

Developing effective meeting management practices in a selected petrochemical company

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Abstract

One of the most common, and yet effective ways of dealing with problems for managers, is the use of meetings. Meetings are a managerial tool that is used to perform their tasks. In a meeting, two or more people come together for the purpose of discussing a predetermined topic. These topics are relevant to the business and help with business decisions as well as event planning.

Meetings sometimes have no focus, have too many discussions that meander into topics of interest to only one or two participants, and stretch on and on. Many people dislike meetings; however, productive meetings enhance the chance of having a successful project. Just like other processes, meetings can be studied and constantly improved. Meetings are most important for managers to conduct their tasks in any organisation. Meetings are the very heart of management. Effective meetings are important for collective decision-making, planning and follow-up, accountability and other practices that will help any manager to build a good organisation.

Any manager of an organisation will attend several meetings during their service period. Time is a scarce commodity and indirectly equates to money. Meetings are time consuming and it is imperative that time is spent efficiently during such meetings. The more effective the meetings, the easier and the more effective the entire process will be.

One of the major problems identified is the communication gap between managers and their subordinates. Meetings can also be defined as a type of communication session. Meetings' main tool is communication. No meeting can be conducted without proper communication channels. An effective meeting can only occur in the event of effective communication. It is possible for every problem recognised to be explored within the context of a meeting.

Most managers start their days with a morning meeting with his/her employees. Meetings are an important vehicle for personal contact. During such meetings, the previous day's events or performances are reported and the day's actions are formulated. During this meeting, the manager normally collects information about the performance of his/her department. Consequent actions are devised. This could possibly result in a further

development of more formal meetings. Effective meetings can be a problem-solving tool for the organisation, while bad meetings, on the other hand, represent a loss. If a manager spends 60% of his/her time in meetings that are 50% productive, he/she wastes 30% of the organisation's time. Can any organisation survive with that type of return in investment? Effective meetings do not only contribute to the advancement of the organisation, but also to the career of each individual.

Professionals spend an average of one to two days out of every week in meetings. This is 1/5 of their work week. Professionals become more and more frustrated with the number of meetings they have to attend. The value of those meetings is questioned and they labelled meetings as a black hole in their workday. Furthermore, this is happening at a time when most professionals are under tremendous pressure to add to the bottom line, work efficiently, and contribute directly to the organisation-wide productivity initiatives. In short, this is time that has been wasted and lost.

As a manager, individual contributor or even a team leader, the success of the project and even the career of the individual can be heavily influenced by how well he/she participates in a meeting process. By following a few basic guidelines for preparing and leading a meeting, he/she will have a better chance at creating something that is beneficial rather than boring.

Meetings represent the most powerful and dramatic events in the workplace. When a meeting works well, it can add enormous value to the organisation. It is possible to conduct such value-added meetings. If the organisation follows a few basic guidelines for preparing and leading a meeting, they will have a better chance to create something that is beneficial rather than boring. In the current "do more with less time" climate that organisations find themselves in today, it has become even more important to maximise the effectiveness of meetings.

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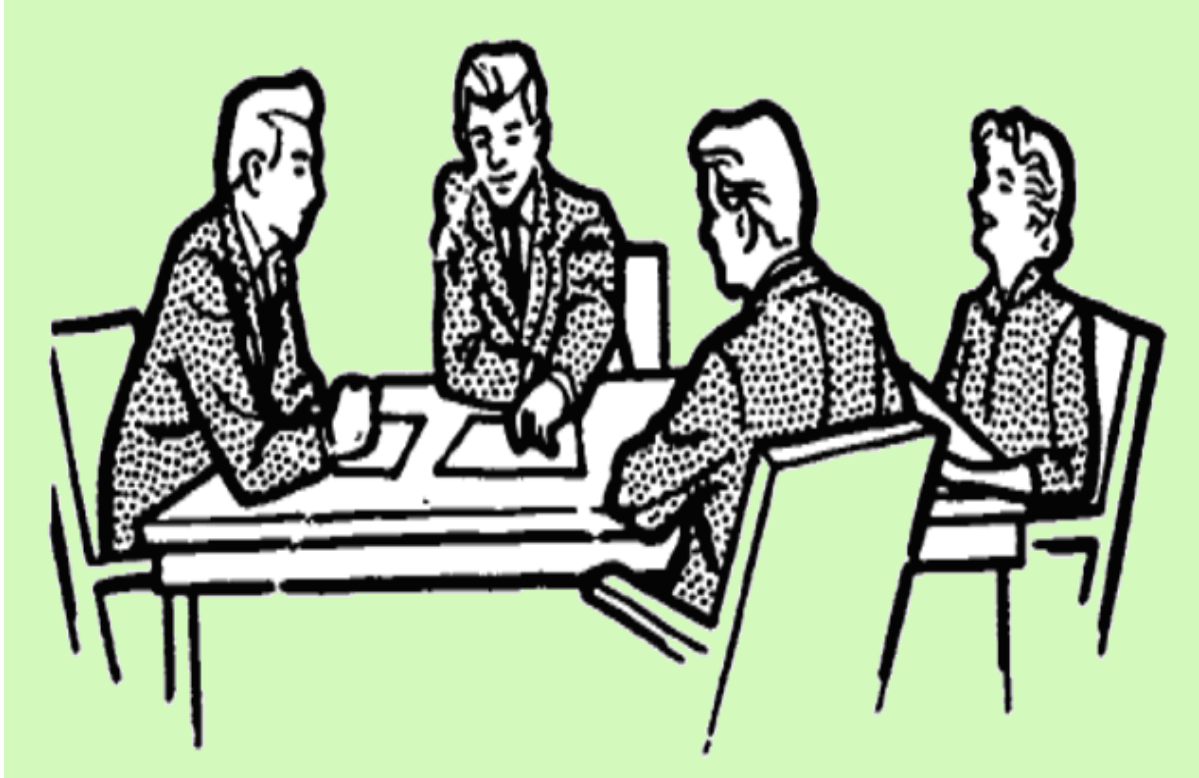
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Chapter 1

Nature and scope of the study



1.1 Introduction

Meetings consume a great deal of personal and corporate time and mostly because they are poorly planned or conducted. They end up wasting the time of the attendees. There are three kinds of meetings most managers of organisations will conduct, namely those with clients, those with staff and those with partners or associates. These meetings can either be an expensive exercise in frustration or highly productive. Despite the predictions that the impact of technology in the workplace reduces the need for meetings, it seems that meetings have started to consume an increasing proportion of the working day. Meetings should be held, even if it is difficult to justify the time. Plan, run and follow-up meetings properly and they will repay the cost many times over because there is still no substitute for physical face-to-face meetings.

“I hate meetings. Meetings are a pain. Meetings tend to waste time. In my opinion, most meetings are the least efficient method for sharing and disseminating information.” This is the view of a well-known businessman. Most people see meetings as too unproductive and time consuming, sometimes necessary, but not enjoyable. Some attend meetings to get a free donut and a nap – however, this is not desired. Rather than assuming that all meetings are bad, this study will look at how to conduct meetings that are actually effective – meetings where people generate ideas and make informed decisions, i.e. effective meeting management.

1.2 Background and motivation for this study

According to the Bonner Curriculum (2000), annually there are more than 11 millions meetings held in the United States alone. The higher up you are in an organisation, the more time you will spend in meetings. Middle managers spend 35 percent of their time in meetings, while upper level management spends 50 percent of their time in meetings.

What is an effective meeting? The answers will differ from person to person. The definition will vary from the house owner holding a meeting with his gardener to a team leader of a highly effective project group to an MD of a company. No matter what type of meeting, the definition will be relatively similar.

“A meeting is a gathering of people to present or exchange information, plan joint activities, make decisions, or carry out actions already agreed upon. Almost every group activity or project required a meeting, or meetings, of some sort” (Youth in Action Bulletin, 1999).

Employees realise the importance of meetings for their organisation. On the ground level, the supervisor will have daily meetings with his or her workers (toolbox meetings). In a petrochemical environment, safety meetings are the most important to start off a day's work. Most of the employees are involved in meetings at one or another time. A meeting is a tool that a manager uses to manage/lead his or her team.

The question now is, “Why meetings?”. Holding an efficient meeting can help to execute projects successfully. During an effective meeting, participants’ ideas are heard, decisions are made through group discussions and within a reasonable timeframe. The activities are focused upon the desired results. Efficient meetings will also help to generate enthusiasm for a project, build skills for future projects and provide participants with techniques that may benefit them in their future careers. Meetings are frequently too lengthy – with an effective meeting, twice as much can be accomplished within half of the time.

Good leaders/managers will understand the purpose of a meeting. Consequently, an effective meeting requires effective leaders/managers and effective participants. This will help to keep the discussion on track and within the allotted timeframe.

1.3 Problem statement

In any organisation, from marketers to engineers, one or another time of the day a manager can be attending a meeting. Meetings are a fact of life. A court case is nothing more than a meeting. The opening of Parliament is a different type of meeting. Based on the percentage of a day a manager spends at meetings, the need to ensure that the quality of meetings is good is further reiterated.

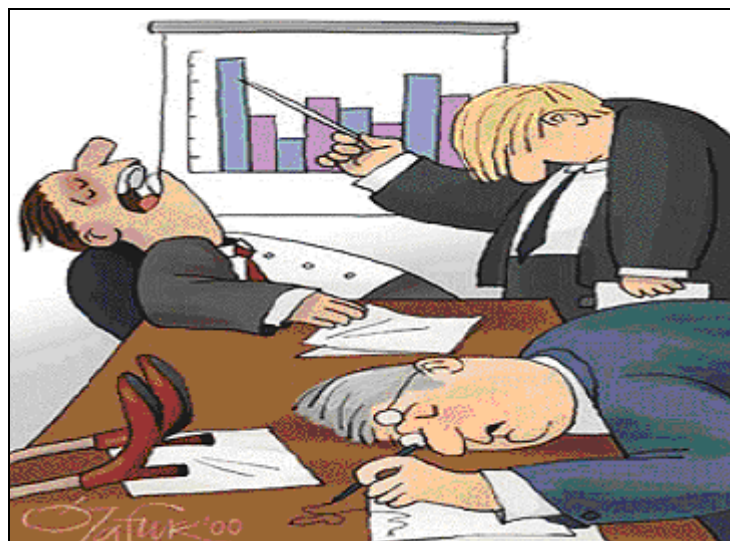
It is not possible to know when the first meeting took place, but one can assume that meetings are part of the human race from the day that they could communicate. The problem is that meetings are too long for some participants. Meetings also appear to be poorly organised, boring to at least a few and likely that some were disappointed with the results. Every meeting held costs time and money. Is it then fair to state that some meetings are a waste of time. It may be the case that on some days, several hours are spent by an employer in meetings, where he/she did not actually contribute to the company’s core business.

If meetings are not properly planned and executed, meetings can be a waste of time and resources. However, like all other organising tools, meetings can be poorly executed and end up not serving the purpose that they are intended to serve. Frequently, employees find themselves in long meetings, where the same issue is

discussed several times over, with the indication that there is no progress. Meetings can become places where conflict is played out. Some people can also see attending meetings as working for the organisation instead of seeing it as a tool for getting work done.

Agendas are a road map for the meetings and some meetings are still conducted without a pre-determined agenda. Often people do not take meetings seriously. They arrive late and leave early, and spend most of their time idling. Their mobile phones are more important than the actual meeting. Most people simply do not view going to meetings as doing work. Meetings should not be seen as a downtime.

However, the opposite is also true. If meetings are used in the correct manner, they can help an organisation to operate more efficiently. Properly planned and conducted meetings can help a manager of an organisation to work together in a more effective and coordinated fashion. The organisation must benefit from the time the employees spend in a meeting. Meetings are meant to be an event consisting of people, content, and a process designed for a purpose (Streibel, 2003:ix). There must be a return for the organisation on the time that employees invest in meetings. The problem is that the employer did not experience it and feels that there is a better way of conducting meetings. ***How can meetings be changed from time wasters to performance enhancers?***



1.4 Objectives of the study

The objective of this study will be divided into primary and secondary objectives.

1.4.1 Primary objectives

The primary objective of this study is to develop effective meeting management practices in a selected petrochemical company.

1.4.2 Secondary objectives

The secondary objectives, which will support the primary objectives, are:

- **Definition:** The study will look at different definitions of meetings and compile a definition that suits the organisation's needs. (Chapter 2.5).
- **State of meetings:** The study will look at different ways of how a manager and leader can determent the state of meetings in his or her organisation.
- **Meeting process:** The study will look at the basis of a meeting (process) as well as looking at different types of meetings. He will determine when/if it is necessary to conduct a meeting, what the aims and scope of a meeting are, as well the meeting process. In the end, a model will be compiled for all managers to use as a guideline for effective meetings.
- **Facilitator:** The study will look at the manager or meeting leader. He will determine the role of the manager or meeting leader. When is an external facilitator needed? What are the preparations needed for the meeting (who and where)? How can the purpose/goal of the meeting be developed? How does one set up an appropriate agenda?
- **Participants:** The participants will be addressed. The study will determine the role of the participants. How does one prepare oneself for a meeting? How does one nurture the appropriate attitude towards the meeting?

- **Bad meetings:** The study will also look at the causes as to why a meeting went bad. As well as the impact of bad meetings on the manager and the organisation. How does one improve bad meetings to prevent bad meetings from becoming worse meetings?
- **Success of meetings:** At this objective the study will look at when a meeting is a success. How does one improve a meeting? How does one maximise the potential of meetings?
- **Virtual meetings:** The study will look at methods for conducting long distance meetings through the use of technology, teleconferences, web meetings and video conferencing. These have become more and more important and will play an important role in the future with the development of new technologies

1.5 Scope of the study

The field of study falls within the subject discipline of petrochemical company. The majority of the study will be performed in this chemical engineering research (RND) environment. The research results will, however, be tested by looking at other results from the literature study. The test population consists of engineers, managers, Technicians, technologist and production people working at pilot plants.

1.6 Research methodology

The research, focussing on the specific study objectives, will consist of two phases, namely:

- *Phase one:* Literature review.
- *Phase two:* Empirical study.

1.6.1 Literature review

A detailed study regarding meetings is provided in Chapter 2. All the relevant terms regarding meetings are explained and definitions from different authors are presented. The reasons why meetings went bad are investigated. The meeting process is described pertaining to the different roles and role players.

The literature study will consist of text books, journal articles, Internet articles and dissertations.

1.6.2 Empirical study

To measure the state of meetings in the organisation, a measuring instrument was developed. The measuring instrument consists of a questionnaire, investigating the study population, gathering the data and the statistical analysis. The results are discussed in Chapter 4. A new questionnaire was developed to suit the purpose of this study. The questionnaire was used because it can be distributed and analysed among a large number of people in a short time. The questions in the questionnaire were based on the information gathered from the literature study. The study population was chosen because of the large number of meeting they deal with on a daily basis. The study population of this study includes a unique group, namely the Research and Development department of an organisation that designs and operates pilot plants as a research function. It consists of Production, Technical, Manager and Engineering groups.

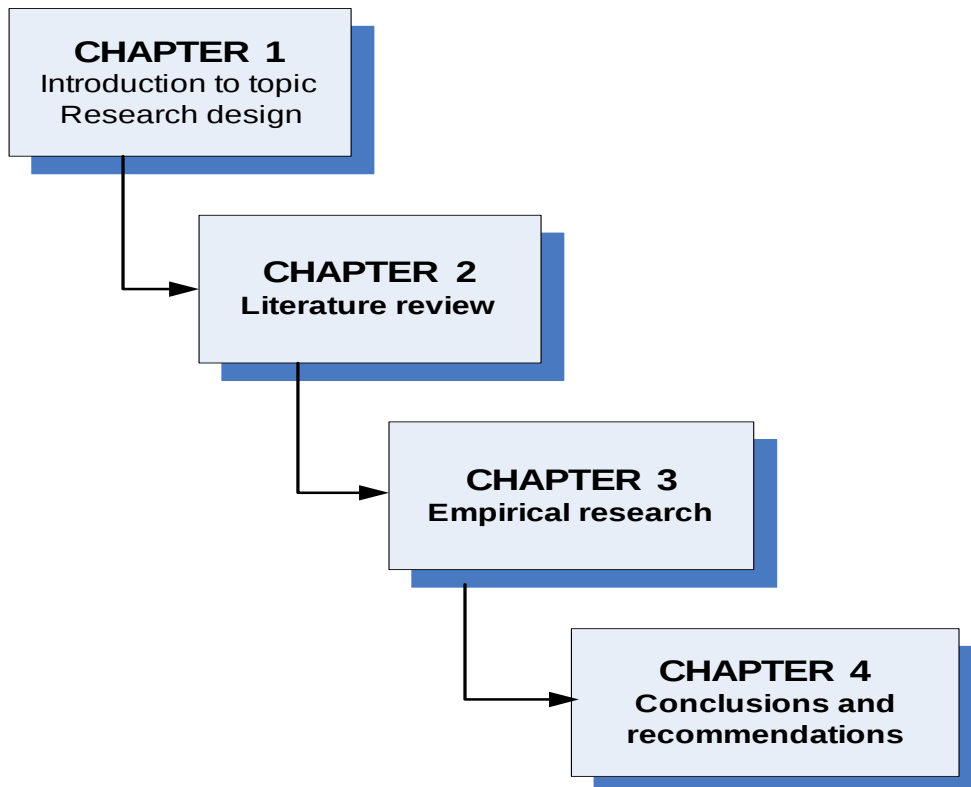
1.7 Limitations of the study

The study will only be restricted to the RND environment. The questionnaire was also restricted to certain areas. Another limitation is that the research only focused on one section of the organisation. During the literary study, only a few articles and journals were available on this topic. Published books, Internet and training material were used.

1.8 Layout of the study

The layout of the study can be represented graphically as indicated in Figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1: Graphical representation of the study



Chapter 1: In Chapter 1, the overview and research design were discussed. The problem statement was given and the reason for this study was explained. The importance of this subject was also expounded upon.

Chapter 2: Chapter 2 consists of a literature review. The aim of the review is to gain insight into what constitutes meetings. It was also done to support the primary as well as the secondary objectives of this study. The literature review was aimed at corporate meetings.

Chapter 3: In Chapter 3, an empirical study will be conducted. The questionnaire design and how the data was collected will be discussed in more detail in this

chapter. The findings of the questionnaire will be tabulated and “*descriptive statics*” will be used for data analysis. Some graphs will also be presented to assist with the demonstration of the results. Correlations will be drawn between the different groups of the population.

Chapter 4: Chapter 4 will consist of three parts. In the first part, the findings of the chapter will be discussed. Firstly, the demographical information be discussed, followed by a discussion of the close-ended questions. A summary of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire will then be provided and compared with the literature review. In the second part of Chapter 4, the study will discuss certain important topics regarding effective meeting management with conclusions and recommendations regarding the topic.

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Effective meetings are both a science and an art. The art aspect is difficult to explain and to teach. The science aspect is easier to explain. The science aspect is also the actual aspect that determines the success of an effective meeting or not (This, 1972:xi). Chapter 2 of this study primary deals with the science aspect of meetings. Different books, journals and study material were used in this chapter to formulate and understand a basic meeting process from the planning of the meeting to the actions after the meeting. Experience in this field is essential and the authors of these books and journals put their experience on paper for others to learn from.

2.2 Meeting terms

It is important to begin the literature study by firstly looking at different meeting terms and jargon that are in general used by organisations and were also found during the literature study. Table 2.1 represents the terms with a short description of the meaning of the terms used. The terms in Table 2.1 will be used in this study.

