. I share my knowledge willingly, and also listen to and learn from my colleagues, our staff and advisors, and others.

3. I prepare fully for meetings, perform my pre-meeting duties with excellence, maintain consistent attendance, arrive on time, and am there for the full duration of meetings, in body and in spirit.

4. When speaking in discussions, I keep my comments clear, on topic, concise and to the point. I avoid an emotional or personal tone, and I help keep the meeting environment safe. I communicate in a manner that makes it easy to listen and learn from me, and I do not place any barriers in front of my input.

5. I do not hesitate to constructively and respectfully raise tough but necessary questions or points. When I observe a dysfunction, I do not hesitate to propose a needed change.

6. In words and in deeds, I treat my colleagues as valued partners in decision making. I seek to boost each of them, regardless of how much I agree or disagree with their views, regardless of any annoying habits they may be displaying, and regardless of how much I like or dislike them as people. Instead of speaking negatively ABOUT them, I speak TO them and share feedback.

7. I abandon my judgments and assumptions. I give others the benefit of the doubt and resist the temptation to interpret their actions or inactions as malicious or misguided.

8. I welcome feedback and listen to it with an open mind. I keep a thick skin and leave my ego behind when on organizational duties. I share constructive feedback with others.

9. I place the organization’s interests (short and long term) ahead of personal or other interests. I disclose conflicts of interests in a timely fashion.

10. Post-meeting ethics: I accept majority decisions as collective decisions, and I maintain confidentiality when required to do so.

6. **INFLUENCING THE SELECTION OF MEMBERS**

- Inform voting members of the positions that need to be filled. Explain the group’s mandate, required time commitment, roles and responsibilities, and the code of conduct. Then invite members to send nominations by a specified deadline.

- In parallel with this open process, approach qualified individuals and encourage them to run for office. Try to include some incumbents on your proposed slate, for continuity, and some newcomers, for a fresh perspective. Look for individuals with leadership potential who could take over if an incumbent officer is unable to serve.

- If an election is held at a general meeting of the voting members (as opposed to an election by ballot), nominations from the floor are usually permitted (unless the bylaws prohibit them). Nominees should be given an opportunity to address the group.
7. ORIENTATION OF MEMBERS
An orientation program should be in place to help new elected members gain an appreciation of the team’s work. Consider the following ideas:

- A pre-election orientation: Prospective nominees can be encouraged to review the orientation package before deciding whether to run for office.
- An orientation manual: It is good practice to have the parameters and policies relating to the group’s work documented in an orientation manual. Roles and responsibilities of should be clearly articulated in such a manual. Such a manual should be given to every member and should be updated on a regular basis.
- A formal orientation session: Dedicate a meeting to discussing the group’s mandate, roles and responsibilities of members, relationships with staff and stakeholders, and conflict of interest and confidentiality guidelines. Both new and continuing members should attend such a meeting (to build a sense of cohesion among all members).
- A formal commitment: New members may be required to formally affirm that they will comply with a code of ethics, conflict of interest and confidentiality guidelines, and other policies (verbally and, in some cases, in writing).
- Refresher programs: A refresher program should be run at least once a year, to remind members of standards and policies, and to introduce new information.
- A mentoring program should be considered, whereby a new member receives guidance and support from an experienced member.

8. TRAITS OF AN EFFECTIVE CHAIR
1. Sets the tone and direction: Knows the group’s mandate and is firmly entrenched in it; Knows members, brings the best in them, and capitalizes on their skills and expertise.
2. Able to delegate and share control: Is prepared to let go of control and delegate important leadership tasks to others (a good succession planner).
3. Proactive and visionary: Identifies not only what should be prevented, but also what should be created; Takes initiative and makes things happen. Deals proactively with emerging disputes instead of ignoring them and hoping they will somehow vanish.
4. A mentor, coach and team builder: Challenges each individual to excel, overcome self-imposed limitations and contribute as a member of a cohesive team.
5. Humble and eager to learn: Listens and is genuinely interested in hearing what others have to offer; Invites and welcomes feedback.
6. Courageous and able to say “no” respectfully but firmly: Shows sensitivity and respect to individuals, but stands firm on objective principles.
7. Majority-driven: Balances the rights of individuals to be heard with the right of the team to make progress.
8. Objective: Is able to maintain a broad perspective on issues; Guided by the broad interests of the organization and not by personal or narrow interests.
9. Articulate: Is able to communicate clearly, concisely and convincingly.
10. Light hearted and ego-free: Is not driven by an ego and has a healthy but appropriate sense of humor: “Take yourself lightly, but take your work seriously.”
9. CEO AND STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In organizations with enough paid staff, the Board is usually expected to function in a hands-off fashion. The following principles should be considered:

a) The Board formulates policies and broad strategic goals, focuses on decisions that it is legally required to make, and oversees the administration. The CEO implements the Board orders and policies and leads Management and Staff. Put differently, the Board governs from the balcony, and the CEO manages from the ground floor.

