Pajaree Nipaspong

EFFECTIVE BUSINESS MEETINGS

SKILLS, STRATEGIES, AND PRACTICE

Effective Business Meetings: Skills, Strategies and Practice

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Effective Business Meetings:

Skills, Strategies, and Practice

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Preface

The book Effective Business Meetings: Skills, Strategies, and Practice was inspired by my experience teaching business English. I found that one of the most challenging issues for students is participating in meetings using professional and appropriate language. Although their ideas are valid and well-reasoned, many students find it challenging to express themselves and respond effectively in professional meetings. This difficulty is often caused by language barriers and differences in communicative norms shaped by cultural backgrounds. In meetings, where turn-taking is often impromptu and requires professionalism, good preparation is essential. Preparation involves not only language expressions, grammar, and business vocabulary, but also the contextual appropriateness of language choices.

This book aims to provide business English students and general readers interested in business English with key elements for conducting business meetings, important concepts in informal and formal meetings, useful expressions for chairing and participating in meetings, and both conceptual and practical understanding of intercultural communication.

The book includes five chapters. Chapter 1, "Core Elements of Effective Meetings," provides background information on key issues to consider when conducting meetings throughout the meeting cycle: before (planning and preparation), during (general meeting process and ground rules), and after the meeting (follow-up issues). It discusses the characteristics of in-person, virtual, and hybrid meetings, followed by a discussion of the roles of AI and technology in meetings.

Chapter 2, "Informal Business Meetings," defines the various purposes of informal meetings and provides essential information about their key components, including the role of small talk, turn-taking in discussions, expressing opinions politely, active listening strategies, and giving feedback.

Chapter 3, "Formal Business Meetings," focuses on the roles of meeting members, including the chair, recorder, timekeeper, and participants, as well as the distinct role of small talk in formal meetings compared to informal ones. The chapter discusses in detail the chair’s responsibilities in starting, facilitating, summarizing, and closing meetings, as well as writing minutes and action points.

Chapter 4, "Diplomatic Language for Meetings," addresses language use, including linguistic strategies for making polite and diplomatic statements, managing conflicts in meetings, and diplomatic expressions for chairs and participants. Expressions are categorized by their typical use in informal, neutral/professional, and formal contexts.

The final chapter, Chapter 5, "Intercultural Communication in Business Meetings," begins with the importance of intercultural understanding in meetings across cultures, introduces two powerful frameworks in intercultural communication: Hofstede’s framework and the Lewis model, explores their application in meetings, and offers practical strategies for intercultural meetings.

Except for Chapter 1, which presents foundational information for conducting business meetings, Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 conclude with exercises for readers to check their understanding.

Drawing from my years of teaching business English, I hope this book will serve as a meaningful resource for students, educators, and anyone interested in business English. More than anything, I hope it empowers readers to express their ideas with confidence and clarity.

Pajaree Nipaspong

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My appreciation also goes to all the students I have taught in my business English classes over the years. Their active participation and positive attitude toward learning have been a true inspiration, making this book come to life.

Lastly, I am deeply grateful to my family, who have been a constant source of support and patience through both the joy and frustration of the book writing process.

Although I have not named everyone here, I want you all to know how deeply meaningful your contributions and support have been to this journey. I am truly grateful.

Table of Contents

Contents **Page**

Preface **2**

Acknowledgements **4**

Table of Contents **5**

Lists of Tables **8**

Table of Figure **9**

Chapter 1 Core Elements of Effective Meetings **10**

The Three Phases of Meetings: Before-During-After 10

Meeting Preparation 11

Conducting the Meeting 18

Meeting Follow-Up 21

In-person, Hybrid, and Virtual Meetings 23

Main Differences Between Meeting Types 23

Additional Considerations for Hybrid Meetings 26

AI and Technology for Meetings 28

Summary of AI Meeting Tools 32

Chapter Summary 33

Chapter 2 Informal Business Meetings **34**

Defining Informal Meetings 34

Purposes of Informal Meetings 36

Essential Components in Informal Meetings 37

Small Talk and Rapport-Building Language 37

Turn-Taking in Casual Discussions 40

Expressing Opinions Politely 42
Active Listening Strategies 44
Providing Feedback 46
Examples and Exercises 50
Chapter Summary 59

Chapter 3 Formal Business Meetings 60
Meeting Roles and Responsibilities 60
Small Talk in Formal Meetings 64
Useful Expressions for Small Talk in Formal Meetings 65
Duties of the Chair in Formal Meetings 66
Starting the Meeting 66
Facilitating the Meeting 68
Summarizing and Closing Meetings 75
Writing Minutes and Action Points 77
Examples and Exercises 79
Chapter Summary 89