Table 2.1: Different meeting jargon and terms

Term	Description
Agenda	List of topics for a meeting. Also called the plan for a meeting or the <i>script</i> .
Audio meeting	Holding a meeting with people that are connected by telephone. Also called the <i>telephone conference</i> .
Action plan	A map used to identify what goals have to be accomplished and who will do it and by what date. Also called the <i>work plan</i> .
Brainstorming	A technique used to generate a list of ideas about an issue. The best idea is then used to solve the problem.
City-wide	Large meeting that cannot be held under one roof.
Chairperson	A person who guides the participants through the meeting. The person is in charge of the meeting. Also called the <i>facilitator</i> for the purpose of this study.
Convention résumé	Document produced by the meeting facilitator that includes all the details of the meeting.
Consensus	Decision made by agreement by all people involved during a meeting.

Term	Description
Crisis management	Process to plan and implement decisions to avoid or control undesirable events.
Code of conduct	List of agreed rules for how members are expected to behave. Different from the ground rules. Also called <i>ethics</i> .
Database	A structured dataset made up of records.
Data conferencing	Participants share information by using technology.
Electronic brainstorming	Make use of computers to exchange ideas during the brainstorming process. (EBS)
General session	A meeting format that addresses all attendees.
Goal	Contains the foundation of the meeting. Also called the <i>objectives</i> .
Huddle	Group of people, standing close together, for a brief meeting. Can also be called the <i>stand-up meeting</i> .
Idea bin	A list on the wall that the group uses to save valuable ideas for later conversation or considerations. Related to "Parking lot."
Keynote speaker	It is a person that is an expert on a certain subject at hand.
Lavaliere	Small microphone that can be attached to clothing – <i>mini microphone</i> .
Meeting planner	When the planning of the meeting is outsourced. The person the organisation hires to plan the meeting for the organisation. Usually pertaining to large meetings.
Meeting	Gathering of two or more persons to gather or share information that leads to a decision. Also called an <i>event</i> or <i>conference</i> .
Minutes	Recording happenings at the meeting. Also called the <i>meeting notes</i> .
Milestone	An important point reached in a meeting process.
Scribe	A person who writes down the minutes of the meeting as they occur. Also called the <i>recorder</i> or <i>note taker</i> .
Objective	Measurable and attainable targets that contribute to the accomplishment of the goal.
Parking lot	Allotted time at the end of the meeting process to look at the ideas in the <i>idea bin</i> .
Participants	A person attending a meeting (invited) whose inputs will help to achieve the goal. Also called the <i>meeting members</i> .
Pre-convention	Small meeting prior to the main meeting (pre-con).
Post-convention	Small meeting after the main meeting (post-con).
Preprint	Bound copy of all handouts and papers for the event. Normally at larger meetings or conferences.
Quorum	The number of members in a meeting who can vote or make a decision.
Return on investment	The process of evaluating a meeting in terms of value to the stakeholders involved in it (ROI).
Return on objectives	The process of evaluating a meeting in terms of value to the stakeholders regarding the objectives of the meeting (ROO).
Stakeholder	Someone who has a vested interest in the success of the meeting.

Term	Description
Tools	Software applications used to achieve a special objective. Used during meetings. Also called <i>software tools</i> .
Timekeeper	A person whose role it is to control the time spent on a topic on the agenda during a meeting.
Video conferencing	Meeting that connects people by using technology such as audio and video.
Virtual meetings	Distance meeting held by using modern technology. Audio as well as visual.

Sources: Streibel (2003:3); Arredondo (2000:151); Kay (1995:8)

2.3 History of meetings

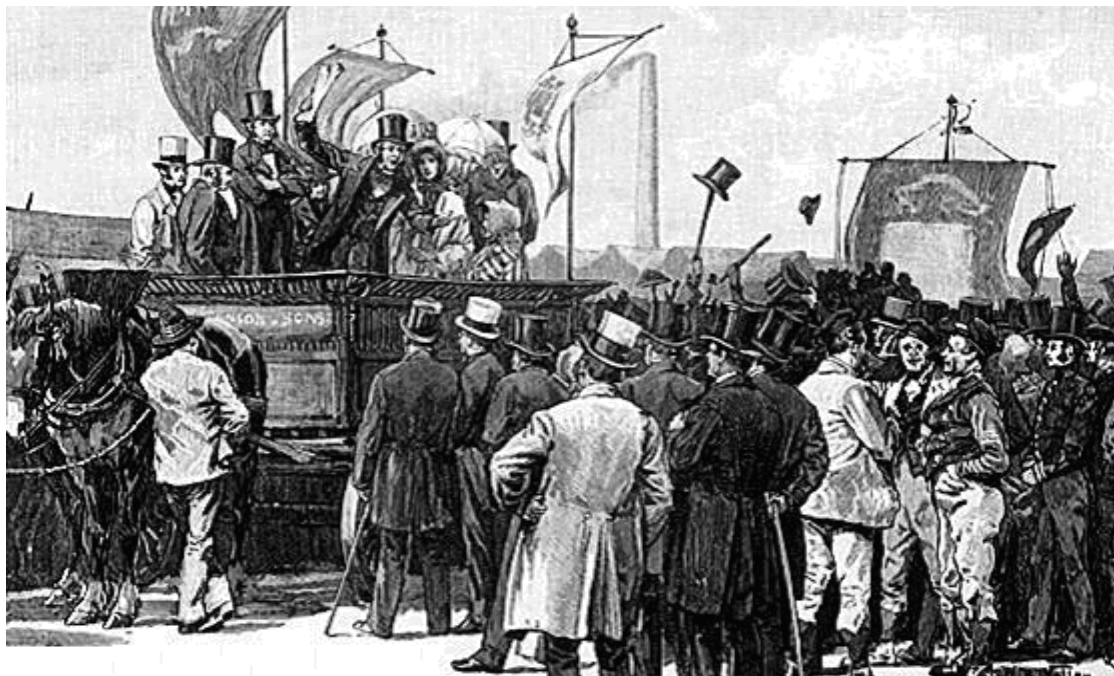
Not much information is available regarding the history of meetings. Nobody knows when the first meeting took place (Streibel, 2003:ix). However, the ancient art of storytelling has much to tell. The first meeting was probably held back in the Stone Age. The Stone Age is the earliest period of human culture, when tools were made of stone, bone or wood. In those days, men's jobs were to catch prey and bring it home for the woman to cook. Men were slow and naked (cold) and the prey had warm fur and ran like antelope and this caused their hunting expedition to not be as successful as they want it to be. Less meat made the woman complain more than usual (Barry, 1995:1).

Presumably, someone suggested that they should sit down and do some thinking (brainstorming) about the problem. They had to come up with a better way to hunt their food. It went well and it was warm sitting in a circle so they agreed to meet again the next day, and the next. But the women pointed out that the men did not produce enough in terms of prey. The men agreed that this was a serious situation and suggested that it would be a priority on the next agenda. The women, who were primitive, but not stupid, started harvesting and preparing plants to eat and modern agriculture was born. It would never have happened without the first meeting (Barry, 1995:1). An article, dated September 1894, with the heading "HINTS FOR BRANCH MEETINGS", indicated that the importance of meetings was already noted in the early years (Anon., 2009). The article is displayed in Appendix K.

The history of brainstorming began in the 1930s when a certain Alex Osborn developed the idea of brainstorming for application to his work in advertising. His book was published in 1957, entitled “Applied Imagination” (Kay, 1997:22).

The Bible also states that meetings were regularly conducted and used as a method to share ideas and make important decisions. It is not documented when the first meeting was held, but most probably Adam and Eve had a “meeting” pertaining to the issue of the apple.

Figure 2.1: A drawing of a large public meeting held in 1838



Source: Encarta (2008)

2.4 Different definitions of meetings

Different definitions are used to describe the term “meetings”. The following are a few important definitions used in the literature.

- A meeting is a group of people thinking purposefully together (Baker, 2007:5).
- A meeting is a team activity where selected people gather to perform work that requires group effort (Kaye, 1998:7).

- An event involving a group of people, getting together to discuss and/or decide (Cutman, 2000:3).
- According to Gail Kay (1995:4), a meeting is a gathering of people with one or more goals to be achieved.
- A meeting takes place any time two or more people come together to give or gather information, take action, plan, problem solve, and make decisions (Bonner, 2000:3).
- The goal of a meeting is to move a group of people through a process towards developing a common desired outcome (Cornelius & Associates, 2006:1).
- Essentially, meetings are a gathering of two or more persons to collectively accomplish what one person cannot (Rebori, 1997:1).
- A meeting is an event consisting of people, content, and processes designed for a purpose (Streibel, 2003:ix).
- A meetings is any time two or more people come together to give or gather information (Bonner, 2000:3).
- Coming together of two or more persons for the transaction of a common lawful order of business (Nailer, 2008:7).

It is now important to formulate a definition that is suitable for the industries (Secondary objective). The key points about meetings are that the organisation goal is to move a group of people through a process towards developing the organisation's desired outcome. An organisational meeting is a goal-oriented activity, which differentiates it from other types of gatherings.

A meeting consists of (a) more than one person, (b) a reason for the gathering – purpose, (c) information input, (d) process, (e) and output actions that can be decisions or information.

There are three central elements necessary to have an effective meeting. (1) Topic: What are the meeting attendees going to talk about? (2) Deliverable: What does the organisation want to have when it is finished? (3) Process: What process should be used to reach deliverables?

A definition that comes closest to an organisation's actions and their perception of a meeting as an event is the one defining it as a gathering of two or more people with common goals where verbal communication is the basic approach to achieving these goals.

Definition: *A meeting is a team activity where selected people gather to perform work that requires input and with the help of a process leads to deliverables.*

2.5 The importance of meetings

Meetings can generate energy. The importance of the dialogue and the ideas generated is valued by all attendees. The attendees who leave an effective meeting will be positive and motivated by the work accomplished through active participation in the meeting (Lewis, 2009:8). The main aim of meetings should be to keep them brief and focussed on the issues on hand. Meetings should support the organisation's goals and mission (Craven & Golabowski, 2000:4). Each meeting will have an overall purpose. Face-to-face meetings are essential especially in the agile developing process where decisions need to be made on a daily basis about the projects and scheduling of projects and important business decisions. The advantages and disadvantages of meetings are summarised in Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2: Advantages and disadvantages of meetings

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Informing, analysing and resolving matters. • Discussing different views, encouraging, minimising disagreements. • Giving feedback, persuading, qualifying and developing. • Promoting changes in knowledge matters. Skills and approaches. • Organisation can make quick informed decisions.	• Ineffective meetings waste time and money. • Meetings tend to take attention away from more important matters. • Employees using meetings for gossip and unconstructive work. • Bring about chaos and disorder. • Hindering progress and postponing actions.

Source: Busch (1959:3)

2.6 Purposes of meetings

Some organisations recognise the benefits of orally communicated information and obtain spontaneous feedback from a group. The oral approach offers more opportunity for persuasion. It also offers the flexibility to adjust to the reaction of the group (Lewis, 2009:11). A meeting can make or break the planning process of a project. It can also inspire people to work harder towards a common goal as well as to help to build an inclusive community (Bonner, 2000:1). Effective meetings provide opportunities to contribute ideas, set goals, and give and receive important information. The purpose of meetings for the organisation is summarised in Table 2.3 below.

Table 2.3: Purposes that effective meetings serve

Area	Purpose
Information	Present information to a group or solicit information from a group. To share important and timely information.
Planning and problem-solving	Setting goals and establishing a schedule of activities. To gain “buy in” ownership for a problem or solution. Also planning

Area	Purpose
	projects.
Team building	Creating feelings of trust and collaboration. Strengthening relationship and building alignment. Networking. Increasing morale. Motivating and energising a team.
Decision making	Reaching a conclusion about what action to take. To participate in group decision-making and to gain consensus.
Analysing	Determine the causes of a situation. To get input from others regarding ideas. Brainstorming.
Celebrating	Recognising and honouring achievements.
Brainstorm ideas	Leaders can help employees to develop their abilities to think critically.
Sharing of best practices	To increase teamwork. Learn from each other.
Mediating	Facilitating negotiations or resolving conflict between people.
Marketing	To sell or promote an idea, product or service.

Source: Baker (2007:8)

2.7 Elements of effective meetings

In all organisations, professionals are spending more and more time in meetings. It is therefore important that the organisation benefits from all the time and effort spent in these meetings. Most of the benefit is directly determined by the productivity of the participants attending the meeting and how successful they are in reaching the meeting's objectives (Lewis, 2009:vii). Organisations need better meetings to have a better relationship and better processes to improve teamwork.

There are three central elements necessary to have an effective meeting (Cornelius & Associates, 2006:1).

Topic: What are the meeting attendees going to talk about?

Deliverable: What does the meeting want to achieve when it is completed?

Process: What steps need to be followed to reach the goal?

Meetings are also:

An assembly of people: People are different based on their needs, their interests, and their ideas. Different people are now together in the same room to pursue a common goal.

An event: A meeting is an event that occurs at a specific moment in time and within a certain dynamic. No two meetings are alike. There is movement, action and reaction.

A tool: The meeting is a tool that is used to achieve an objective in a working framework. Any tool functions well when it is correctly used.

According to Bowman (2006:1), any efficiently organised meeting should have a purpose, an agenda and a timeline (PAT). If these elements are absent, then the organisation has a recipe for frustration. He also suggests a well-defined process and roles (Bowman, 2006:2).

2.8 Common reasons why meetings typically go bad

What is wrong with most meetings? What is the reason that meetings go bad and have such bad reputations? The answers to these questions are as follows (Greenfield, 2007:1; Baker, 2007:10):

- Meetings start late. Those on time get more frustrated and it encourages others to be late. Participants arrive late and leave early.
- No meeting agenda or a poorly prepared agenda. Meetings with no real agenda make it more difficult to measure the success of the meeting (Kay, 1995:27).
- Users of meetings do not know how to use structures to plan and run meetings that are powerful and guide a group to achieve its goals.
- Lack of clear purpose, clear preparation and lack of clear process. The meeting process and roles of the participants are not clear.
- Domination by strong characters. The meeting is dominated by one person or the leader.
- Lack of true commitment to meeting outcomes. Lack of actions following meetings.
- Meetings sometimes have no focus; therefore they have too many discussions that meander into topics that are of interest to only one or two participants (Fetzer, 2009:1827).
- Lack of ground rules.

- Often meeting participants are not entirely sure why the meeting was called. Participants do not show up.
- Many meetings do not need to be held, and often those that are held are attended by more people than necessary.
- Chairperson did not have the right people at the meeting to make the decisions. Meeting topics do not apply to everybody present.
- The meeting is too long and accomplishes too little or nothing.
- Regular meetings become routine. Routine activities become boring.
- Information overload. Overabundance of data, facts and figures can be confusing.
- Wheel-spinning. Continuously going over the same topic.
- Meetings run late because of :
 - Getting off track. Items other than meeting objectives consume time.
 - Lack of preparation.
 - Too many agenda items.
 - Interruptions.
- Lack of focus, lack of control, lack of participation and lack of follow-up.

The above are some important reasons why meeting fail to be effective. The impact of bad meetings on an organisation is much more negative than what most managers realise. The potential of the organisation's people is not maximised due to bad meetings. It is a waste of time, talent, energy and money. Employees and employers are negatively affected by ineffective meetings. Bad meetings affect the morale of the employees of the organisation and can also damage the image and reputation of the organisation (Streibel, 2003:5).

2.9 Types of typical meetings

2.9.1 Main classes of meetings

There are two main classes of meetings (Nailer, 2008:7).

Public meetings: These are meetings that members of the public are entitled to attend by their interest or by their payment to funds. These include annual meetings, elections or regular businesses of association.

Private meetings: These are meetings that relate to matters of private concern, i.e. meetings for workers of the organisation. The intention of this study is to only pay attention to these private organisational meetings. These meetings are private in the sense that the topic of the meetings concerns the organisation's operations and profits.

2.9.2 Different types of meetings

There is quite a long list of different types of meetings, but for the purpose of this study, all meeting will be divided into three categories, namely huddles or stand-up meetings, information-sharing or status meetings, and problem-solving or working meetings. They can also be classified as (a) **Problem-solving meetings**, (b) **brainstorming meetings** and (c) **information meetings** (Lorenzen, 2003:1). In Table 2.4 there is a brief description of each meeting as well as its goals and purposes.

Table 2.4: Description of each meeting category

No	Name	Timeline	Purpose
1.	Huddles or stand-up meetings	5-15 minutes	• Brief informal meetings. • Take place at the work area and can be called at any time. • Used to report progress on actions. • The purpose is to share minor issues or problems. • Providing daily work assignments or discussing the day's priorities. • No formal agenda needed, but decisions must be documented.
2.	Information-	15-30	• Formal meeting that is scheduled.

No	Name	Timeline	Purpose
	sharing or status meetings	minutes	• Often routine meetings. • Used to report on progress of action items, and to update meeting attendees. • All members have a chance to speak or to ask questions. • News, plans or other information can be shared with a group orally. • Formal agenda with ground rules needed.
3.	Problem-solving or working meetings	1-2 hours	• Formal meeting that is scheduled. • All members' participation and interaction are needed. Problems affect everyone in the group. • Purpose is to solve problems and make decisions. Two heads are better than one. • Emphasis is on participation. • Formal agenda with ground rules needed.

Source: Levine (1997:7)

If the main objective of a meeting is to inform people, then the meeting will usually involve some form of presentation, followed by a question-and-answer session. If the meeting is held to solve a problem or to brainstorm, everyone should be encouraged to participate from the outset.

Meetings can also be divided into two types of meetings (Streibel, 2003:14), namely:

- Participatory meetings: Meetings that need inputs from members.
- Non-participatory meetings: Meetings that are mostly one-way communication-informational and motivational.

Many more different types of meetings are used in the business world, but in the end they will be classified into one of the mentioned types, or a combination of both. It is important to notice that no matter what meeting type the organisation makes use of,

all productive meetings share similar characteristics (Lewis, 2009:30). The more common types of meeting are discussed in Table 2.5 below.

Table 2.5: More common types of meetings

Meeting type	Short description of the meeting and uses
Team meetings	Meeting among colleagues working on various aspects of a team project.
Status meetings	Led by a leader. Reporting back by one-way communication. Providing information.
Kick-off meetings	First meeting with the project team and their clients. To orient a new team pertaining to their mission.
Information gathering meetings	Leader wants to gather information.
Instructional meetings	Also called training meetings. Aim is to develop and train people.
Virtual meetings	Used because of globalisation of organisation. This area of meetings is dealt with separately.
Ad-hoc meetings	Meeting called for a special purpose.
Management meetings	Meeting among managers.
One-on-one meetings	Meeting between individuals.
Brainstorming sessions	Generating ideas. Finding solutions/solving problems.
Negotiations meetings	Consulting and getting feedback.
Staff meetings	Cross-feed or information exchange meetings. Group gathers to discuss business, to trade news, and to receive direction.

Source: Serrat (2009:3)

2.10 Meeting ground rules

The aim of ground rules is to cultivate the basic ingredients needed for successful meetings (Kay, 1995:62). Groups that meet on a regular basis should consider setting rules or guidelines. It also helps to govern behaviour at meetings. Ground rules can also be defined as behavioural expectations that leaders and participants have for each other to support the group's effort (Lewis, 2009:37). To get buy-in, let the meeting participants define their own ground rules. This will improve the feeling of ownership between the members. Display the ground rules during the meeting. There is a difference between ground rules and a code of conduct.

Examples of ground rules are as follows (Kay, 1995:63; Fetzer, 2009:1826):

- Work as a team.
- No ranks in the room. Hierarchy.
- Only one person speaks at a time and one conversation at a time.
- Be an active listener. Listen with respect.
- Focus on the issues. Challenge ideas, not the individuals.
- Respect others. No personal attacks.
- Suspend judgement.
- Allow curiosity, discovery.
- Support others.
- Participate freely when appropriate.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Start and end on time. Start at the scheduled time.
- Respect for and acceptance of diverse ideas and views must be part of any meeting.
- No sidebar conversations.
- No cell phones or PDAs during the meeting.
- Make decisions by consensus.