b) For clarity, the Board’s governance roles typically consists of:
   I. Establishing a vision and broad strategic priorities
   II. Establishing policies
   III. CEO oversight
   IV. Fiduciary (protecting the organization’s assets)
   V. Providing high level leadership and representation to the community

c) The Board should generally interact only with the CEO. The CEO should generally take directions from the Board as a collective entity, and not from its individual members. Requests by Board members during meetings should not be treated as Board orders, unless they are introduced as motions and voted on (especially when they require substantial staff time to implement).

d) Staff members should generally be accountable to and take directions from the CEO or their own managers, going through the established chain of command. They should generally not receive directions from the Board or from individual members, although they may need to be in communication with them.

e) It is the duty of the CEO and Management to create a safe and harassment-free environment in which staff can excel in serving the organization.

f) Outside Board meetings, a Board member has no more authority than any individual from the community, except when that Board member was delegated certain duties or powers by the Board. Individual members must not interfere with the work of staff members nor bully or harass them.

Board-Management Dysfunctions
1. Micromanagement and time spent on operational minutiae
2. Violating the management and staff “chain of command”
3. Bullying, threats and harassment (during and away from meetings)
4. Refusing to follow professional advice and then claiming it was not given
5. Tolerating attacks on staff
6. Too little or too much trust between the Board and Management; “Rubberstamping”
7. Management giving “political” or “politically-colored” advice
8. The Board or Management withholding feedback
10. COMMITTEES
Committees are usually established by and are accountable to the governing body. Committees operate under terms of reference defined by the governing body. Questions to consider:

- Is the committee composed of the most suitable individuals?
- Does the committee include only Board Members or others?
- How should the committee chair be chosen?
- Are the committee’s terms of reference clearly defined?
- On what matters will the committee offer advice?
- What can be done to avoid a committee exceeding its mandate?
- Is it clear when a committee mandate will end?

11. INTERACTIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY (Public Bodies)
Desirable traits of a community consultation program:

- Clear (advisory nature?)
- Logical (knowing when to consult, when to stop consulting, and when not to consult at all)
- Genuine, meaningful (early warnings & early engagement)
- Truly representative
- Proactive, deliberate, continued (a process, not a single event)
- Diverse
- Principled (shifting from narrow interests to broad community interests)
- Informed: “Educate before you engage”

Comment on the following behaviours by Council/Board members during meetings:
1. Nodding enthusiastically or frowning when a citizen addresses the group.
2. Staring at the ceiling or the floor, or leaning backwards.
3. Coming to a meeting in jeans, shorts or gym outfit.
4. Asking leading questions of a presenter.
5. Arguing with a presenter.
6. Interrupting a presenter without a compelling reason.
7. Making a promise to the presenter before hearing all the facts (or before taking a vote).
8. Referring to people on a first name basis.
9. Publicly insulting a staff member.
10. Giving staff members orders (not formally sanctioned by the Council/Board).

Comment on the following behaviours by the public during public meetings:
1. A citizen shouts out his opinion about an agenda item or calls a “point of order.”
2. There is applause and heckling in response to comments.
3. During a public input segment, a presenter speaks “forever.”
4. A presenter becomes irate and abusive.
5. A presenter introduces irrelevant information.
6. A presenter threatens dire consequences if his or her wishes are not followed.
7. A presenter threatens to campaign against the Council/Board at the next election.
8. A presenter directs profanity or verbal abuse at a group member or staff.

Comment on the following situations outside/before Council/Board meetings:
1. A citizen corners an elected official after a meeting and tries to “squeeze” a promise.
2. A media reporter asks an elected official how the Council/Board will vote on an issue.
3. Elected members engage in an e-mail “war of words” with other members or staff.
4. Elected members enter debate in a chat room, wanting to “set the record straight.”
5. Elected members speculate on what the Council/Board might do.
6. Just prior to a public hearing, the Mayor warmly greets and hugs his developer friend.
12. CONFLICT OF INTEREST GUIDELINES
Conflict of Interest (COI) guidelines are intended to protect the integrity of the decision making process. They exclude from discussions individuals whose ability to act objectively may be impaired by personal interest. Such guidelines would increase the likelihood that decisions will be objective, balanced and fair to all affected parties.

It should be noted that holding a strong view or being a member of a group or a region that may be affected by a decision may not by itself be a personal COI.

A decision maker who believes she or he has a personal COI should proceed as follows
- Declare the COI immediately upon becoming aware of it.
- Leave the meeting when the issue is discussed, to avoid the possibility of influencing other members in any way.
- Avoid influencing the decision in any way (at the meeting or outside the meeting).
- It is good practice to record in the minutes the fact that a member declared a COI and was absent while the issue was discussed.