Chapter 4 Diplomatic Language for Meetings 90
Defining Diplomatic Language 90
Language strategies for Being Diplomatic 90
Managing Conflicts in Meetings 98
Diplomatic Language in Action: Expressions for Chairs and Participants 103
Chair Expressions 104
Participant Expressions 111
Useful Expressions for Online and Hybrid Meetings 119
Exercises 122
Chapter Summary 124

Chapter 5 Intercultural Communication in Business Meetings....................... 125

Why Intercultural Understanding Matters in Meetings?...................................... 125

Intercultural Communication Frameworks.. 128

Hofstede's Dimensions Approach to National Cultures................................. 128

Applying the Hofstede Framework in Meetings... 130

The Lewis Framework for Intercultural Awareness 132

The Lewis Model: Cultural Styles in Business Meetings 133

Applying the Lewis Model in Meetings 134

Strengths and Limitations of the Lewis Model.. 135

Practical Strategies for Intercultural Meetings.. 137

Developing Intercultural Understanding, not Stereotypes 143

Exercises 144

Chapter Summary... 147

References.. 148

Answer Key... 153

Index.. 158

Lists of Tables

Table **Page**

Table 1: Examples of meeting purposes and measurable outcomes 12
Table 2: Order of agenda items 13
Table 3: General ground rules for meetings 19
Table 4: The CARE model 20
Table 5: Main differences between meeting types 23
Table 6: Key strengths, limitations, and requirements of different meeting types 25
Table 7: Summary of AI meeting tools 32
Table 8: A comparison between informal and formal meetings 34
Table 9: Expressing opinions politely 43
Table 10: Communicative functions of expressions in turn-taking 52
Table 11: Differences between small talk in informal and formal meetings 64
Table 12: Hedging words and phrases 91
Table 13: Modal verbs in tentative language 92
Table 14: Tentative phrases 92
Table 15: Qualifiers in diplomatic language 93
Table 16: Negative questions in diplomatic language 93
Table 17: Second conditionals in diplomatic language 94
Table 18: Using not and positive words to avoid negative words 95
Table 19: Expressing uncertainty 95
Table 20: Expressing empathy before disagreeing 96
Table 21: Passive voice in diplomatic language 97
Table 22: The Lewis Model: Cultural styles in business meetings 133

Table of Figure

Figure Page

Figure 1: The Three phases of meetings 10
Figure 2: Common meeting purposes 11
Figure 3: AI-Enabled project ticket board 31
Figure 4: Essential components in informal meetings 37
Figure 5: Roles in a meeting 61
Figure 6: The Chair's roles in managing meetings 68
Figure 7: Three levels of meeting formality 103
Figure 8: Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions 128
Figure 9: The Lewis Model (Lewis, 2006) 132

Chapter 1

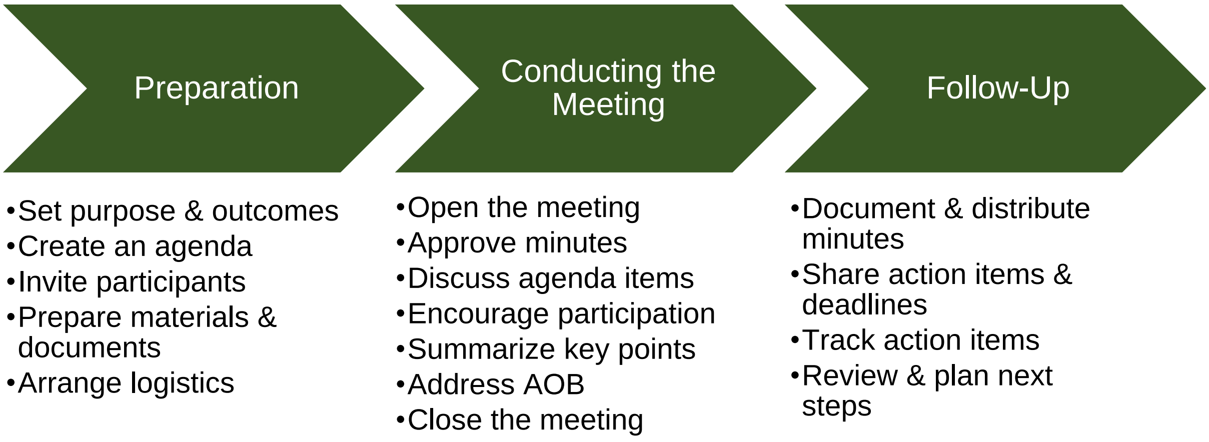
Core Elements of Effective Meetings

Meetings are an integral part of any business because they allow teams to solve problems, brainstorm ideas, make decisions, report new information, provide project updates, and more. Before any meeting, it is important to clarify the purposes and goals of the meeting to determine whether a meeting is truly necessary or if an email, chat, or individual planning time would be more effective and cost-efficient. This can be done by first defining the desired outcome, such as approval, idea generation, or resource allocation. If a meeting is indeed required, it is then important to ensure it is conducted in an effective and professional way.