2.11 Preparing for a meeting

Benjamin Franklin said: “By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.” The success of the meeting depends on planning. A little planning can go a long way. Leading a meeting is easy for the chairperson when he or she is prepared. To have an effective meeting, the chairperson as well as the attendees must have a positive mindset towards the success of the meeting (Kaye, 1998:27).

2.11.1 Determine meeting goals and desired outcomes

Make sure the meeting is necessary. Often managers call a meeting for activities that can be handled through other processes that are far more efficient. 25% of meetings can be replaced by a phone call or an electronically memo. Is the meeting purpose worth the time and cost of taking participants away from their jobs? Are you ready to have a meeting and what will make you ready for a meeting? Do you need group involvement to move ahead and what is the intended outcome? Have a clear purpose or specific topic for the meeting. The goals do not need to be fancy (Baker, 2007:33). The chairperson can ask him- or herself the following questions, summarised in Table 2.6 below.

Table 2.6: Questions to ask when planning a meeting

Topic	Description
Why	Is the meeting necessary? What is the purpose of the meeting and what is the desired outcome of the meeting?
What	What topics need to be in the agenda and what timeline?
Who	Who should attend?
Where	Where is the best location?
When	When is the best time for the meeting?
How	What is the best way to start and what preparation work is needed? Methods and media.

Source: Walker (2005:1)

Define the purpose of the meeting. If you cannot come up with a purpose, do not have a meeting. Unnecessary meetings cause burnout and waste time and money. Clarity about the meeting's purpose encourages the team to identify desired outcomes, and increases the chance for achieving its goal. The number of meetings you will need will depend on the nature of the group and what you want to achieve (Hagerty, 1990:374).

The goals and the outcome of a meeting must be specified, measurable, achievable and time bound to determine if the meeting has achieved the objectives (Lewis, 2009:9). The goals of the meeting must be so clear and complete that somebody else can run the meeting based on the written goals.

Goals are: (Kaye, 1998:16):

- The results that the chair or manager wants from the meeting;
- The deliverables from the people in the meeting; and
- The reason the manager called a meeting.

According to John Fetzner (2009:1), work has to be done before, during and after a meeting in order for the meeting to succeed. The chairpersons' work begins well before the start of the meeting with the preparation of the agenda. The chairperson's aim is to motivate the people to come prepared and to see the meeting in a positive spirit. A preparation checklist can be used to help the chair. An example of a checklist is provided in Appendix B. When choosing a date for the meetings, always have at least two alternatives available – a preferred date and a just-in-case alternate date. When a meeting is necessary, determine which type of meeting will best support the goal of the meeting.

An acronym, called "SMART", can also be used to help with the setting of the goals (Kaye, 1998:17). This process is formulated in Table 2.7 below.

Table 2.7: The SMART process used in the goal planning process

Acronym	Word	Description
S	Specific	The goals must state exactly what the chair or the manager wants.
M	Measurable	The goals must contain some number parameter to measure them by, or some measurable item that will tell if the outcome represents the goals.
A	Achievable	The goals must be realistic and achievable.
R	Relevant	The goal must be relevant to the business mission.
T	Time	The time component of the goal is the deadline.

Source: Kaye (1998:17)

If the purpose of the meeting is not clearly defined it indicates that the chairperson is not ready for the meeting. There are then more effective alternatives to use, such as emails and phone calls.

2.11.2 Determine pre-work

Pre-work can be an effective way of preparing for an effective meeting. The aim of pre-work is to save time during the meeting and to be prepared for a more effective meeting. The key to a successful meeting starts well in advance of the meeting. Does the chairperson need additional information, advice or resources to make the task more effective? The chairperson can make a list of all the materials and equipment needed.

2.11.3 Determine the location and meeting equipment

An important part of meeting dynamics is the meeting environment. Should the meeting be held off site or on site? Choose a convenient location suitable to number of attendees. A large room is more comfortable and encourages individual expression. Facilities need to be comfortable and spacious (Striebel, 2003:33). The chairperson and assistants need to arrive early enough to set up the meeting room and to ensure that all necessary housekeeping tasks are completed.

Speedy Internet connections are important when attendees need their laptops to access and present computer-based information. Temperature control and lighting are important. Audio and visual aids will depend on the type of meeting that is planned. The type of meeting location will have an impact on the meeting cost.

Some negative items regarding the meeting location are crowded locations, too much noise, too high temperatures and uncomfortable chairs. In Appendix 3 there is a list that the chairperson can use assist him or her to choose a suitable meeting location. Most organisations have their own meeting rooms for their own uses (Striebel, 2003:34).

2.11.4 Common room set-up

How the room is set up will depend on the type of interaction expected between the participants. It is not the most important issue in the meeting process, but can make the meeting process more effective (Nadler, 1972:101). Table 2.8 below provides an indication of common meeting room set-ups.

Table 2.8: The meeting room set-up

Name	Set up	Usage
Conference style	Participants are seated at four sides of a table.	Used for small committee meetings where interaction between participants is expected.
Hollow square	Tables are arranged in a square where the centre is open.	Used for larger meetings where interaction is important.
U-shape	Tables are positioned to form a U. Chairs are placed on the outside of the tables.	Useful when audiovisual equipment is used, where the screen is placed at the open end of the U.
Theatre style	Rows of chairs placed	Used when audience needs to take

Name	Set up	Usage
	next to each other facing the front of the room.	minimal notes and when the participant interaction will be minimal.
Classroom style	Rows of table and chairs facing the front of the room.	Used when the presenter is in front of the room with the audience taking notes.
Round tables	Chairs are arranged around small round tables.	Used for small breakout groups.

Source: Nadler (1972:101)

2.11.5 Determine participants

Determine who is needed to be in the meeting by examining the agenda points. People's time is a valuable resource both in terms of what it costs and in terms of what else they can achieve in that time (Lewis, 2009:21). Some of the attendees do not have to stay for the entire meeting. Good scheduling can save many man hours.

Before finalising the participant list, do a quick calculation of the hourly cost of all the people on the list. Consider the potential value of time and the cost of lost opportunity (Streibel, 2003:31).

Two basic criteria of attendees should be in the planned meetings:

- Attendees who can benefit because of the meeting objectives;
- Attendees who can contribute to the meeting objectives; and
- There is also a group that wants to be in the meeting.

A diverse group of thinkers is often helpful. Experience is important. If a critical participant is not available, the chairperson can make the decision to reschedule. Another useful tool to use during the set-up of an attendance list, is to use the 2/3 rule. If a person is involved with two out of three agenda items, he or she should be at the meeting (Hagety, 1990:375). Having outside guest helps to build and

strengthen relationships. Outside guests can also shed new light on difficult issues. Sensitive issues should not be on the agenda when outside guests are present.

2.11.6 Group size

The usefulness of a meeting is inversely proportional to the number of people attending (Baker, 2007:39). The size of the group is normally related to the purpose of the meeting. For example:

- Three to five people for problem-solving purposes.
- Four to 10 people for brainstorming purposes.
- 20 or more for information giving purposes.
- As many as possible for motivational purposes.

Smaller meetings (10 or fewer people) are of vital importance to any organisation. Smaller meetings often accomplish a vast amount of work; however, smaller meetings are often much more difficult to conduct, because of the human factor involved (Nailer, 2008:21).

2.12 Create an effective agenda

The most important requirement of any effective meeting is the agenda. The agenda controls the meeting and whoever controls the agenda, controls the meeting (Baker, 2007:48).

2.12.1 The purpose of an agenda

The agenda normally contains items to be presented or discussed within a timeframe attached to each item. The purpose of the meeting will be defined in the agenda. It can also be seen as the script. The agenda needs to include a brief description of the meeting objectives. Think about the agenda as a work plan for a project (Streibel, 2003:37). In planning the agenda and materials, the chairperson's focus must be on the meeting outcomes. The objectives of the meeting are topics or subjects to be

accomplished. The agenda is not the objectives of the meeting *per se*. A meeting agenda only lists the topics (Lewis, 2009:17).

The chairperson is responsible for the agenda. The subjects of the agenda come from several sources. The agenda must be balanced by means of the allotment of time to provide information, a discussion period, space for the unexpected etc. The agenda belongs to the assembly. Write down the purpose of the agenda in the form of goals for the meeting. List topics to be covered. The agenda serves as a reminder to the participants about the goals of the meeting (Streibel, 2003:13). Meeting participants need to know what kind of input they should give. Specify whether they need to bring any materials with or have to do preparations in order to participate in the meeting. Agree to starting and ending times and stick to those.

Place most important things first on the agenda. If the chairperson runs out of time, the less unimportant items can be left out. An agenda is meaningless if nobody follows it. Distribute the agenda well in advance of the meeting. It is important to clearly specify the objective associated with each agenda item. A different approach is also to put the less important issues at the top of the agenda. If they are at the bottom, the meeting will never get to them, because all the time is spent on the big issues. Table 2.9 below explains the reasons for an agenda

Table 2.9: Reasons for an agenda

No.	Topic	Description
1.	Communication	Agenda communicates important information to the attendees, such as topics of discussion, presenter of each topic, time allotted for each topic.
2.	Outline	The agenda provides an outline for the meeting, e.g. how long to spend on each topic.
3.	Checklist	The agenda can be used as a checklist to ensure all topics are covered.
4.	Participants' tool	It allows the participants to come to the meeting prepared.
5.	Focus	The agenda provides a focus on the clearly-stated

No.	Topic	Description
		objectives.

Source: Streibel (2003:12)

2.12.2 Advantages of the agenda

- Written agendas maximise the productivity of the group.
- Written agendas save time during the meeting process.
- An effective agenda ensures that all the participants are prepared for the meeting. Meetings are much more effective when the attendees know what to expect before they arrive and can prepare in advance (Gutmann, 2008:29).
- Agendas ensure that each agenda item achieves the desired outcome.
- A well-thought-out agenda will go a long way in ensuring your meeting is effective and efficient.

2.12.3 Process of setting up an agenda

- Send out an e-mail about the goal of the planned meeting.
- Ask the participants for agenda items.
- Set up an agenda with a timeline.
- Send the updated agenda to all the participants.

For each agenda item there must be:

- A topic stated in question format.
- The person responsible for leading the discussion.
- Information relative to the issue.
- Time allotted to the issue.

Distribution of the agenda will depend on the culture of the workplace. Distribution normally takes place electronically, but good practice proposes that a few hard copies are at hand during the meeting. An example of an effective agenda that can

be used is presented in Appendix 5. The date of the next meeting is also an important agenda item.

2.13 The timeline of the meeting

A clear timeline keeps people on the topic and offers direction. It is a tool for planning and allows participants to prepare based on the time allotments. Participants who have a negative attitude towards time will influence the objectives of the meeting. Always begin and end on time. Ban the culture to wait for late comers and to repeat because of late comers.

It is better to have too much time and accomplish the outcomes of the meeting than running short on time and not achieving the set goals. Meetings should have a timekeeper to help manage the time. Most literature states that meetings should not be longer than 90 minutes – one hour is a good limit. This does, however, depend on the purpose of the meeting and some meetings can take up a full day.

2.13.1 Timeslot of the meeting

Software programmes, like Outlook® are used to determine the availability of participants for a meeting. Scheduling meetings becomes when one has to find a time slot that can accommodate all the participants. The chairperson or meeting planner must find a time slot that is suited to all participants, instead of just finding one that is available to all participants (Wainer, 2007:286). For meetings that repeat on a regular basis, the easiest way to set dates is to agree on dates in advance at the first meeting.

Finally, end the planning process with a feeling of confidence in the plan and all the work the chairperson has done to prepare for an effective meeting.

2.14 The meeting process

2.14.1 The opening of the meeting

The following process can be followed during the opening of the meeting:

- Start the meeting on time and welcome the participants. The chairperson can introduce him-/herself and let others introduce themselves and explain their roles during the meeting. Be polite and make use of icebreakers. Build initial enthusiasm and grab the attendees' attention, thereby setting the tone of the meeting. (Streibel, 2003:43).
- Consider a warm up. This will help the participants to interact with each other in a less formal manner (Hagerty, 1990:375.)
- Take time to build trust and involve everyone. Encourage people to speak freely.
- Pass around the attendees' list.
- Overview the purpose of the meeting and agenda.
- Review the ground rules.
- Introduce the minute taker and timekeeper.
- Set a time frame and stick to it. Stick to the agenda.
- Explain the decision-making process at the beginning of the meeting.

A poor welcome or a late start creates an uncomfortable situation. An effective opening is crucial because it sets the stage and makes participants comfortable. Openings also bridge the gap between what the participants were doing before the meeting and the purpose of the meeting (Lewis, 2009:36). Never overlook the social side of meetings.

2.14.2 During the meeting

The key to success is to maintain control. Do this by sticking to the agenda. Throughout the meeting, participants should continue to feel that they are welcome, are useful to the group and are receiving personalised attention. If a decision is not reached about a point on the agenda, the point can be postponed until a later meeting, giving everybody time to think about the issue. If a decision in the meeting needs to be resolved by means of voting exercises, not all attendees need to vote, only those who are actively involved in what will happen after the meeting.

The chairperson should establish an appropriate pace in the timeframe of the schedule. Productivity is one of the key characteristics of a successful meeting or at least progress. Time management is important during the meeting. Time is money and meetings cost a lot of both. Good cooperation between the timekeeper and the chairperson is necessary. It is also true that the purpose of the meeting is more important than the minutes. It is more important for the group to be effective than efficient (Striebel, 2003:66). The clock must not limit discussions or drive decisions.

Focus on the most important issues during a meeting. Do not struggle with unimportant issues. The most effective meetings focus on the most important issues. All actions agreed to in the meeting need to be allocated to persons present at the meeting. It is not appropriate to allocate an action to someone that is not present at the meeting.

2.14.3 Closing the meeting

The attention to detail pertaining to a meeting's conclusion is just as important as the opening of the meeting. The facilitator must end the meeting with the following basic questions (Striebel, 2003:91):

- Why did they meet?
- Were the objectives met?
- What are the following steps?

Save some time at the end to review and summarise the meeting. Send a meeting summary or minutes to all participants as soon as possible. The meeting must be closed with a sense of accomplishment and direction. This is possible by using a memorable message and a feeling of accomplishment.

2.14.4 Steps for ending meetings

- End on time (Gause, 1989:80);

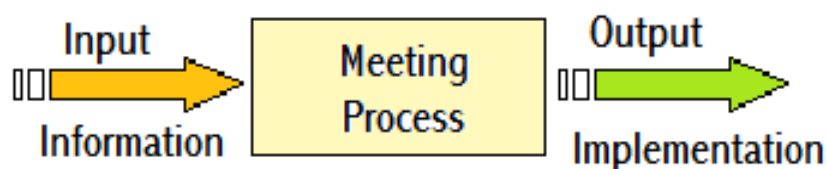
- As the minute taker to review all the decisions that were made and determine who takes responsibility to carry them out;
- Set a time, agenda and place for the next meeting, if any;
- Evaluate the meeting by referring to the purpose or goal and determine how successful the team has been; and
- Express appreciation. Thank the participants, the timekeeper and minute-taker.

It is just as important to conclude a meeting effectively as it is to have a good introduction (Lewis, 2009:124). The chairperson should send the attendees away with a feeling of satisfaction that their time and energy were well spent. In the end, the chairperson must turn all the preparations and contributions into results.

2.15 More about the meeting process

The manner in which a group discusses topics is called the “process”. The process can determine the success or failure of a group meeting (Payne, 2002:1). A process can be explained as a series of things that happen and can have a particular result.

Figure 2.2: A simple meeting process



Source: This (1972:6)

Michael Bergemann, manager of 3M Meeting Network, views the meeting process in terms of “conversations” (Streibel, 2003:17). He distinguishes between three basic conversations during the meeting process. His method is explained in Table 2.10 below.

Table 2.10: Michael Bermann's conversation meeting process

Term	Stage	Decryption
Conversation of possibility	Open	• Maximise creativity • Generate and discuss ideas • Brainstorm
Conversation of opportunity	Narrow	• Narrow down field of options • Discuss, share information and analyse
Conversation of action	Close	• Make decision • Commit to taking action • Vote on proposals

Source: Streibel (2003:17)

During a meeting, the chairperson can also make use of different process tools to produce results. Process tools are structured activities for meetings (Kaye, 1998:30). Process tools allow people to focus on the solution, rather than the process. Some process tools are:

- Idea harvesting
- Balanced dialogue
- Voting

Once a meeting begins, everyone is expected to give their full attention. No one should be called from the meeting unless it is so important that the disruption would occur even if the meeting was 100 kilometres away from the workplace. This is called the "100-kilometer rule". The "100-kilometer rule can be included in the ground rules. An organisation consists of a number of people of whom a certain number or "Quorum" must be present at meetings if the decisions taken are to be recognised as valid and binding.

2.15.1 Communication during a meeting process

All activities during a meeting process evolve around communication. The chairperson needs basic communication skills during the facilitation purposes. These so-called communication skills are needed to interact with each other in a respectful and productive manner. Many meetings go bad because of the lack of proper communication between the attendees. Many people have natural communication skills, but what about those who battle with communication? A very successful engineer is not always a successful communicator. In his or her line of work communication is not the most important skill to have. However, it is possible to improve the skill leading to a great improvement in work output.

During a meeting communication is important because: (Huebsch, 1986:7).

- individuals should use communication skills to listen to others in a respectful manner;
- individuals should use communication skills to share personal and professional experiences;
- individuals should use communication skills to be heard; and
- individuals should use communication skills to solve problems.

Basic communication skills. It is not possible to cover all basic communication skills within the context of this study, but it is worthwhile to look at some basic communication skills that are most important to the meeting process. The first part is “reflecting listening” skills. Most people do not have the skills to listen. They only hear what they want to hear and are quick to react on it before they really understand what the message was. This skill relates to the receiving of the message. It is the chairperson’s responsibility to make sure that the correct message was received by the audience by repeating the message. The second part of communication skills is the expression. The sender of the message uses tools to send a clear, responsible message and to establish clear boundaries.

Communication is more than words and listening or even conversation. Language, body language and the context or situation within which the communication occurs,

will affect the message. For a meeting to reach its full potential, it should be possible for members to be able to say what they think, ask for help, share new or unpopular ideas and risk making mistakes. This can only happen in an atmosphere where team members are free to communicate.

The level of communication skills will differ from organisation to organisation. The managers/leaders will probably have a natural way of communicating. It is obvious that the chairperson should also have great communication skills. It will be an investment for the organisation to send their employees on a basic communication course. Organisation's can develop their own communication course and run it internally. It will not only benefit the meeting process, but also improve productivity on all levels of the organisation. Effective communication during the meeting process will benefit the process, making it shorter and more productive.

Technical Communication: Technical communication is the process of conveying technical information through writing, speech and other media. Technical communication is important for the meeting process. Information is usable if the intended audience can perform an action or make a decision based on it. All technical communication is done with a particular end in mind. The technical communication and technical writing are very important for meetings of professionals. Technical communication is important to engineers, mainly for the purpose of being professional and accurate.

Communication model: There are many communication models available. It is important to look more closely to a meeting model and how it can be applied during a meeting process. The Shannon-Weaver model is described and provided in Figure 2.3 below (Huebsch, 1986:43). The following is useful and can be applied during a meeting process.