A member who is not sure whether he or she has a real or potential conflict of interest, should declare this concern and seek feedback or, if needed, legal advice.

13. CONFIDENTIALITY GUIDELINES
Generally there should be transparency and ease of access to most documents, especially in a public or membership based organization. However, there are times when it is necessary to place risk management ahead of transparency and discuss sensitive issues in a closed meeting.

A typical complaint is that some decision-making bodies keep too much information confidential and conduct too much business behind closed doors.

Usually, confidentiality is intended to achieve one of two purposes:
- Protect the organization, its operations, economic interests, and delivery of its mandate from harm that could result from the release of certain information.
- Protect individuals when the release of certain information would be an unreasonable invasion of their personal privacy.

There are certain areas that are often deemed to justify keeping documents confidential, e.g.:
- The security of the property of the organization.
- The disclosure of intimate, personal or financial details in respect to a person.
- The acquisition or disposition of property.
- Decisions with respect to negotiations with employees.
- Litigation affecting the organization.

Minutes of closed (in-camera) meetings should be kept confidential. They should focus on the decisions made and not on what each person present said.

14. MINUTES
Minutes are a historical record of a meeting’s deliberations and decision-making processes, focusing primarily on what was done by the group (collectively) and not on what each member said or did. Verbatim minutes should be avoided, unless required for legal reasons. Alternatively, the group should have “decisions-only” minutes or “anecdotal” minutes (which capture the key points made, with minimal or no attribution of comments to individuals).
A meeting is a gathering to discuss business and reach decisions jointly. The following ten ingredients characterize an effective meeting:

- **Clarity** of mandate, purpose, issues, and process.

- **Participation protocol and etiquette**: Only one person speaks at a time. Interruptions (verbal or non-verbal) are kept to the necessary minimum. A courteous, civilized and respectful tone is maintained. Discussions are focused on issues, not personalities.

- **Productivity and forward movement**: Discussion progresses along a pre-defined agenda, in an efficient and timely manner. For the sake of follow-up, good minutes are taken.

- **Flexibility and room for creative thinking**: Meeting structures (agendas and rules) are used in a flexible manner, to accommodate and promote creativity and open discussion rather than stifle them.

- **Quality**: Informed and in-depth discussions take place, leading to meaningful outcomes and thoughtful decisions.

- **Balance and inclusion**: All members are given an equal opportunity to participate. Dominated discussions are avoided.

- **Openness and Collaboration**: Listening takes place, and members work together towards a common goal; Members are open to changing their views based on the discussion; Debates are "personality-neutral": hard on the issues, soft on the people.

- **Shared responsibility**: Everyone (and not only the leader) takes responsibility for the success of the process; Finger pointing is minimized; Promises are kept and assigned tasks are completed.

- **Variety and a light touch**: The meeting’s pace and activities are varied, to make it more engaging, interesting, and enticing to attend. A light touch is introduced when appropriate: "Take yourself lightly and your work seriously".

- **Logistical support**: Logistical details are managed proactively and professionally, to allow for an optimal use of time at the meeting.
16. DESIGNING AGENDAS

The agenda is usually drawn up by the Chair and the staff, with input from the group’s members. When designing an agenda for a meeting, consider these factors:

- **Purpose**: The agenda should be designed with the purpose of the meeting and the mandate of the group in mind.

- **Agenda items, reports**: A list of agenda items should be prepared. Most items should be pre-scheduled, with last minute items being the exception, not the norm. Reports should be circulated (and read) before the meeting, be “reader-friendly” and action-oriented. At the meeting, only the key points and proposed actions need to be discussed. Consider adding items of a strategic and proactive nature, to make the meeting more interesting and meaningful (some groups tie every agenda item to an element of their strategic plan).

- **Sequence**: The issues should be arranged into a logical sequence. Routine and non-controversial items are typically (but not always) scheduled early. Related items should be grouped together. It may be desirable to insert “lighter” items between “heavier” items.

- **Scope**: The number of items on the agenda should be reasonable, to help ensure that each of them can receive proper attention within the available time.

- **Time per issue**: Estimate how much time will be required for each main issue or category of business, and “budget” time accordingly.

- **Time frame**: Consider a timed agenda, with opening and closing times, and interim milestones (including breaks). Plan to start on time and end on time (or early). Deviations from the agreed time should be negotiated, not dictated.