The Three Phases of Meetings: Before-During-After

Any meeting can be divided into three phases: before, during, and after the meeting. Although expectations at each phase may vary depending on factors such as the level of formality, the meeting purpose, and the relationships among participants, the most common stages in each phase are outlined below.

Figure 1:
The Three phases of meetings

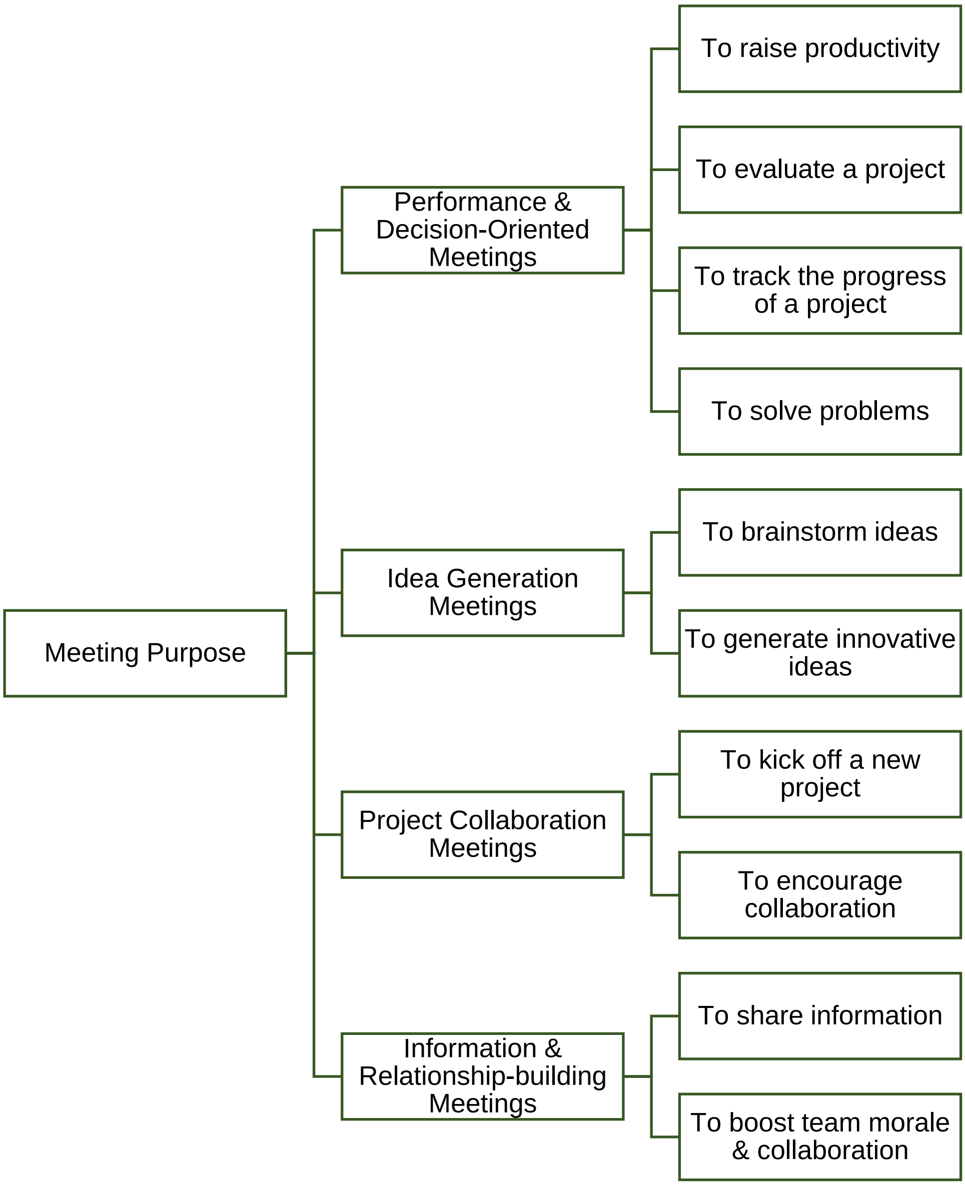

Preparation
•Set purpose & outcomes
•Create an agenda
•Invite participants
•Prepare materials & documents
•Arrange logistics
Conducting the Meeting
•Open the meeting
•Approve minutes
•Discuss agenda items
•Encourage participation
•Summarize key points
•Address AOB
•Close the meeting
Follow-Up
•Document & distribute minutes
•Share action items & deadlines
•Track action items
•Review & plan next steps