Information source: A person with a message (Meeting inputs)

The message: It is sent via the information source and received at the destination (Objectives of the meeting)

A transmitter: The mouth (sound) that transmits signals from one person to another (Also technology during virtual meetings)

The signal: It flows through the channel

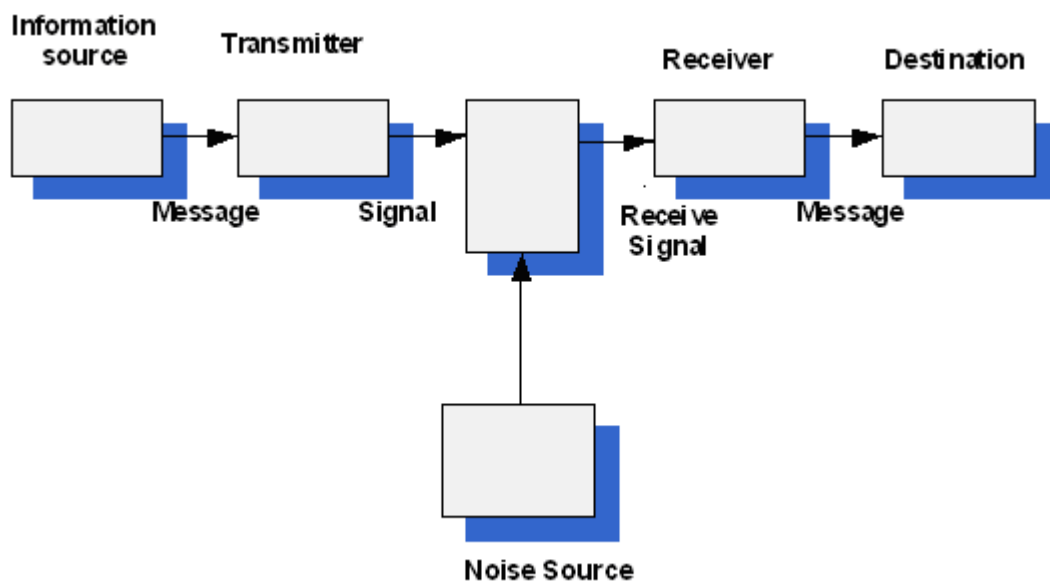
A channel: The airwaves

Noise: Signal carried

Receiver: Set of ears (Attendees)

Destination: A person who consumes and processes the message (Desired outcome of the meeting)

Figure 2.3: Shannon-Weaver communication model



2.16 Problems during the meeting process

Possible problems with solutions that can develop during the meeting process are summarised in Table 2.11 below.

Table 2.11: Problems during the meeting process

Problem	Possible solution
Distractions	People entering and exiting the room while meeting is ongoing. Break regularly during long meetings. People entering and leaving through the back, can help.
Late-comers	Encourage people to be on time. Change schedule if necessary.

Problem	Possible solution
Arguments	Regain control and summarise different viewpoints.
Negativity	Chairperson must ask for positive suggestions.
Low energy	Get people involved by means of brainstorming. Have a break to stretch.
Talkers	Break in and summarise. Ask leading questions.

Source: Munter (1985:7)

2.17 Meeting minutes

The minutes of a meeting are essential to following up on the decisions and the actions (Striebel, 2003:10). Good minutes do not only document what happened during the meeting, but also what is happening as result of the meeting. Part of the aim of the minutes is communication – communication about the meeting, about decisions, about actions and about accomplishments. The chairperson should not take the minutes because he or she needs to focus on the facilitation of the meeting. An example of the format of minutes can be found in Appendix 7.

Make sure that the minutes are an accurate account of the meeting before circulating. The minutes should be easy to scan and the facts should stand out. Make the minutes easy to read for the reader. The minutes should be sent out as soon as possible. All the meeting participants should receive a copy of the minutes. The minute-taker is responsible for the publishing and distribution of the minutes.

The minutes also play an important role as tracking document pertaining to the progress of a project, or the performance of a team or employee. If one of the members missed one document due to sickness or circumstances, he or she can use the minutes as an update. Modern technology can be used to store the minutes on a system that is easily accessible to the relevant members (Striebel, 2003:10).

2.18 Actions after the meeting

2.18.1 Follow-up

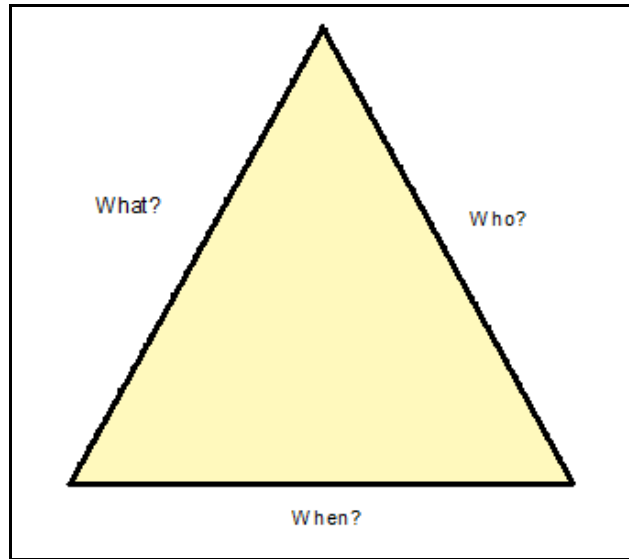
Following up after the meeting is the last critical step in making the meeting more effective. No meeting is ever an end in itself, but forms part of an ongoing cycle in the lives of managers and organisations (Baker, 2007:121). Many meeting goals have failed completely because the follow-up process was not conducted. The follow-up process can be as follows:

- Distribute the action minutes as soon as possible.
- Follow-up on discussions.
- Check on progress of actions.

Action notes are most effective when they say enough, but just enough to explain the point. State every decision that was made clearly and identify who has agreed to do what and by when. The following information should be provided to all attendees after the meeting:

- Decisions reached at the meeting.
- Action items. What is going to be done? Who will take responsibility? When will the actions be completed?
- Items not resolved that need to be carried over.

Figure 2.4: The action triage



Source: Gutmann (2008:113)

2.19 Evaluate the meeting

Evaluating each meeting is an important key for having an effective meeting. If the chairperson wants to improve his or her meeting, he or she should spend some time on the evaluation of the meeting process. It is not easy to answer the question, "How can an organisation determine if a meeting was effective?". The Chairperson can measure the success of the meeting against three criteria (Lewis, 2009:145).

- Were the meeting objectives accomplished?
- Was the meeting held in a time effective manner?
- Were the participants satisfied with the results?

A meeting evaluation form can be use to determine the effectiveness of meetings. An example of such a form can be found in Appendix 4. It is also important that the chairperson should conduct a self-evaluation after the meeting. It is not always possible to determine the effectiveness of the meeting after the meeting ended. The proof of productivity is in the action items decided on during the meeting. This is why

every action item must have an owner and a timeframe. The chairperson should plan a follow-up meeting where the attendees can report back on the progress of their actions.

2.20 General points of importance for an effective meeting

- Be clear about the need and the purpose of the meeting and be clear about the outcomes required from any meeting.
- The organiser and participants must understand the meeting as a business process.
- Design meetings by using a wide range of techniques, methods and tools. Do not always use the default process by talking and talking and.....
- The organiser should plan the meeting process to ensure that he or she gets full participation from the participants.
- Design and lead meetings that serve the purpose.
- Be prepared to work with challenging situations and challenging individuals.
- Things that must be in place for bigger meetings, agendas, ground rules, and meeting assistants (Fetzer, 2009:1).
- All participants must have a valid reason for being in the meeting.
- The meeting should be as short as possible and according to the agenda.
- Without an agenda, the chairperson risks losing control and ending up with no results (Kaye, 1998:2).
- The chairperson should place the results that he or she wishes to achieve by the end of the meeting on paper and then determine whether a meeting is the best way to get there.
- Cancel the meeting if key players are not available.
- Use a consultant facilitator for long and difficult meetings.

2.21 Different roles during the meeting

Each person in the meeting has a specific function or role. Participants present in meetings without any role do not belong there. Each person in the meeting is a potential valuable resource, that is why he or she was invited. Only the word

“participants” is used and it refers to people who participate in a meeting. This word suggests an active participation and not only an attendance (Streibel, 2003:ix). A role is a set of behaviours by which participants can help the meeting achieve its objectives. During a meeting, there will be four different categories or types of people present (Baker, 2007:34).

- Ideas people
- Action people
- Administrators
- Carers

2.21.1 Roles of the chairperson

The word "chairman" can be traced back as far as the middle ages (around 1200 BC), when the king and his council would meet. Only the king had a chair, and "chairman" was a euphemism for the king who had complete control over the meeting. The others, who sat on the ground, on stools or carpets, always agreed with what the king said if they wanted to keep their heads.

Chairing a meeting, leading a group and conducting a meeting are different tasks, but they are usually done by the same person, namely the chairperson. *The role of the chairperson is to facilitate the meeting in such a way that the collective wisdom of the attendees is tapped into, while keeping discussions in line with the meeting objectives.* For purposes of this study, the roles of the facilitator and chairperson are considered to be the same. Some studies, however, suggest that they have different roles.

In an organisation, the manager or the leader is normally the chairperson of meetings. It can happen that an outside facilitator is hired to chair the meetings. This is normally done because of the complexity of the goals of the meeting and because of the special skills that the facilitator has. To chair a meeting is a full-time job for such facilitators. For the purpose of this study, and because it is the norm in the business environment, the manager/leader is also the chairperson. The leadership skills of the chairperson play a vital role in the success of the meeting. In this

situation, the chairperson is part-time facilitator as well as participant. However, Steve Kaye (1998:83) does not agree and states in his book that “facilitation is a full time job. It is impossible to be both a facilitator and a participant.”

A chairperson acts as the referee of the meeting (Fetzer, 2009:1827). The chairperson must make sure that the ground rules are followed and that the agenda is kept. The chairperson should be part diplomat and part headmaster. It is important for the chairperson to know the techniques of a meeting, but it is even more important to master the hands-on practice by practising. The chairperson’s role is to make sure that the attendees can answer the following question at the end of the meeting: “Was the meeting momentarily satisfying, a real pleasure or a total and boring waste of time?” (Anon, 2003:10).

The most difficult task of a chairperson is time management. Time seems to run out before all tasks are completed (Streibel, 2003:56). After the people have finished speaking, the chairperson should summarise the opinions expressed. The chairperson can spot leaders in the group because the meeting can count on them. A good chairperson can turn a bad meeting into a productive work session with little effort. Some important responsibilities of the chairperson are summarised in Table 2.12 below.

Table 2.12: Responsibilities of the chairperson

Role	Action
Creates a favourable climate	The climate of the meeting is not only the responsibility of the chairperson, but a good attitude and the impression the person creates greatly affect the climate.
Works in a relaxed atmosphere	Make good use of humour. Lower stress levels.
Allows people to express their feelings	Understand the participants and let them express their feelings.
Does not let conflicts	The group can disagree, but they must not seek

Role	Action
degenerate	someone to blame.
Remembers the objectives	The mission of the group and the objective of the meeting must be fully understood. The chairperson should remind the members of this.
Leader	The chairperson is the leader. The chairperson takes advantage of personal experience of human relations to conduct a meeting.
Has well-prepared documents	Information feeds the group. The chairperson should make documents available far ahead of time.
Makes use of different tools	Charts, tear sheet stands, projectors etc.
Information bank	Good discussions cannot begin unless participants have received sufficient information to understand the issues under discussion.
Makes decisions	The chairperson must make sure that the decisions made truly reflect the wishes of the group.
Enforcer, moderator	The chairperson should demonstrate both firmness and understanding in enforcing the rules.

Source: Remp (1974:112) & Kay (195:75)

General tips for a chairperson (Della Porta, 2006:46):

- Create an agenda and stick to it;
- Watch the clock;
- Turn ideas and decisions into action;
- Have fun, but do not mismatch activities and people;
- Speak plain English;
- Learn from your mistakes;
- Take responsibility;
- Stay neutral with regard to the meeting content; and
- Focus on the energy of the group.

The chairperson is the process expert, and not the content expert. According to Mark Deaval (2010:8), all great managers share the following qualities. These can also be applied to meeting chairpersons.

- They have influence;
- They are leaders;
- They have integrity;
- They are trustworthy;
- They are disciplined;
- They are tenacious;
- They are problem-solvers;
- They are proactive;
- They use well-defined meeting processes;
- They are good communicators;
- They are passionate;
- They are compassionate;
- They are loyal; and
- They are competent.

2.21.2 Roles of the participants

The role of the participants is to prepare for, and engage constructively in meetings, so that the desirable results can be accomplished. Therefore, have the “right” people at the meeting. The meeting participants should be given the problems that are going to be discussed prior to the meeting. Participants should:

- Review the agenda;
- Make their way to the meeting in time;
- Ask relevant questions during the meeting; and
- Leave the meeting when it is scheduled to end.

According to Fetzer (2009:3), are there two important types of participants. Those who are needed to reach decisions and those who need to know the outcome of the

decisions and information. The other participants are optional. Their attendance can be useful, but they are not needed to make the meeting successful and effective. It is important that participants know why they are there and why the meeting exists. They must feel that they can contribute to the mission or the action of the group. Participants should come prepared to the meeting according to the agenda. If an attendee cannot attend a meeting, he or she should designate an alternative with the same knowledge of the topic or the goal of the meeting.

Attendees are not always skilled as communicators. The chairperson can tactfully help them by saying, “If I understand correctly, you want to tell us....”. Some of the participants will be dominant and they contribute significantly to the success of the meeting. They can also be overwhelmed and can have a negative impact on the meeting outcomes. It is the chairperson’s responsibility to control their energy without losing their support (Kaye, 1998:95).

According to the “Fédération des comités de parents (FCPPQ)” (Anon, 2003:8), there are three types of participants. The chairperson should immediately recognise the three categories in a group and lead the meeting by using the group’s knowledge. These groups are described in Table 2.13 below.

Table 2.13: Different groups of attendees

No	Types	Characteristics	Role
1	Creative people	They bring new ideas to the table. They love action. They are in a hurry to reach a conclusion.	Endorse the group’s adjectives and cooperate with them.
2	Intellectuals	They like to discuss.	Brainstorming role.
3	Negative assets	They interfere with the group’s effectiveness.	Non-asset to the goal of the meeting.

Source: ANON (2003:8)

If the attendees clearly understand the goals of the meeting, they will respond enthusiastically to the goals and will play an active role. Participants should improve

their listening skills. Most people think they listen well, but the truth is that most people do not listen at all. During a meeting, they just speak and then think about what they are going to say next. Good listening means asking relevant questions and clearing your mind of distractions, including what they are going to say next.

2.21.3 Role of the note-taker

The note-taker take notes during the discussion, type them up and distribute them to all participants. He or she is responsible for displaying a “living record” of the progress of the group (Streibel, 2003:55). Such a person can make use of a flipchart, pad of paper or electronic aid to capture the minutes. The method will be determined by the nature of the organisation. The aim is to capture the basics of the meeting for a permanent record. The note-taker should focus on the decisions, action items, open issues and key discussion points.

2.21.4 Role of the timekeeper

The timekeeper’s role is to help the chairperson with effective timekeeping. The person’s role is to make sure that the meeting process begins and ends on time. The timekeeper makes use of the agenda and the time allotted on the agenda. If a group goes beyond the allotted time for an activity, the timekeeper interrupts and asks the group to make a decision. Because very few meetings run exactly according to the allotted time, the timekeeper needs to adjust the beginning and ending time if the group falls behind (Streibel, 2003:56).

2.22 Decision-making approach during a meeting

During the meeting, a stage is reached where the members of the meeting have to make a decision. The aim of this study is not to look at the “*decision-making process*”, but it is worthwhile to look at some of the decision-making approaches generally used in meetings. As mentioned before, the decision making-process must be explained at the beginning of the meeting.

What is an effective decision? An effective decision made during a meeting should meet the following criteria (Della Porta, 2006:28):

- Effective decisions should meet the needs of the group members who made them;
- Effective decisions should either be made by or supported by all group members;
- Effective decisions should be made within a reasonable length of time; and
- Effective decisions should contribute to group cohesiveness.

Consensus is the most important word during the decision-making process. The stated objectives of many meetings are to reach consensus. Consensus involves the reaching of an agreement by the whole group on a course of action. Although some members may feel that other choices may be better for one or other reason, a consensus is built when all members come together in the final choice. Only in a perfect world will all members leave the meeting with a high degree of satisfaction pertaining to decisions made at a meeting process – the so-called “perfect consensus”. It will only be effective if the chairperson’s objective for the meeting reaches perfect consensus, but is it possible? It is important to think strategically about the degree of consensus needed. Comfortable consensus is enough for many objectives.

Definition of comfortable consensus: The term refers to final agreements that all participants can at least live with (Bens, 2005:16).

During a meeting, a decision-making process has to be followed. It is the chairperson’s responsibility to guide the participants through the decision-making process. The process used to make a decision affects how people feel about the decision (Streibel, 2003:18). The chairperson must determine in advance who should be and is involved with a particular project, outcome or goal and what decision-making approach should be followed. Meeting participants need to know in advance what kind of input they are expected to give that will lead to the effective decision.

There are different approaches to the decision-making process that can be chosen from. A combination of the approaches can also be used (Namara, 2008:4). The different approaches are described in Table 2.14 below.

Table 2.14: Decision-making approaches

Type of approach	How it works
Delegate with given expectations	• Use area of expertise.
Consensus	• The entire group has to agree. • Careful decision-making process
Gather input from team/group and decide	• Inclusive but speedy.
Gather information from individuals and decide	• Democratic, inclusive. • Use voting process.
Decide and announce	• Quickest alternative.

Source: Namara (2008:4)

Another simple decision-making approach is as follows (Streibel, 2003:19):

- *Managerial.* The leader makes the call. Make use of managerial authority. Managers make the decision and announce, explain and discuss it before implementation.
- *Vote.* Majority rules. This method must make sense under the meeting conditions.
- *Consensus.* Result that all participants can support. Team approach.
- *Delegation.* Select members from the group to make the decision based on research or facts.

Some important problem-solving methods can be used and are discussed in Table 2.15 below.

Table 2.15: Problem-solving methods

Steps	Action	Comments
1.	Identify the desire state	• Define the problem. Brainstorm. • Groups provide different views than individuals.
2.	Define and analyse the problem	• Gather as much information as possible. • Use surveys, focus groups. • Information from internal or external sources. • SWOT analysis.
3.	List possible solutions	• Generate multiple ideas and solutions. • Teams must not jump to this step.
4.	Evaluate and choose best solution	• Systematically evaluate each problem against best option. • Clarify discussion and summarise results.

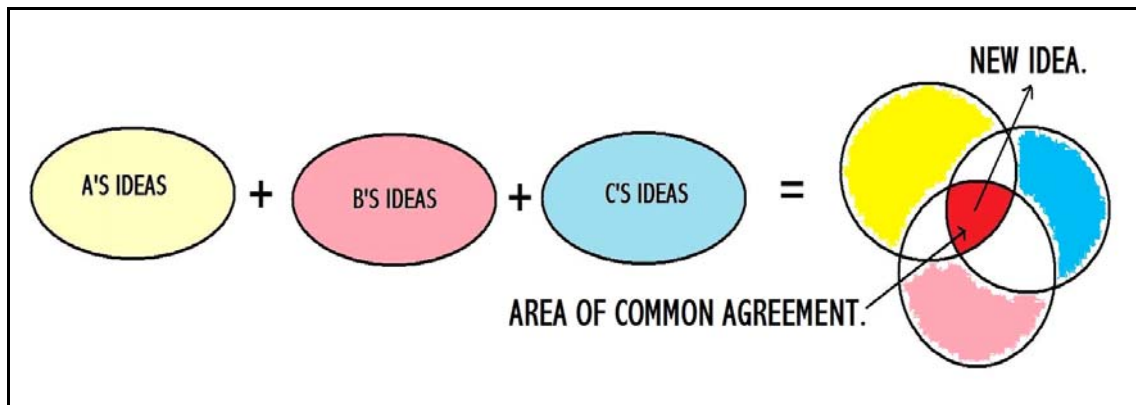
Source: Lewis (2009:66)

2.23 Brainstorming

Brainstorming is used to help groups make quick and effective decisions at any point and time during the meeting. The technique stimulates the flow of ideas for any topic or problem. The following is important during brainstorming (Lynn, 2002:19):

- Everybody must participate;
- All ideas should be recorded;
- Write down or throw out ideas without concern about negative feedback;
- Repetitions of ideas are allowed;
- Building on others ideas is encouraged (Piggybacking); and
- Strive towards quantity vs. quality of ideas.