Here is an example of a timed agenda:

7 pm: Call to order, Opening remarks  
Approval of minutes  
Reports, questions & discussion:  
  Finance  
  Personnel  
  Jack Edwards  
  Edith Jones
8:00: Unfinished business: New computer  
8:20: Refreshment break
8:30: New Business:  
  Staff recognition program  
  Other new business  
  Joan Smith
8:50: “Visionary/proactive” components
9:20: General feedback (meeting evaluation)
9:30: (or sooner): Adjournment
17. CHAIR’S ROLES DURING MEETINGS

An effective meeting chair directs the discussions in a fair and efficient manner. The chair’s challenge is to create a balance whereby people are accommodated, time constraints are complied with, and issues are addressed.

An effective chair assumes the following roles:

- **Setting the tone, guidelines and direction for the meeting**, with the group’s support.

- **Deciding who speaks next**, usually on a "first-come-first-served" basis; going by the person who raises the hand first, and not by the person who raises the voice first.

- **Keeping the meeting on track**: reminding "digressing" members what item is being considered; repeating the proposal under discussion from time to time.

- **Keeping the meeting on time**: establishing time limits and a time frame, in consultation with the participants; watching progress versus time frame and reminding participants of time constraints; asking "long winded" members to be brief and to the point.

- **Creating balance**: asking outspoken members to give way to quieter individuals; inviting less assertive members or experts to comment; if needed, initiating a "round table" poll.

- **Listening, watching members**: responding to what people say, but also to the manner in which they say it (vocal and facial expression).

- **Ensuring clarity and encouraging listening**: listening for ambiguities, missed points, generalizations and misunderstandings, and ensuring that people are heard and understood.

- **Re-directing**: shifting the discussions from problems and complaints to solutions.

- **Summarizing and initiating closure**: briefly repeating key points (e.g.: main areas of agreement and main areas of differences); repeating task assignments and ensuring that any missing details are filled in, e.g.: "When would you be able to report back?" Leading to a vote or informal decision on an issue; e.g.: "Am I correct in hearing that the members want to ______?"

- **Varying the pace and the facilitation method**: suggesting a break, small group discussions, etc.

- **Recognizing ideas & progress**: recognizing member contributions as well as progress made by the meeting.
18. CHALLENGING MEETING SCENARIOS

Develop an approach and/or script for the following situations:

1. The discussion is unbalanced, with two members dominating.

2. Someone rambles for a long time and you notice someone else who is anxiously looking for "an opening" to speak.

3. A member was recognized to speak, when another one "barges in" and begins to speak without permission.

4. Two members conduct a loud and distracting side conversation.

5. The discussion becomes personal and members appear uncomfortable with the tone.

6. Three members raise their hands at about the same time, indicating they wish to speak. Variation: A member raises his/her hand and does not put it down.

7. A participant speaks about an item that is not on the agenda (or is scheduled for later on the agenda).

8. A member says with a soft voice (or through facial expression) "I don't think it's a good idea", but this protest is drowned in the loud discussion.

9. There is a heated discussion on the wording of a document to be approved, with three distinct views on it. The discussion is going nowhere.

10. A few important decisions have just been made, but they have not been articulated clearly, and the implementation duties have not been assigned. The members appear ready to proceed to the next item on the agenda, but you want to ensure follow-up.

11. Discussion of a point is lingering on and becoming repetitive, and time is running out (or most members appear ready to move on).

12. Members are rushing to make a decision on an important issue, but you are aware that significant points have not been addressed.
## 19. TOOLS FOR MEETING PARTICIPANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If this occurs</th>
<th>You can say:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digression</td>
<td>“Can we please get back to the agenda?” Or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Can we please focus on the core issue, which is ____?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interruptions</td>
<td>“Can we have one person speaking at a time?” Or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Can we speak by raising hands?” Or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Can we please hear people out?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last minute motion</td>
<td>“I am not comfortable debating a new issue this late and without the benefit of professional analysis. I move that this motion be postponed until the next meeting.” Or:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Given that it’s late, I suggest that we discuss this motion informally now, and then refer it to the administration for professional analysis.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal criticism</td>
<td>“Point of order. We should be focusing on issues, not people.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rambling</td>
<td>“Can we please keep our comments brief? I’m worried that we may run out of time for significant issues later on.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repetitive debate</td>
<td>“I am not hearing any new information and I’m worried about our time. Are we ready to close debate and vote on this motion?” Or:</td>
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<td>“I move to close debate.” Or “I move the previous question.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Side conversations</td>
<td>“Point of order. I’m having trouble concentrating when we have more than one conversation at the same time.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unbalanced participation</td>
<td>“Can we please speak by raising hands?” or</td>
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<td>“I am wondering if we could hear from members who have not spoken.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unclear motion</td>
<td>“Can we please have the motion repeated?” Or</td>
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<td>“I move to amend the motion by ____” (You may propose to replace, add, insert or delete text, to enhance clarity.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>A decision is being rushed through.</td>
<td>“I am not comfortable with the pace of this discussion. This is an important decision, and rushing it through may be risky. We need to slow down a bit.”</td>
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