Meeting Preparation

1. Define Meeting Purpose(s)

Meetings can be held for various purposes. Some of the most common types of business meetings include team meetings, board meetings, recurring meetings, project kickoff meetings, brainstorming meetings, feedback meetings, and committee meetings. When planning a meeting, the chair, or meeting facilitator, should answer the question: “What are the purposes of the meeting?” Meeting purposes should be clear, specific, and measurable to ensure desirable outcomes. Some common purposes of business meetings are as follows:

Figure 2:
Common meeting purposes


Meeting Purpose
Performance & Decision-Oriented Meetings
To raise productivity
To evaluate a project
To track the progress of a project
To solve problems
Idea Generation Meetings
To brainstorm ideas
To generate innovative ideas
Project Collaboration Meetings
To kick off a new project
To encourage collaboration
Information & Relationship-building Meetings
To share information
To boost team morale & collaboration

Along with a clear and specific meeting purpose, the meeting outcome should also be listed. The outcome is the final result of the meeting, making the purpose measurable and reflecting what needs to be accomplished. Below are examples of clear and specific meeting purposes with measurable outcomes.

Table 1:
Examples of meeting purposes and measurable outcomes

Meeting Purpose	Measurable Outcome
To brainstorm ideas to promote the new product	– Five methods / means to promote the new product – Responsibility for each team member – A schedule or process for each activity – Deadlines
To solve problems in customer service	– Two solutions for each complaint in customer service – Tasks for each team member – A schedule or process for each solution – Deadlines
To share information about upcoming changes	– All participants' understanding about the changes as measured by their feedback – Task delegation (if any)

2. Create Meeting Agenda

An agenda is an outline or overview of the issues to be covered in a meeting (Quintanilla & Wahl, 2011). It serves several important purposes, including informing participants in advance about the topics to be discussed and specifying the steps to be taken during the meeting.

An agenda acts as a **roadmap** or **compass** for the discussion and is essential for keeping meetings productive, efficient, and focused. It helps the leader guide the meeting in a structured way and provides a reference for bringing participants back on track if discussions begin to digress. By clearly listing topics, priorities, and the order of discussion, a well-planned agenda helps maintain focus, manage time effectively, and maximize the productivity of a business meeting.

A simple meeting agenda may consist of a short list of bullet points, while more formal meetings may include time allocations, discussion leaders, and expected outcomes for each item. A detailed agenda may provide brief descriptions for each item. These descriptions can specify the time allocated, the purpose or expected outcome of each discussion topic (such as making a decision or brainstorming new ideas), the person leading each item (if applicable), any required preparation, and the proposed process for conducting the discussion.

Tropman 2003 as cited in Hartley and Chatterton (2015, p. 235) states that there are only three things people can do in a meeting: announce something, decide something, and discuss something. Corresponding to these three activities, Tropman (1996) suggests that a meeting agenda has the same three general purposes, which should be organized in the following order: all announcements, items requiring decisions, and items to be discussed. The table below shows examples of how to order different categories of agenda items and allocate time for each.

Table 2:
Order of agenda items

Category	Item	Type	Time (minutes)
1	Minutes		10
2	Announcements		15
3	Decision	Easy	15
4	Decision	Moderately difficult	15
5	Decision	Hardest item	25-40
6	Discussion		15-30
	Discussion	Easiest item	10

Source: adapted from Tropman 1996, pp. 24-47 as cited in Hartley and Chatterton (2015, p. 237)

Common types of meeting agendas include the following:

- **General / Formal Meeting Agenda**

  This standard format typically includes welcoming remarks, a review of previous action items, approval of prior minutes, clearly defined agenda items with time allocations, and a closing summary.

- **PATIO Agenda**

  This is a structured approach in which each agenda item is organized around five elements—**P**urpos**e, A**genda, **T**iming, **I**nformation, and **O**utcome (University of Cambridge, 2023).

- **Mission-Oriented vs. Process-Oriented Agenda**

  Meetings can also be classified by their goals. Mission-oriented meetings aim to produce a specific outcome, often a decision (e.g., committee meetings), while process-oriented meetings focus on ongoing discussion and information sharing (e.g., regular team meetings). The agenda structure should match whether the meeting is intended to make decisions or exchange information.

The iBabs State of Meeting Management Report (2025) outlines a clear structure for writing a comprehensive meeting agenda. Based on this report, the checklist below is designed to help prepare a clear and effective meeting agenda.