Figure 2.5: Brainstorming in action



Source: Busch (1959:3)

How to use Brainstorming (Della Porta, 2006:52):

- Step 1: Decide on a topic (Ideas for solutions)
- Step 2: Write down the key questions on a flip chart/board
- Step 3: Each member offers an idea
- Step 4: Record all ideas on a flip chart
- Step 5: Keep going until all ideas are exhausted
- Step 6: Discuss and clarify ideas on the list

Electronic brainstorming (EBS) is sometimes used in organisations. It is a new technique that allows the members to make use of computers to exchange ideas. EBS is used as part of a regular organisation meeting process (Kay, 1995:22).

2.24 Idea bin

Place unrelated ideas into an idea bin. It can be a blank white charter paper with ideas on it. Each new idea is written on it. When somebody thinks about an unrelated idea, write it down and save it for an appropriate time. This helps to free the attendees' thoughts to focus on the meeting (Kaye, 1998:92). The advantages are that it helps to save ideas while maintaining a focus on the real and important issues. With these ideas, the diamonds can be sorted from the pebbles.

2.25 Problems during the meeting process

During the meeting process, a few problems can arise. These so-called problems can be short and will pass quickly if an experienced chairperson deals with it (Kayle, 998:91). In Table 2.16 below, there are some of the more common problems, with a proposed solution to deal with the problem.

Table 2.16: Summary of problems during a meeting process

No	Problem	Negative effect	Possible solution
1.	Personal attack	• Hurts people. • Meeting is less effective. • Unrest during the meeting process.	• Speak tactfully to the meeting. • Explore the cause(s) of the attack. • Call a break and coach the attacker.
2.	Endless monologue by one of the participants	• Waste of time. • Participants will become negative. • Misses the goal of the meeting.	• The chairperson can intervene.
3	Deadlocked discussion	• Gap appears in agreement. • Meeting process is trapped in endless arguments.	• Divide meeting into subcommittees. • Get an analysis.
4.	Dominant participants	• Overwhelming, intimidating and exclusion of others.	• Ask others to contribute. • Use a process tool. • Create barriers.
5.	Drifting from the topic	• Hurts the productivity. • Jumps from topic to topic without	• Use the idea bin.

No	Problem	Negative effect	Possible solution
		completing anything.	
6.	Multiple conversations	• Unproductive behaviour. • Lack of concentration pertaining to the objectives.	• The chair should ask for cooperation. • Use process tools.

Source: Kayle (1998:91)

In the above table, the chairperson uses diplomatic techniques to solve the problem. However, if the problem is more serious, the following tools can be used for more extreme action:

- *End the meeting*: Postpone the meeting to a later date in order to focus on the problem and be better prepared for the next meeting (Kay, 1995:111).
- *Call a break*. Use the time during the break to calm your feelings and plan a solution (Kay, 1995:112).

2.26 Use a parking lot

A parking lot is a list on the wall that the group uses to save valuable tangents for later conversation or consideration (Della Porta, 2006:56). Use five minutes of the meeting time for this parking lot. It is always the last item on the agenda. Decide in that time which ideas to ignore and which to use. Wrap up each agenda item, this means also determining who is going to do what by when.

2.27 The use of an outside facilitator

The facilitator can be defined as the person who makes things easier for the group by smoothing the path, so the group can work better together (Lynn, 2002:17). Meetings designed to move a group towards consensus should use a facilitator rather than a chairperson (Anon, 2006:3). Outside facilitators are normally very successful consultants that can be very useful (This, 1972:23).

The role of the facilitator has already been discussed in this study, but it is important to look at the use of an outside facilitator. It is normal practice that the manager/leader facilitates his or her own meeting. However, in certain situations it will be more appropriate to make use of an outsider to lead the meeting. Large and important meetings are normally led by a professional facilitator. When the outcomes of a meeting have a huge effect on the stakeholders, an outside facilitator is needed to lead the meeting. Such facilitators are normally professionals whose work it is to lead meetings. They can take the blame of unfavourable, but correct decisions away from the manager. Some facilitators can be a specialist in a certain field and this will help the organisation to solve problems in a more professional manner. The facilitator is the process expert, and not the content expert. Such facilitators can give the manager more freedom to participate in the process.

2.28 Group work

A meeting is a group in action (Barker, 2007:14). It is necessary for the managers/leaders to understand how groups behave in order to manage effective meetings. The meeting group can consist of a newly formed team or a regular committee. Groups are a number of people who interact with each other in some way. Group objectives can be task or social objectives (Barker, 2007:15). Both objectives will be present during a meeting, but groups should be aware that the objectives do not mismatch. A group should be managed in order for them to grow and develop. The success of the group will depend on group behaviour. Behaviour in meetings can be defined as task behaviour (contribution to the meeting work) and process behaviour (helping the group develop) (Barker, 2007:24).

Task behaviour:

- Defining the problem
- Seeking and giving information
- Setting standards
- Diagnosing
- Testing for consensus

Process behaviour:

- Responding

Gate-keeping
Following and listening
Relieving tension
Mediating

Non-functional behaviour:

Aggression
Blocking
Competing
Special pleading
Seeking attention

Managing the group during the meeting is essential for effective meeting outcome. Groups are developed and managed according to a four-stage model (Barker, 2007:29):

- *Forming:* First stage. Individuals have not yet become a group.
- *Storming:* This stage is characterised by conflict.
- *Norming:* Group finds a shared frame of reference and a set of norms.
- *Performing:* Group gets on with the task, fully mature.

Managers and meeting leaders can use this model to improve their performance and the model can also indicate why a meeting may go wrong (Barker, 2007:29).

2.29 Virtual meetings

Definition: Online virtual meetings are real-time interactions that take place over the Internet using features such as audio and videos, chat tools, and application sharing (Anon., 2006).



An older *definition* states that virtual meetings are communication and collaboration involving two or more people who are not present in the same physical place or at the same time (Streibel, 2003:160). The virtual meeting that technology allows still fits the basic definition of meetings, namely as an event consisting of people, content, and a process for a purpose (Streibel, 2003:159).

Electronic group meetings, making use of communication technology, have a great potential for permitting discussion among people who otherwise would be unable to meet (Remp, 1974:102). This statement by Richard Remp shows the date when the importance of so-called “distance meetings” was recognised.

The common meeting is an integral part of the everyday life of organisation employees, especially when operating on managerial level. However, due to travel, time or other constraints, people are often not able to attend all meetings they need to. Virtual meetings can address this problem. In the past years, a number of different technologies emerged that make it possible to allow meetings to be held, where business can be conducted and participants communicate, without being physically in the same location. The new “groupware” aims to place the computer squarely in the middle of communications among managers, professional and everybody else who interacts. Technology changes low-tech conference rooms into multimedia “War Rooms” (Jarvenpaa, 1988:645).

Assembling and working with virtual teams are common practices within the globalisation of organisations. This technology allows distant groups to interact over

the Web, even if they are thousands of kilometres away. It saves time and the expense of travelling. Virtual meetings open the door to great scheduling flexibility. Virtual meetings also remove the time (when) and the place (where) from the definition of a meeting, because time and place become less important. Computers provide recordings and analysis tools that allow groups to conduct surveys, analyse data and share documents over a distance. Some software programmes that are mostly used during videoconferences are CU-SeeMe and NetMeetings.

Electronic brainstorming (ESB) also resulted from technology development. Members of an organisation make use of computers to interact and to exchange ideas. Electronic brainstorming has been used to define the scope of a problem, to identify possible solutions, and to develop solutions to problems. In Figure 2.6 is a so called “Ring Cam” used and designed for capturing meetings. It consists of cameras and microphones.

Figure 2.6: An example of a “Ring Cam”



Source: ANON (2009)

Physical face-to-face meetings, however, are still the most effective type of meeting to convey feelings and meanings. It is not sensible or fair to hold a virtual meeting about a very serious matter.

2.29.1 Applications of virtual meetings

Virtual meetings make it easy to:

- meet with colleagues across the globe;
- allow participants to communicate from the desk by means of a conference call;
- deliver sales presentations and demos; and
- allow groups at different locations to sit in audio conference rooms. This is a combination of the traditional meeting and conference call.

2.29.2 Advantages of virtual meetings

- Virtual meetings are less expensive than face-to-face meetings, thus cost effective.
- Virtual meetings bring people together who are separated by space or time.
- Virtual meetings require more focus and more discipline.
- There is a huge saving in time and the cost of travelling (Kay, 1995:125).
- Audio meetings are easy to set up.
- Members can attend while sitting at their desks or even while travelling.

Source: Striebel (2003:161)

2.29.3 Disadvantages of virtual meetings

- No face-to-face contact. This makes team building difficult.
- Virtual meetings work for smaller groups, but it is difficult for larger groups.
- Using technology presents different challenges.
- Building trust between attendees is also a problem.
- Time zone differences are a concern.
- Sound and video quality can be affected by network traffic. Background noises can cause problems.

Source: Striebel (2003:162)

2.29.4 Different types of virtual meetings

Capturing devices focus on four major sources of data and are valuable for videoconferencing and meeting viewing:

- Video data
- Audio data
- Whiteboard marks
- Documents or presentations shown on monitors

The technology development in this area is so advanced that the use of cell phones for this type of meeting is the next step. The common types of virtual meetings are summarised in Table 2.17 below.

Table 2.17: Different types of virtual meetings with a short decryption of each

Name	Description
Audio conferencing or teleconferencing	• Connects three or more people by telephone or through the Internet. • Huge advantage because it saves time and money. • The technology is simple to set up and use. • Lack of visual material is a disadvantage and must be shared in advance via e-mail or fax.
Data conferencing or Web meetings	• Teleconferencing is distance conferencing by which the people are separated geographically. • Audio connection used to help meeting. • Make use of computers and web cameras.
Videoconferencing	• People are connected by using a combination of video, audio and data communication technology. • Limit the number of participants to make it more effective. • To set up the technology is more complex and needs more attention than the other methods. Also more

Name	Description
	expensive. • Makes use of television or computer screens.

Source: ANON (2009:2)

2.30 Hidden cost of meetings

Meetings cost any organisation more than what most managers realise. Is the meeting really worth all the salaries of the employees attending the meeting? Time is taken up before and after the meeting. For instance, a person will typically leave his current task half an hour before a meeting starts and will also take another half an hour to get back to and continue with his normal tasks after the meeting has ended. (Clover, 2010:1). Salary-based calculations take no account of the costs associated with meetings – the so-called hidden costs. In Table 2.18 below, a list of other hidden costs regarding meetings is presented.

Table 2.18: Meeting hidden cost list

No	Item	Description
1.	Opportunity cost	Opportunities that are missed because attendees are removed from their tasks to attend the meeting.
2.	Cost of overruns	There are far more meetings exceeding scheduled times than those that end on time.
3.	Preparations and follow up	Meeting preparations occupy three to five times the scheduled duration time.
4.	Overhead and administration cost	This category includes fixed costs such as the venue, hiring presentation equipment, stationery, technology used etc.
5.	Travel cost	Long distances are travelled to attend meetings by attendees.

Source: Clover (2010:2)

2.30.1 Basic calculation of meeting cost

Time is money and meetings are expensive. Using a simple calculation can determine the cost of any meeting. For example, assume that eight people earning R600 000 per annum are meeting for two hours. The calculation is as follows (Gutmann, 2008:6):

Item	@	R
Add up the annual salaries of those attending	600 000	4800000
Add 25% on cost	+ 25%	6000000
Divide by 52 weeks	/ 52	115384.6
Divide by standard hours per week	/ 40	2884.615
Multiply by time of meeting	X 2 hours	5769.231
Add hidden costs, such as hire, refreshment etc	+ 5000	10769.23
Cost of meeting		10769.23

This meeting will cost the organisation R10 769. Is it worth it? This was only the cost of the meeting. What about the preparation cost and the follow-up cost?

2.31 Return on investment of meetings (ROI)

The success of meetings can be measured by return on investment (ROI) or return on objective (ROO). The Sarbanes-Oxley Act requires the need to demonstrate results to management or the justification of one's job (Anon., 2010:2). Measuring ROI of a meeting is more complex than suspected. The first element of measuring ROI for meetings is to identify objectives. There must be a clear understanding of the desired outcome, although it is not always possible to measure the success of the programme. The second objective is to determine the measured strategy. Hard actual numbers should be evaluated, such as actual sales numbers vs. projected sales numbers. The strategy should deal with less tangible factors such as knowledge gaining from a training meeting or improvement in morale among the audience. There has to be an agreed method to measure performance against the objectives (Anon., 2010:2).

The most basic approach is to simply compare performance against set objectives. Each organisation should design its own measuring approach according to their business model. It is Important to note that the meeting should be designed with the ROI in mind. It is easy to do this with figures such as sales figures; however, intangible factors make it more complex. The aim is to design a Kea Performance Indicator (KPI) tool for meetings that is simple and easy to be used by managers.

Dr Jack Phillips formulated a model called “The Phillips model”: (Boone, 2009:6). It quantifies the meeting results into dollars and cents. The model is explained in Table 2.19 below.

Table 2.19: The Philips model

No	Action	Description
1.	Reaction, satisfaction and planned action	How was the meeting received in general, and what happens as result of the meeting?
2.	Learning	What did they learn during the meeting?
3.	Application and implementation	How can the meeting outcome be applied?
4.	Business impact	How will the organisation be affected by the meeting outcome?
5.	ROI	Money value of the meeting?
6.	Intangibles	If the meeting outcome impact cannot be converted to money, then what is the intangible benefit?

Source: Boone (2009:6)

Maria Connor (Anon, 2010:5) also developed a basic model that follows below:

$$\frac{\text{Total benefits} - \text{Total Cost}}{\text{Total cost}} \times 100 = \text{ROI}$$

Total benefit: Savings or anything that adds to the bottom line.

Total cost: All costs related to the meeting, including the hidden cost.

2.32 Meeting ethics

Meeting ethics is an important topic in any industry and can be a hot topic in industry circles (Craven & Golbowski, 2001:254). When faced with ethical issues, always ask the question, *“Is it the right thing to do?”*. A code of conduct helps to set standards for how people should behave, both towards each other and when carrying out duties on behalf of the organisation. Codes help meeting attendees know how they should and should not behave (Davey, 2007:3). A code of conduct is not the same as ground rules, because the code of conduct never changes, but the ground rules of a meeting can change from meeting to meeting. The ground rules can have the same rules as the code of conduct. A good practice is to display the organisation's meeting ethics on the notice board. Some useful codes of conduct are summarised in Table 2.20 below. An example of a code of conduct checklist is presented in Appendix F.

Table 2.20: Code of conduct for meetings

No	Conduct of meetings
1	All stakeholders should be included to determine the goals and objectives of the meeting.
2	Have a clear purpose or objective for the meeting, otherwise do not have a meeting at all.
3	Participants must deal with each other in an open, honest and respectful fashion at all times.
4	Confidential handling of all Information. Confidentially to protect the organisation's core business.
5	Participants should arrive on time for the meeting and stay for the duration of the meeting. Arrive in good time.
6	Participants will respect the views of others and allow others the opportunity to speak without interruption.
7	Switch off mobile phones.
8	Keep contributions brief and to the point.
9	Co-operate with the chair.
10	The objective of any meeting is to benefit the organisation, and not the

No	Conduct of meetings
	individuals.

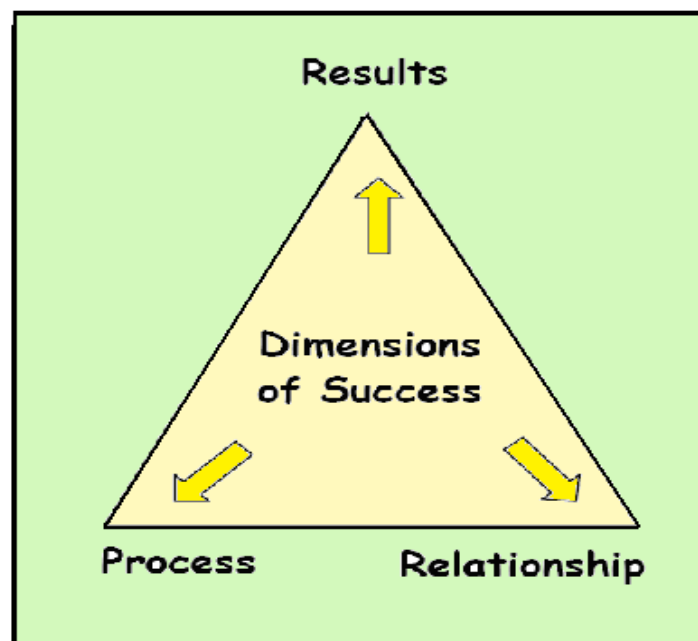
Source: Davey (2007:5)

2.33 Dimensions of a successful meeting

It is mostly the norm to focus on the outcomes or results to determine the success of a meeting. The following are some points to focus on when determining the success of a meeting (Brenner *et al.*, 2003:8).

- Results: Were the desired outcomes achieved?
- Process: Was the decision-making process clear and fair?
- Relationship: Were participants treated with respect and courtesy?

Figure 2.7: Dimension of success model



Source: Brenner *et al.* (2003:8)

2.34 General tips for effective meetings

- Split a long meeting into two shorter meetings. Studies have shown that the average person can pay attention in a meeting for approximately 20 minutes before he or she becomes fidgety (Church, 1988:9).
- Avoid Friday afternoons, because the participants' energy levels may be low.
- Schedule breaks every hour during long meetings.
- Focus everyone's thoughts on producing results (Kaye, 1998:2).
- Maintain a safe environment.
- Work as a team.
- Effective meetings lead to fewer meetings. Decline ineffective meetings.
- Be flexible. Meetings can be done standing up in the hallway, on the run. Meetings can be cancelled with no warning. Members have to deal with sudden shifts in their daily schedules.
- Introduce something new during a meeting. Take the next meeting off site. Meetings in new environments can spark creativity.
- Effective meetings are organised around actions.
- Prevent the expectations of the meeting attendees turning into frustrations.

2.35 Summary

In this chapter, different views of different authors were studied and the most relevant issues were compiled to help understand how effective meetings are supposed to work. This study is about how to manage meetings for everybody's benefit. Most of the studied material indicated that meetings are poorly organised, uninteresting and most studies are disappointed with the results.

Chapter 3

Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the methodology utilised to achieve the aims of the research as detailed in Chapter 1. In this chapter a questionnaire are designed and use that collects information from a group of employees who are regularly involved in meetings. The purpose of this is to gather data about knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours regarding the state of meetings in general. It focuses on the employees on all levels and positions. The research will highlight the factors that contribute to effective or bad meetings. It will also attempt to answer the question as to why meetings are effective or bad. The extent to which the questionnaire was structured depends on the purpose of the evaluation and can be used in other data collection methods.

3.2 Survey goals and objectives

In Chapter 1, the main purpose of this research was defined. After considering the relevant literature and journal information, it was noted that the value of the research can be focused on some key areas. The main objective of the survey is to determine the general state of meetings in an organisation. This is done by looking at the following:

- Training;
- Time spent in meetings;
- Attitude towards meetings;
- Meeting process in general;
- Measuring outcome and ROI of meetings;
- Use and roles of facilitators in the meeting process;
- Goals of meetings; and
- The use and attitude towards virtual meetings.

3.3 Research design

A research design is a designed method specifying the methods and procedures for collecting and analysing the information that is needed for the study. It is a framework that plans the action for the research section of the study. The objectives of the study, determined during the early stages of the study, are included in the design to ensure that the information collected is appropriate for solving the problem. The research should specify the source of information, the research method used, sampling methodology and the schedule and cost of the research (Zikmund, 2003.65).

The data will be collected by using a questionnaire. This questionnaire will be distributed to all age groups and levels in the division that is involved in daily meetings. A five-point Likert scale was used to answer the questions. This type of question examines how strongly the respondent agrees or disagrees with a statement and can help to assess the feelings of respondent towards issues.

3.4 Target population

Choosing subjects is an integral part of the research process. The sample will be drawn from the employees working in a specific workplace in the chemical industry. An attempt was made to get a random sample from the group that is evenly spread between levels, ages and genders.

3.5 Population and sample size

The population consists of all the items or individuals from which the study wishes to draw a conclusion. In this study, the population is a group of employees working in the Research and Development department of the organisation. A sample is the portion of the population selected for the analysis. The sample consisted of 70 participants and the population consist of 420 individuals. The purpose of sampling is to enable researchers to obtain data in order to estimate some unknown characteristic of the population. The simple random sampling technique was used.

3.6 Sample frame

A sample frame is the list of elements from which the sample may be drawn. For this research, the sampling frame is the full-time staff members of the organisation. A well-designed questionnaire that is used effectively can gather information on both overall performance of the test system and information on specific components of the system.

3.7 Data collection

The data for this case study was collected using a designed questionnaire. Questionnaires are an inexpensive way to gather data from a potentially large number of respondents. They are the most feasible way to reach a number of reviewers large enough to allow statistical analysis of the results. The questionnaire was designed to test the staff's attitude and feelings regarding meetings in general. It was also used to gain insight into the general state of the organisation's meeting process. The questionnaire consists of six demographic questions pertaining to gender, age, service years and position in the organisation. The second part consists of 42 close-format questions and ended with three open-format questions. Examples of questions in the questionnaire are provided in Appendix H.

3.8 Survey techniques

A survey research technique was used in which information is gathered from a sample of people using a questionnaire. The questionnaire that was used was self-administrated. The questionnaire consists mostly of close-format questions, but three open-format questions were also included to give the respondent more freedom of expression. Open-format questions are also useful to give more insight into the study. The advantages of close-format questions are to save time and to simplify statistical data generation. Paper-based questionnaires were used.

3.9 The measuring scale

In this study, a questionnaire was used to capture demographic as well as other important data from the respondents. The five-point Likert method was used. This pertains to how strongly the respondent agrees or disagrees with a statement and

can help to assess the feelings of the person towards the issues. An example of the measuring scale is provided in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Example of the questionnaire rating scale

1	Totally agree or excellent					
2	Partially agree or good					
3	Neither agree nor disagree or satisfactory					
4	Partially disagree or fair					
5	Totally disagree or poor					
No	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
1	Many meetings can be replaced by the use of e-mails or a phone call.		X			

3.10 Data analysis

The data obtained from the close-format questions was fed into a pre-designed Excel® spreadsheet. Some data points were tested by more than one question spaced out in the questionnaire. These questions were grouped together in the spreadsheet. The findings from the questionnaire are structured and documented in the second part of this chapter (Paragraph 3.13).

3.10.1 Analysing the close-format questions

Different groups of question are grouped together and fed into a pre-designed spreadsheet. The responses can be counted and used, for example X out of Y have formal training regarding meetings.

3.10.2 Analysing the open-format questions

It is more difficult to analyse open-format questions, but the following strategies were followed:

- Count the number of times a particular idea occurs and provide numerical data to it.
- The study will look at themes that were repeated.

3.11 Research limitations

One of the noted limitations of the research is the possibility that the research simply focused on selected items and neglected less common issues. The researcher is also a staff member of the organisation under investigation. Another limitation is that the research was only focused on one division of the organisation.

3.12 Responses to survey

A total amount of 70 questionnaires was distributed by hand among the employees of the organisation. Sixty-five were received back by the cut-off date. Only one questionnaire could not be used because of missing data. A total of 64 questionnaires were therefore analysed. A summary of the responses of the respondents is provided in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2: Summary of the survey responses

Description	Count	Percentage
Number of questionnaires distributed	70	
Number of questionnaires received back	65	93%
Number of questionnaires discarded	1	1.54%
Number of questionnaires analysed	64	91%

The response rate of the questionnaires was 93%. The study found that questionnaires distributed by hand provided a better response rate compared to electronically distributed questionnaires.

3.13 Findings of the research

Demographical information regarding the age and gender of the respondents, position in the organisation and work experience, measured in the first part of the questionnaire, is discussed in the following subsections.

3.13.1 Age of respondents

The age of respondents was measured in the questionnaire because different age groups have different views. The ages of the respondents are presented in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3: Age distribution of respondents

Description of age group	Count	Percentage
Younger than 20	0	0
Between 20 and 30	12	19%
Between 31 and 40	24	38%
Between 41 and 50	18	28%
Between 51 and 60	10	16%

The larger percentage of respondents (38%) was older than thirty-one, followed by 28% between the age of 41 and 50 years, with 19% between the age of 21 and 30 years. Only 16% of the respondents were between 51 and 60 years of age. The average age of the respondents was between 31 and 40 years.

3.13.2 Gender of respondents

The genders of the different groups were determined. The genders of the respondents are represented in Table 3.4 below.

Table 3.4: Gender distribution of participants

Respondent group	Male		Female		Ratio	Total
Technical group	25	81%	6	19%	4:1	31
Production group	10	100%	0	0%	0	12
Engineer group	11	91%	1	9%	11:1	11
Manager group	12	100%	0	0%	0	10
Total group	55	86%	9	14%	6:1	64

Only 14% of the respondents were female, while 86% of the respondents were males. This gives a ratio of 6:1. For each female respondent, there are six males. In the manager and production groups there were no females, with 19% females in the technical group and 9% females in the engineering group. The technical group has the highest female population.

3.13.3 Position occupied in the organisation

In the questionnaire, the positions in the organisation were classified into four groups. The technical group consists of technicians, technologists and planners. The managers group consists of area managers, foremen and division managers. The

engineering group consists of chemical engineers and mechanical engineers. The production group consists of shift supervisors, section managers and shift leaders. The positions of the respondents in their organisation are displayed in Table 3.5 below.

Table 3.5: Position distribution of respondents

Position in the organisation	Count	Percentage
Technical	31	48%
Managers	12	19%
Engineers	11	17%
Production	10	16%
Total	64	100%

The technical group constituted the largest group of respondents (48%), followed by the manager group on 19%. The engineering group was on 17% and the production group was the smallest at 16%.

3.13.4 Work experience of the respondents

The work experience of the respondents was classified in the questionnaire into six groups, namely from one to above 30 years. A sample of the work experience of respondents is presented in Table 3.6 below.

Table 3.6: Work experience of respondents

Work experience of respondents in years	Count	Percentage
1 to 5 years	8	13%
6 to 10 years	8	13%
11 to 15 years	14	22%
16 to 20 years	13	20%
21 to 30 years	12	19%
31 years and higher	9	14%
Total	64	100%
Average of total respondents in group		16 to 20 years
Average of technical respondents in group		11 to 15 years
Average of production respondents in group		16 to 20 years
Average of manager respondents in group		16 to 20 years
Average of engineering respondents in group		16 to 20 years

The largest work experience group of the respondents is those between 11 and 15 years (22%). The smallest work experience group is between one to five years (13%) as well as six to 10 years. The average work experience is between 16 and 20 years.

3.13.5 Time spent in meetings by respondents and productive assessment

The percentage time spent in meetings and the productivity of such meetings were obtained from the questionnaire completed by the respondents. The time spent in meetings was multiplied with the productivity to determine the real productive time spent in meetings by the respondents. The time wasted in meetings was also calculated. The results are presented in Table 3.7 below.

Table 3.7: Time spent in meetings versus effectiveness

Position in organisation	Average time spent in meetings	Average effectiveness of meeting	Average real effective time of meeting	Average time wasted in meetings
Managers group	48%	54%	25%	75%
Engineers group	44%	48%	21%	79%
Production group	29%	51%	15%	85%
Technical group	34%	53%	19%	81%
<i>Total</i>	37%	52%	20%	81%

The results indicate that the average time spent in meetings is 37%, of which 52% were effective. Only 20% of this time in meetings is productive. Eighty-one percent of meeting time was unproductive. The managers spent most of their time in meetings (48%), of which 54% were productive. Production employees spent the least amount of time in meetings (29%), of which 53% were productive. The production group wasted the most of their time in ineffective meetings. The engineering group has the most unproductive meetings.

3.14 Assessment regarding effective meetings in the organisation

Section B of the questionnaire measured different areas regarding the state of meetings in the organisation in general. Forty-two questions were compiled and based on the five-point Likert type scale, from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree

(5). The questions were grouped together to assess different aspects regarding effective meetings. The different questions and each item are displayed in table format in *Appendix F*.

In the assessment, the mean, standard error, median, mode and standard deviation were calculated by using the function descriptive statistics in Excel®. Descriptive statistics were used because it summarises a collection of data in a clear and understandable way. The values were used to understand the outcome of the survey. By using a numerical approach, it conveys information about the average degree of shyness and the degree to which people differ in shyness. The values most used for the outcome of the study were the mean. The rest are displayed to support the outcome.

The arithmetic **mean** is the average of a set of values, but not the middle value for skewed distributions. The mean is the most common measure of central tendency. (Levine & Stephan & Krehbiel & Berenson, 2008:97). The mean is a good measure of central tendency. The mean was used because there were no extreme values on the questionnaire scale. The mean was also used to determine the average score of the questions in the questionnaire.

The **median** is the middle value in a set of data. The median can be used where extreme values are present (Levine *et al.*, 2008:99). In some instances it provides a better idea regarding the statistics as the mean.

The **mode** is the value in a set of data that appears the most (Levine *et al.*, 2008:100). The mode was used to show which value in the questionnaire was mostly selected.

The **standard deviation** is an indication of how the data was scattered around the mean (Levine *et al.*, 2008:106). The standard deviation is a statistic informs as to how tightly all the various examples are clustered around the mean in a set of data. One standard deviation away from the mean in either direction on the horizontal axis accounts for somewhere around 68 percent of the outcome in this group. Two

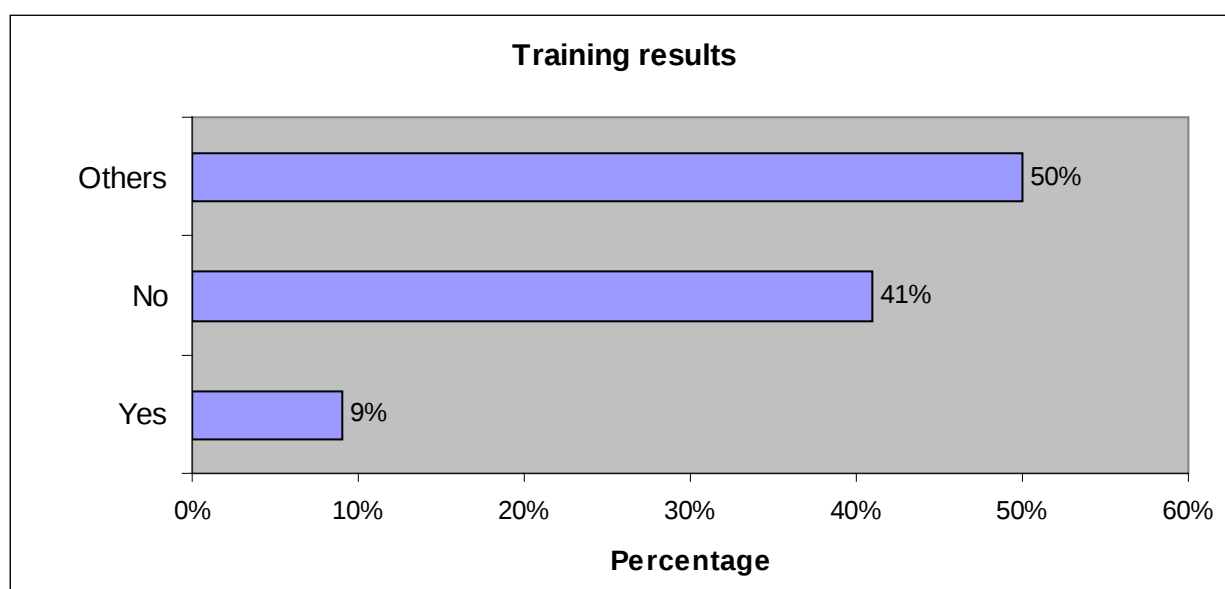
standard deviations away from the mean account for roughly 95 percent of the outcome in the group.

The **standard error** of a statistic is the standard deviation of the sampling distribution of that static. It is used to show how much sampling fluctuation a statistic will show. The larger the sample, the smaller the standard error becomes. This will give a measure of how well a sample represents the population.

3.14.1 Training

In this section, a simple question was asked to the respondents as to whether they have had any formal training regarding meetings or training regarding the facilitation of a meeting. Only 3% of the questionnaire was focused on this topic. A scale of 1 to 5 was used, with 1 indicating yes and 5 indicating no. Only 6 (9%) individuals indicated that they received training. Then 26 (41%) indicated that they had not received any training. The rest of the respondents, 32 (50%), indicated something in between. The results are displayed in graph 3.1 below.

Graph 3.1: Training results of respondents



The rest of the 32 (50%) respondents marked between 1 and 5. The results are displayed in table 3.8 below. The respondents were sorted into the different groups in

order to determine whether a certain group has more training than the others. The table ends with the total group.

Table 3.8: Training results

Group	n	Mean	Standard error	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
Managers	9	2.6	0.24	2	2	0.73
Technical	11	2.4	0.24	2	2	0.82
Engineers	5	2.6	0.4	2	2	0.89
Production	7	2.4	0.29	2	2	0.78
<i>Total group</i>	32	2.5	0.13	2	2	0.76

The remaining group is more neutral regarding training, while the data tends to show some training. The results show that the technical group and the production group have the most training regarding meetings. The engineering and managers group has the least training.

3.14.2 Time spent in meetings

In this part of the questionnaire, the time aspect regarding meetings was tested. Only 7.5 % of the questions were focused on this topic. The 1-to-5 scale was also used, with 1 indicating that the respondents feel that they spend too much time in meetings and 5 indicating the opposite. The results are displayed in Table 3.9 below.

Table 3.9: Time spent in meetings results

Group	n	Mean	Standard error	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
Managers	12	2.4	0.15	2	2	0.9
Technical	31	2.8	0.12	3	3	1.2
Engineers	11	2.5	0.17	2	2	0.9
Production	10	2.8	0.2	2	2	1.2
<i>General</i>	64	2.7	0.08	2	2	1.1

The results show that all of the respondents feel that they spend too much of their time in meetings. The managers feel they spend the most time in meetings, with the

engineering group second, followed by the production group and then the technical group.

3.14.3 Attitude towards meetings

Twenty-seven percent of the questions in the questionnaire were used to determine the respondents' attitude towards meetings in general. A scale of 1-to-5 was used with 1 indicating a positive attitude towards meetings and 5 indicating a negative attitude towards meetings. The results are displayed in Table 3.10 below.

Table 3.10: Attitude towards meetings results

Group	n	Mean	Standard error	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
Managers	12	2.8	0.11	2	2	1.2
Technical	31	2.8	0.07	2	2	1.3
Engineers	11	2.9	0.11	3	3	1.1
Production	10	2.8	0.12	2	2	1.2
<i>General</i>	64	2.8	0.05	3	2	1.2

The general attitude of the respondents towards meetings is neutral to positive. The managers, technical and production groups are on the same level, while the engineering group tends to have the weakest attitude towards meetings.

3.14.4 Meeting process

The questionnaire was also set up to test whether there is a meeting process in place and if such a process is followed. Only 27.5% of the questions were focused on this topic. On the scale of 1 to 5, 1 indicated that such a healthy process is used, while 5 indicated that such a process does not exist. The results are displayed in Table 3.11 below.

Table 3.11: Meeting process results

Group	n	Mean	Standard error	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
Managers	12	2.6	0.09	2	2	1.13
Technical	31	2.7	0.06	2	2	1.09
Engineers	11	2.6	0.09	2	2	1.05
Production	10	2.4	0.09	2	2	0.93
<i>General</i>	64	2.6	0.04	2	2	1.07

All the groups indicated that such a process exists and that it is used. The production group was the most positive regarding the meeting process. The technical group has the lowest score towards the meeting process, although it is still a positive score.

3.14.5 Measuring of ROI and outcomes of a meeting

In this section, the respondents were asked whether their organisation determined the return (ROI) of a meeting as well as whether they think it is possible to determine the ROI. The question was also asked as to whether the success of a meeting can be tested by looking at the outcomes of a meeting. Only 10 % of the questions were focused on this topic. The results are displayed in Table 3.12 below.

Table 3.12: Meeting measurement results

Group		n	Mean	Standard error	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
Manager group	Is ROI measured by organisation?	12	3.4	0.43	3.5	5	1.5
	Can ROI be measured?	12	2.3	0.36	2	2	1.23
	Meeting outcomes determine success?	12	2.4	0.27	2	1	1.35
Technical group	Is ROI measured by organisation?	31	3.4	0.2	3	3	1.1
	Can ROI be measured?	31	2.4	0.18	2	2	0.99
	Meeting outcomes determine success?	31	2.5	0.14	2	2	1.018

Group		n	Mean	Standard error	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
Engineering group	Is ROI measured by organisation?	11	3.5	0.39	3	3	1.29
	Can ROI be measured?	11	2.5	0.25	2	2	0.82
	Meeting outcomes determine success?	11	2.7	0.23	3	2	1.08
Production group	Is ROI measured by organisation?	10	3	0.3	3	3	0.94
	Can ROI be measured?	10	2.2	0.13	2	2	0.42
	Meeting outcomes determine success?	10	2.8	0.27	3	2	1.2
Total	Is ROI measured by organisation?	64	3.4	0.15	3	3	1.17
	Can ROI be measured?	64	2.4	0.12	2	2	0.93
	Meeting outcomes determine success?	64	2.6	0.1	2	2	1.15

The outcomes of this test show that the general group indicated that the ROI of their meetings is not deterrent. They strongly feel that it is possible to determine the ROI of a meeting and the success of the meeting can be determined by looking at the outcome of the meeting. When looking at separate groups, it is shown that the manager group feels the strongest that the ROI of meetings is not determined. The rest of the groups show the same pattern as the total group.

3.14.6 Facilitator

The respondents were tested regarding meeting facilitators. The question was asked as to whether the meeting facilitators' performance is adequate and whether they need an outside facilitator for the job. One indicated a positive performance, while five indicated a negative performance. Only 7.5 % of the questions were focused on this topic. The results are displayed in Table 3.13 below

Table 3.13: Meeting facilitator results

Group		n	Mean	Standard error	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
Managers	Internal facilitator	12	2.67	0.16	2.5	2	0.76
	External facilitator	12	3.75	0.33	4	4	1.14
Technical	Internal facilitator	31	2.45	0.12	2	2	0.92
	External facilitator	31	3.9	0.19	4	5	1.08
Engineers	Internal facilitator	11	2.82	0.18	3	2	0.85
	External facilitator	11	3.45	0.21	3	3	0.69
Production	Internal facilitator	10	2.5	0.15	2	2	0.69
	External facilitator	10	3.9	0.35	4	5	1.1
Total	Internal facilitator	64	2.56	0.08	2	2	0.85
	External facilitator	64	3.8	0.13	4	4	1.02

The outcomes of this part of the questionnaire show that the respondents feel that the current performance of facilitators is on track. The engineering group is the most negative regarding their facilitators, while the technical group as well as the production group feel that their facilitators are doing a better job. None of the groups are interested in outside facilitators, while the production group feels the strongest against outside facilitators.

3.14.7 Goals

In this part of the questionnaire, the respondents were tested regarding the general goal of the meetings. A scale of 1 indicates that they are positive regarding the meeting goals and 5 indicates negativity regarding the goals of their meetings. Only 7.5 % of the questions were focused on this topic. The results regarding the goals are displayed in Table 3.14 below.

Table 3.14: Meeting goals results

Group	n	Mean	Standard error	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
Managers	12	2.3	0.1	2	2	0.8
Technical	31	2.4	0.1	2	2	0.99
Engineers	11	2.6	0.14	2	2	0.79
Production	10	2.2	0.13	2	2	0.73
<i>Total group</i>	64	2.4	0.06	2	2	0.89

The results show that the respondents are in general positive regarding the goals of their meetings. The production group is the most positive regarding the goals of their meetings, while the engineering group is the least positive towards the goals of their meetings.

3.14.8 Virtual meetings

In this section of the questionnaire, the respondents' feelings regarding virtual meetings were tested. Their attitudes towards virtual meetings and whether they prefer them above normal meetings were tested. The scale from 1 to 5 was again used. 1 indicated that they are positive regarding virtual meetings, while 5 indicated that they are negative regarding virtual meetings. Only 10% of the questions were focused on this topic. The results are displayed in Table 3.15 below.

Table 3.15: Virtual meeting results

Group	n	Mean	Standard error	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
Managers	12	3.4	0.19	4	4	1.3
Technical	31	3.0	0.12	3	2	1.3
Engineers	11	2.9	0.17	3	2	1.11
Production	10	3.2	0.21	3	2	1.3
<i>Total</i>	64	3.1	0.08	3	3	1.28

The general results indicate that the respondents are neutral regarding virtual meetings. The manager group shows that they are the most negative regarding virtual meetings, while the engineering group is the most positive regarding virtual

meetings. The technical as well as the production groups are neutral regarding this section of the questionnaire.

3.15 Summary

A questionnaire was developed and used to measure the state of meetings in an organisation. The questionnaire was also used to answer the questions described in Chapter 1. The analysis starts with section A. Section A consists of demographic information of the respondents and time spent in meetings.

- The general age of the participants;
- Gender of the participants;
- Position in the organisation (production, technical, manager and engineering);
- Work experience (divided into groups from one to more than 30 years); and
- Time participants spent in meetings and the productivity of such meetings.

The next section tested pre-determined items regarding meetings. Close-format questions were used, which gave the participants the opportunity to select his or her feelings regarding the statement on a scale from 1 to 5. The following topics were covered in section B of the questionnaire.

- Training;
- Time spent in meetings;
- Attitude towards meetings;
- Meeting process;
- Measuring ROI and meeting outcome;
- Uses and roles of facilitator in the meeting process;
- Meeting goals; and
- Virtual meetings.

In section C, there were three open-format questions used to obtain more information regarding meetings. These questions' outcomes will be discussed in Chapter 4. The

questions in this chapter were analysed and the outcomes will also be discussed in Chapter 4.

The general feelings regarding the questionnaires by most of the participants were positive. The return percentage was high. Conclusions from the results will be drawn in Chapter 4. Recommendations will also be made.

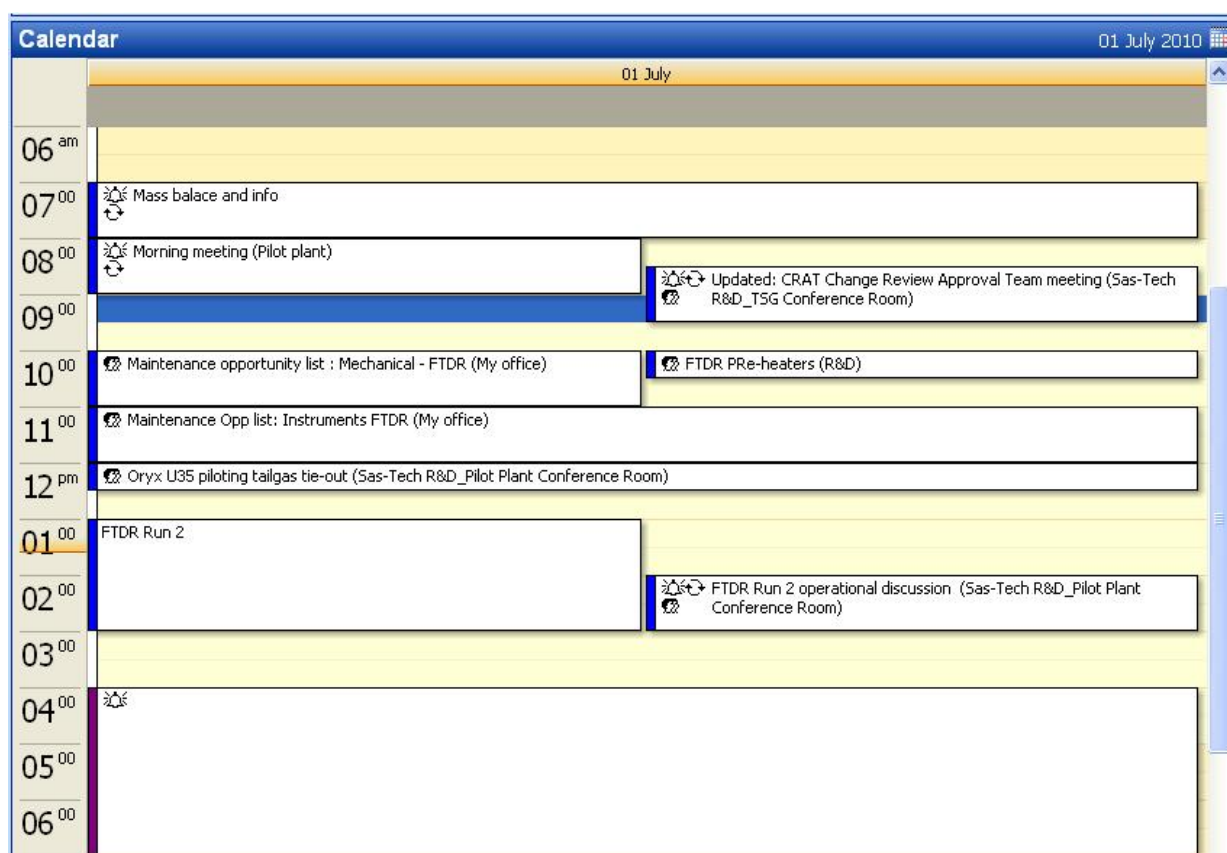
Chapter 4

Discussion, conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Introduction

Meetings are at the very heart of management. It is during meetings that managers make the key decisions that shape their future actions and the future of their organisations (Barker, 2007:4). In Figure 4.1 is an example of an employee personal daily meeting schedule in an organisation. Too many meetings are in competitions with each other. This puts the emphasis on the fact that each meeting should be managed as effectively as possible to reduce the number of meetings and to add value from meetings to the organisation.

Figure 4.1 An example of a daily meeting schedule on Outlook®



This chapter aims to recommend ways in which better and more effective meetings can be achieved. This chapter will be divided into two sections. The first section will discuss the outcomes of the research, while the second part will focus on recommendations regarding meetings. Some important points will be highlighted.

4.2 Discussion

The interpretation of the data will be divided into three different groups.

4.2.1 Demographic information of respondents

Demographic information of respondents was obtained regarding gender, position in the organisation, age and work experience.

The following general conclusions can be drawn:

- **Gender:** Most of the respondents were males (86%). The reasons for this is that the industries are male dominated while the transformation to females is progressing slowly. Of the 14% females, 67% were technical staff, 22% managers and 11% engineers.
- **Position in the organisation:** The largest group of the respondents was the technical group (48%). This group is the largest because, under the technical group, there is a large range of positions in the organisation. The second largest group was the managers (19%), followed by the engineers (17%) and then the production group (16%). It was important to see which group spends most of their time in meetings. The questionnaires show that the managers spend 47.5% of their time in meetings; the technical employees spend 33% in meetings; the engineering group spends 46% of their time in meetings; and the production employees only spend 29% of their time in meetings. It was suspected that the managers would spend most of their time in meetings, but it is lower than was stated in Chapter 1. It was also expected that the production personnel will spend

less time in meetings due to the nature of their tasks. Their meetings are mostly taken up by safety and toolbox meetings.

- **Age:** The age group was grouped into four groups. The biggest group was between 31 and 40 (38%) years old. The second largest group was between 41 and 50 (28%) years old. The group between 21 and 30 years of age were 19% and the group between 51 and 60 years was the smallest (16%). It was expected that the older the group, the more tolerant they would become towards meetings.
- **Work experience:** Work experience was measured in six groups. The highest group had between 16 to 20 years (20%) experience, with the smallest group having between one and five years (13%) experience. Only 14% had more than 31 years experience.

4.2.2 Discussion on assessment of the close-format questions

The close-format questions concentrated on important topics pertaining to the meeting process of the organisation. Those topics were identified in the literary study and are also considered as important building blocks of meetings. Each topic will be discussed separately.

- **Productivity of meetings:** The outcome of the survey showed that the productivity of meetings is lower than what was expected. The outcome is actually shocking. The measurement of how effective a meeting is, will differ from person to person and will mostly be determined by a personal feeling after the meeting. It is also suspected that the managers' meetings will be the most effective, while the technical and production groups have less effective meetings. The survey showed that managers spend the most time in meetings, with the production group second best. However, the most important factor is that only 20% of the managers' meetings are considered as really effective. The production group wasted the most time in meetings (85%), while the managers wasted the least time in meetings. On average, only 20% of the meetings are effective and 80% are wasted. Money wise it is not a positive result. It is also important to notice that

attendees with a positive attitude towards meetings will indicate a higher productivity towards meetings.

- **Training:** The results showed that only 9% of the respondents have had training regarding meetings. Training is always important on all levels. Internal and external training regarding meetings is available. Meeting experience comes with work experience, but looking at the large amount of money lost due to ineffective meetings, training is essential for new employees entering the organisation. The author confirmed with some of the respondents that they did not receive any training regarding meetings during their studies at university. Such training will become more and more important for future leaders/managers and is highly recommended. Managers of organisations should focus on internal or external training about the basics of a meeting process.
- **Time spent in meetings:** Too much time taken up by meetings is a common complaint. This was illustrated in the literary study and was confirmed in the survey. All the groups in the survey feel they spend too much time in meetings. An employee can accept or reject a meeting, but most important is that the time spent in meetings is well spent. The more effective and productive a meeting becomes, the fewer they will be. The better the meeting process becomes, the more effective they will become and that can lead to fewer meetings. Too many meetings are an indication of unproductive meetings. Managers have to face the fact that there will always be a lot of meetings to deal with. It is unhealthy when a technical group spends more time in meetings than the manager group. Top managers should make sure that the ratio that certain levels spend in meeting is healthy. Such ratios should be determined by the type of business they are involved in. Marketers have to spend more time in meetings than designers, for example.
- **Attitude towards meetings:** Attitude towards meetings must be positive on all levels to make meetings work. The survey showed a neutral to positive attitude towards meetings. The managers/leaders should have a positive attitude towards meetings. Only with a positive attitude can a meeting be successful. Negative

attitudes in meetings cause negative meeting processes. Long hours in unproductive meetings are the common building blocks for negative attitudes towards any meeting. It is important to build a positive attitude towards meetings in newcomers to the organisation. It will become more difficult to change negative attitudes than to build initially positive attitudes regarding meetings. The outcome of the questionnaire showed that the engineering group has the poorest attitude towards meetings. This can be suspected because of the nature of their work. It is also true that they have to spend long hours in meetings for design checks and reviews.

- **Meeting process:** A meeting process should be in place and used to make effective meetings possible. The survey showed that such a meeting process is in place and is used. All the different groups were positive regarding the meeting process and the use of it. A well-designed meeting process is one of the pillars on which an effective meeting depends. No process can produce effective results without quality inputs.
- **Measuring of ROI and the outcome of a meeting:** The results show that returns on investment (ROI) regarding meetings are not measured. All the respondents agree that it is possible to measure the ROI. However, it is not easy, especially when the outcomes of a meeting stretch over a few years. All the respondent groups agreed that the success of the meeting can be measured by looking at the outcomes. From a production employee point of view, the outcome of a safety meeting will not be that important. He or she would not even think about the possibility to determine the success of such a meeting. How can a safety meeting's success be determined? After a few effective meetings, the safety statistics must be positively decreased. If not, the manager should look at the meeting and make drastic changes to improve the outcomes. There should always be a process in place to measure meetings' outcomes.
- **Facilitator.** The questionnaire looked at the role of the facilitator, because the facilitator plays such a large role in the success of meetings. All of the respondents had been a facilitator at one or the other time during his or her own

meeting. Only one person did not complete all the questions and indicated that he or she has never facilitated a meeting (open questions). The outcomes show that the participants are in general satisfied with their current facilitators and that they are not interested in an outside facilitator. In the industry, the facilitator is usually the meeting planner, chairperson, minute writer as well as the person doing all the follow-up actions. He or she is usually responsible for most of the roles described in Chapter 2. With this in mind, it is clear that such facilitators are not professionals and as time passes on, they become more equipped for the facilitator role. They become such professionals that other employees start using them to help with their more difficult meetings. It is, however, important to take note of professional facilitators and to make use of them for the more important meetings. This can save time and, although initially expensive, can lead to the saving of large amounts of money.

- ***Virtual meetings:*** This study only looks at the tip of the iceberg regarding virtual meetings. This type of meeting will play a large role in the future, but all the basic things regarding meetings will also play a role in virtual meetings. The survey results show that the respondents are in general neutral regarding virtual meetings. The managers are more negative towards these meetings. This is true because they lose the face-to-face contact that is so important for personal staff meetings. The engineers feel more positive towards such meetings. This is because they are more interested in technology and most of them have already been involved in such meetings. Virtual meetings are not widely used, but are important for the future, as technology changes and improves. Meetings are now possible with employees in their offices on a regular basis.

4.2.3 Discussion on assessment of the open-format questions

In the open-format questions, the respondents were given an opportunity to raise general points regarding meetings. This is to provide them more freedom to express themselves regarding the meeting process. The aim was to capture their sentiments regarding meetings. The most important and repeated answers will be highlighted. Three questions were answered.

Question 1: *Recall one of the worst meetings you ever attended. What specifically made it so horrible?*

- The meeting goal was lost and the chairperson had to reschedule.
- Attendees are not relevant to the meeting.
- Poor planning by the facilitator. No agenda.
- Facilitator that is an autocratic leader.
- Meetings that are too long.
- Meeting hi-jacked by some members for a different goal.
- Scope of work changed during meeting and key persons did not show up.
- Negative feelings and conflict between meeting members.
- Jokes during the meeting.
- Chairperson does not have any control during meeting.

Question 2: *Recall a meeting you have facilitated that did not go as well as you hoped it would. What were some of the things that you did that did not work?*

- Group was more interested in sport than the meeting topic.
- One person dominated the meeting and steered it in the wrong direction.
- Lack of the proper information and attendees.
- Lack of preparations and failed to clarify the objectives and work methods.
- Lack of information.
- Bad time planning. Trying to fit in too much in too little period.
- Meeting became personal and members made assumptions.
- Energy during meeting that is not enough in order to be shared by other people.
- Members running in and out of the meetings.

Question 3: *What specifically are the sticky points you are worried about during a meeting, of which you are the facilitator?*

- One meeting was not enough to reach the desired goals. Several other meetings followed.

- Key role-players accept meeting, but do not attend.
- Poor planning, time management and communication.
- Loss of interest. Arguments regarding the same point. Attitude problem.
- Senior members steamroller the meeting.
- Attendees are not prepared for the meeting.
- Following the agenda.
- People discussed items that are not part or relevant to the meeting.
- People making and defending a viewpoint.
- People are not committed to the meeting and need to be reassured.

The mentioned items are a summary of the main complaints raised in the open-format question section of the questionnaire. There is nothing new when comparing it to this list provided in Chapter 2, *“Common reasons why meetings typically go bad”* (paragraph 2.8). The question is now whether it is possible to prevent all the negative issues raised by the participants. The answer that managers want to hear is “Yes”, but organisations do not run their businesses in a perfect world. All the items raised will always be there, but the answer is to manage them and to learn from mistakes and avoid the repetition of mistakes. Only about 50% of the problems, indicated in the questionnaires open-format session, were summarized above. By comparing each problem with a solution it can be stated that 99% of the problems could be prevented or solved by an experienced facilitator. This issue indicates again the importance of a facilitator who has experience and tools.

In a small business, the owner will rule his or her own meetings. This will be a one-way communication. What the owner said and decided on is law and he or she will force the decisions on the employees. The author called this meeting process the *“Hitler style”*. This is totally wrong, but the scope of this study focused on corporate meetings in the organisation. In such big organisation meetings, there will be no owner present and nobody to force certain aspects. The perfect way is that everybody attending the meeting acts as if they are owners and a healthy meeting process should govern actions and keep all issues on track.

4.3 Conclusions

The factors that highlight the need for effective meeting management were identified in Chapter 2. For an organisation that wishes to make “*Effective Meeting Management*” part of its strategy, the following points are highlighted:

4.3.1 What is the state of meetings in the organisation?

How can a manager determine the state of the meetings in his or her organisation? Some managers and leaders think that there is nothing wrong with their meetings, while the opposite is actually true. If a manager of an organisation answers yes to one of the following question, he or she should do something to improve the performance of their meetings.

- Does the organisation’s performance in general suffer because of too many meetings that take up too much valuable time?
- Can the manager spot an ineffective meeting?
- Does the meeting’s outcomes solve the right problems?
- Are the managers aware of emotions or do they run free during a meeting?
- Does the chairperson know how to master the first 30 seconds of a critical conversation during a meeting?
- Is the organisation’s meeting a real work session or just an “idle chitchat”?

To make the meeting process in an organisation simpler, a manager should also ask the following questions.

- *How productive are the meetings in the organisation currently?* It is not possible to answer this question without a measuring tool or a method to measure the productivity of meetings. The manager should develop a way to measure the productivity of the current meetings of the organisation. To have a general feeling is not good enough. This is not easy, because some outcomes will stretch over years. It is, however, possible.

- *How productive should the organisation's meetings be?* In today's competitive business environment, it will be an expensive mistake not to aim for the best. It is not the best practice to try to produce a better product than your competitor, but it is better to strive to produce the best product. This statement can be proven by looking at the history of products like Coca Cola and Denim. How can the employer next to the production chain do his or her best while the managers waste time in unnecessary and trivial meetings?
- *How will the organisation get there?* To get there will only come through hard work. Look at the building blocks regarding meetings and start there. The organisation can develop their own building blocks for their environment. Let every employee know how important meetings are and let them realise that it is not another break from a stressful work session. Set up a meeting code of conduct that all employees can relate to. Print a large banner and post it against the conference room wall. A code of conduct can be enforced through disciplining actions.

4.3.2 Communication during a meeting process

Not much information was found during the literature study regarding communication during a meeting process. There is more than enough study material regarding communication, but not much about communication during a meeting process. It is true that all aspects of communication are important and apply to meetings. Problems regarding meetings can be reduced when proper communication skills are used.

4.3.3 Have fewer meetings

Meetings cannot rule the organisation. The organisation's leaders/managers must rule the meetings. Push back on meetings that are unproductive and make no sense. Is meeting the best way to do what you have to do? Does it require involving other people? Only have a meeting when important business issues need to be discussed that cannot be done via an e-mail message or a phone call. Invite only the necessary

persons. Keep it brief, focus on the most important issues at hand, and concentrate on reaching a workable conclusion. Choose an appropriate meeting time. Include a time limit in the planning of the meeting. Remember, members have other commitments. They will more likely attend meetings if the chairperson makes them productive, predictable and as short as possible. Avoid meetings whenever possible. Test the importance of a meeting by asking what will happen without them?

4.3.4 Attitude

One of most important issues regarding meetings is the general attitude towards meetings; from the organisation's managers down to the employees. The process is 80% won if the attitudes of managers and employees regarding meetings are positive. During a meeting, the behaviour of the employees regarding the organisation's productivity can be observed. A productive meeting occurs in an environment where the participants feel free to explore new ideas, speak openly, and ask questions (Kay, 1995:61). A meeting must be seen as part of the work process and not a break period. Employees should also have the freedom to skip a meeting when he or she feels it is a waste of time and does not contribute to the core business of the organisation. It is not a good feeling to sit in a meeting in which the attendee was forced to attend and he or she knows it is a waste of time while work piles up in the office.

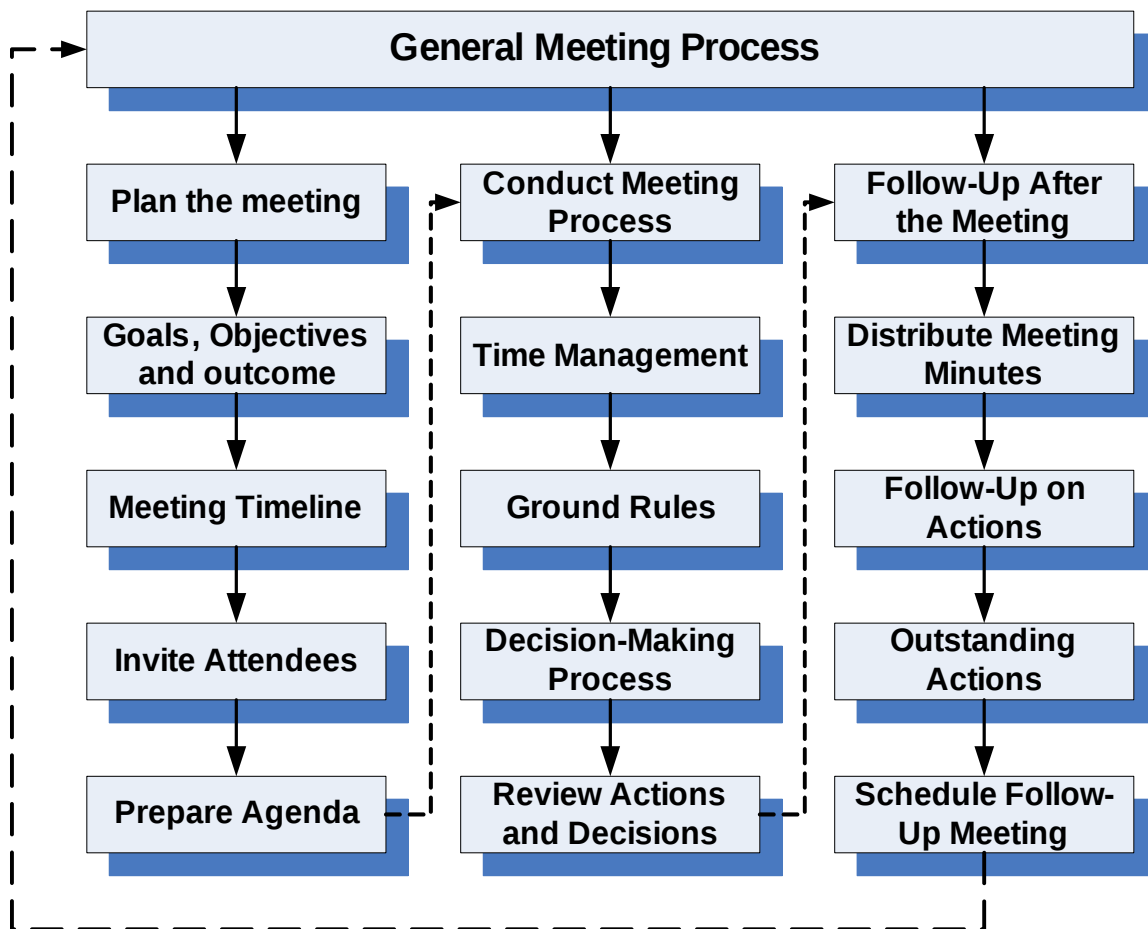
Figure 4.2: An example of bad attitude regarding meetings



4.3.5 Meeting process (Secondary objective)

It will be great to have a single meeting process that is simple and effective to use. Each organisation can design their own meeting process that suits their type of meeting and works for them. The following meeting process model, displayed in Figure 4.3 below, can be used as a basis for all types of meetings.

Figure 4.3: The meeting process



The meeting process should at least combine the following four dimensions:

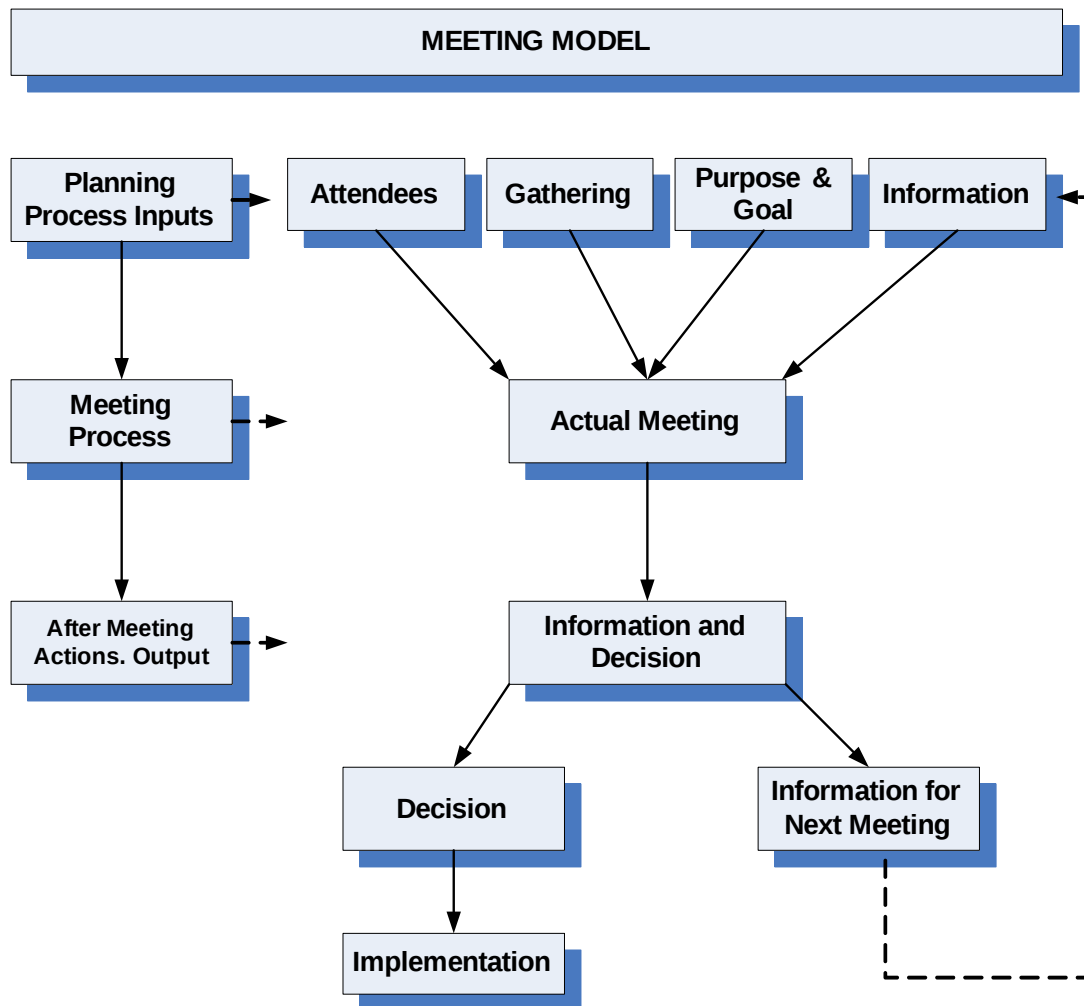
- The set-up of the meeting
- The content of the meeting – topics
- The dynamics of the meeting
- The outcomes of the meeting – decisions

4.3.6 Meeting model

A model is a systematic representation of an event. A good model is useful and provides both general perspectives and particular vantage points from which to ask questions and to interpret observations. Models provide new ways to conceive ideas and relationships. A good model, when studied casually, should offer new insights

pertaining to the object of the study. The meeting model was developed to simplify the understanding of the meeting process. The aim of this model is not to oversimplify the meeting process, but to provide it for the fast and easy understanding of an effective meeting process. Such a model is displayed in Figure 4.4 below.

Figure 4.4: The meeting model



The model can be changed to suit each organisation's unique meeting process.

4.3.7 Effective meetings

It is difficult to have productive meetings because few people know the rules and skills needed for such meetings. To have constantly improved meetings may be as hard for a team to reach as to reach improvement goals set for a project. When can a manager be satisfied that the meetings in his or her organisation are productive and effective? Only when the tools that are used to measure the outcomes of such meetings produce positive results. This leads to another obstacle – keeping those meetings productive and effective. Managers and meeting facilitators should on a continuous basis ensure the following pertaining to their meeting process:

Effectiveness:

Continually check the meeting team's effectiveness:

- Are the meetings doing the right things?
- Are the meetings asking the right questions?
- Is the meeting team tackling the right problems?

Efficiency:

Continually check the meeting team's efficiency:

- Is the meeting team taking unnecessary steps?
- Is the meeting team looking for process-related problems?
- Is the meeting team reinventing the wheel?
- Is the meeting team straying from the agenda?

4.3.8 Effective meeting building blocks

The best way to have productive meetings is to look at each building block of effective meetings. The meeting members and facilitator must learn new ways of working together. It will be great for any organisation to refer to the members of a meeting as a “**meeting team.**” There is no place in a meeting for attendees without a

specific role. Such members will negatively influence the ROI. Meetings become effective when the word meeting can be replaced by **“collaborative work process.”**

Figure 4.5: Building blocks of an effective meeting

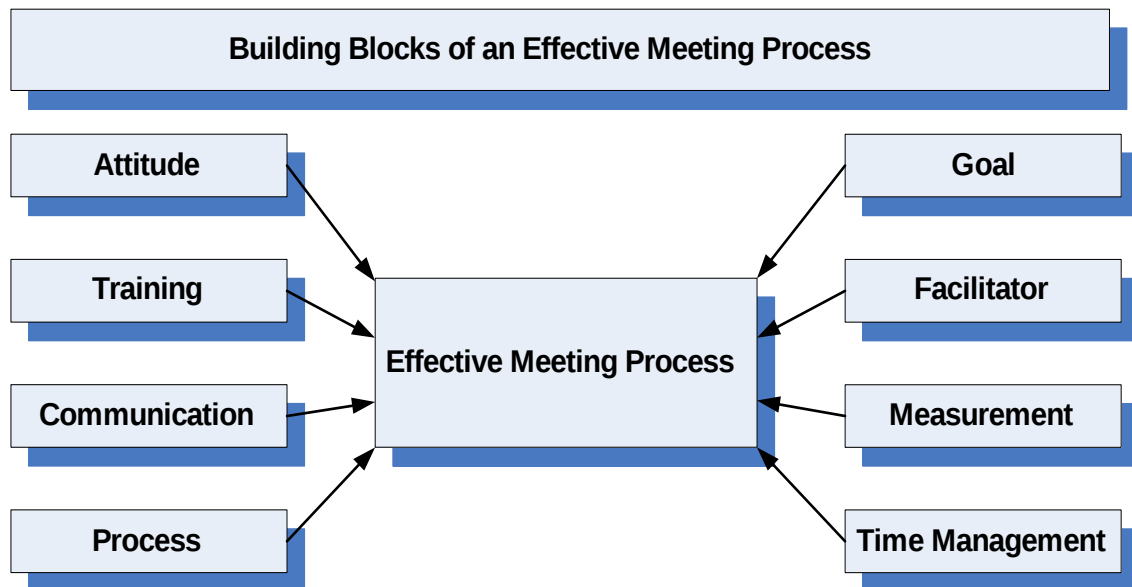


Figure 4.5 illustrates the most important building blocks grouped together. Each organisation can add or remove building blocks from this graphical display to suit their type of business. It is important to state that each one of these building blocks should be healthy in order for an effective meeting to be conducted. Effective building blocks will improve meeting outcomes and at the end of the day shorten meetings, also leading to fewer meetings. Building blocks are the foundations of a meeting. One weak building block will cause the meeting process to lean more heavily on the other building blocks. This will start a domino effect.

Advantages and disadvantages of effective meetings: During the course of the study, the advantages of effective meeting management for any organisation were mentioned. There are so many advantages that it is no longer logical for a manager to ignore the continuous striving towards effective meeting management. The three most important advantages and those that will impact the business the most are mentioned below. These three advantages will also play a large role in motivating any manager or leader towards effective meeting management.

Those advantages are:

- Effective meetings increase productivity and satisfaction.
- Effective meetings have a positive effect on the members.
- Effective meetings have an empowering effect on people.

There are also quite a few negative aspects because of unproductive meetings mentioned throughout this study. The study wants to highlight three of these disadvantages of unproductive meetings, because they are so important to the organisation.

Those disadvantages are:

- Ineffective meetings cost the organisation money.
- Ineffective meetings convey a negative perception regarding the organisation to the outside world.
- Ineffective meetings make employees negative and unproductive.

4.3.9 Meeting measurement and ROI

No manager would spend R100 on a R1 racer, but they often spend 30 or more employee hours on trivia. It is important to budget time in proportion to the value of the meeting. Is it worth it to spend man hours of high-paid employees on a meeting with goals that will not contribute to the profit or the core business of the organisation? The same argument can be applied to the number of employees

removed from a task to attend a meeting. Why are two engineers necessary for a meeting?

The measurement of the ROI of meetings was described in Chapter 2. It is easy to measure the ROI for a salesperson's meeting, but not so easy when looking at the ROI of a safety meeting for shift workers. However, they are both important. Each organisation should develop its own method of measuring the ROI of a meeting. Writing a small spreadsheet in Excel® will make it possible to measure the outcome. If a manager does not measure it, he or she will never know. Calculate the financial ROI by looking at the cost versus the benefits. This is the only way to determine the monetary benefits of the meeting. Two steps can be used to calculate the ROI. Convert data to money and then compare that to the fully-loaded cost of the meeting. Some meetings are one year to conservative measurement because the outcome can create positive consequences over a much longer period.

4.3.10 Meeting facilitators

Much has already been said about facilitators, but the facilitator plays such an important role that the author wishes to include the following. *The facilitator carefully guides the process to achieve desired outcomes.* It is recommended that meetings are facilitated by persons in a leadership position.

Some important items for facilitators:

- The facilitator is someone who uses knowledge of group processes to design and deliver.
- The facilitator helps the group's members to decide where to go, but the group makes the decision.
- The facilitator acts as content-neutral person who leads the group through the agenda.
- The facilitator does not contribute to the substance of the discussion and has no decision-making authority.

4.3.11 Knowledge management and meetings

It should be possible to link Knowledge Management (KM) in an organisation with meetings. KM comprises a range of strategies and practices in an organisation to identify, create, represent, distribute, and enable the adoption of insights and experiences. KM is about creating, identifying, capturing and sharing knowledge. However, it is about getting the right knowledge in the right place at the right time. Computer supported tracking and the understanding of meeting discussions are critical applications of KM. Explicit knowledge can be captured and documented during meetings.

All meeting outcomes and events should be documented in order to share information with the rest of the organisation, especially to those who missed an important meeting due to circumstances. Meetings should normally involve all relevant employees, but what about two years from now? For instance, a manager wants to know the background regarding a decision that was made by the previous manager. He or she needs to do some research, and in order to save time and money, a well-documented database can be the place to start. Many companies have resources dedicated to internal KM. These resources can be used to store meeting minutes for future innovations as well as lessons learned through meetings. KM efforts can help meeting facilitators to share valuable organisational insights, to avoid repeating the same work again or to avoid reinventing the wheel. This concept can also help to reduce the time spent in meetings. The use of technology for KM is well developed. Computer tools such as bookmarks, blogs and Wikis allow more unstructured and self-governing approaches to transfer, capture and create knowledge.

4.5 Achievements of objectives

The evaluation the success of this study is based on the achievement of the primary and secondary objectives, as indicated in Chapter 1 (section 1.4).

4.5.1 Primary objectives

The primary objective of this study was to conduct research regarding meetings. The aim was to establish a guideline for managers to lead an effective meeting. The study also looked at the participants with regard to their preparation for the meeting in order to play an active role in the process. The aim was to ensure that managers and participants are part of effective meetings from which both parties and the organisation will benefit. Any meeting must be effective and efficient and should be productive as well as better attended.

4.5.2 Secondary objectives

The secondary objectives were set out in Chapter 1 (section 1.4.2). These objectives were set out to help with the achievement of the primary objective.

- **Definition:** Different definitions were investigated and one definition was compiled to suit the industries .
- **State of meetings:** The study looked at different ways of how a manager/leader can determine the state of meetings in their organisations.
- **Meeting process:** The study looked at the *meeting* process and different types of meetings. A meeting model was compiled for all managers to use as a guideline for effective meetings.
- **Facilitator:** The study looked at the manager or meeting leader. The role of the facilitator was studied. These included, the preparations for the meeting (who and where); developing the purpose/goal of the meeting; and how to set up an appropriate agenda.
- **Participants:** The study covered the roles and preparations for the meeting by the participants.
- **Bad meetings:** Reasons and causes of bad meetings were covered by the study.
- **Success of meetings:** The study ascertained when a meeting is successful.
- **Virtual meeting:** Virtual meetings and the success thereof were covered in the study.

4.6 Recommendations

Conducting well-planned and well-organised meetings is essential in today's busy world. According to the MCI WorldCom Conference survey, currently professionals spend three hours a day in meetings and more than a third state that meetings are unproductive. Nine out of 10 state that they daydream, 41% of men and 31% of woman state that they doze off, and 6% take notes to make it look as if they are listening (Briefings, 1999:1). The same negative results were obtained from the questionnaire.

To counteract these above-mentioned trends, organisations need to avoid these trends and zoom in on their meeting process to reach their goals. Each manager needs to know how to run and participate in productive meetings. They should also train their ordinates to be able to do the same. Meetings can become events where real work takes place. Meetings provide opportunities for face-to-face contacts and interface, fostering learning groups, and holding best practice sessions. Life is too short and issues too important to spend working hours in uninteresting, dull meetings that lead to nowhere and leave participants feeling drained.

Conducting highly effective and efficient meetings is an essential skill for all business professionals. Good meetings are not accidents. They are the result of good planning and hard work. There is no alternative for face-to-face meetings in certain situations and they add a whole new dimension to work relationships. Why are meetings more effective than writing a memo? Such memos with decisions on have no staff inputs. In short, it means that the ideas of the staff do not count.

Meetings enhance productivity when people use them to do the kind of work that is best done in collaboration with others. Good meetings are about getting somewhere: a decision, a new idea, etc. Working through ideas often means making those ideas tangible through sketches on whiteboards, quickly showing examples, etc. That needs face-to-face time and focused discussion.

For many managers and employers in other roles, meetings are a fact of life. Well-run meetings can be effective and valuable to any organisation's activities. On the

other hand, poorly-executed meetings will waste time and cause frustration. Whether it is a company meeting for employees or a regular gathering of volunteers, the same principles of good meeting management apply. Meetings can be a daunting, recurring ritual experience or they can be vital opportunities for releasing human potential.

For many organisations, a meeting is a way to live. There is no proof that any organisation has gone under because of unsuccessful meetings. Could a business be saved through a better, more effective meeting process? Any manager who needs to turn a business around should spend more time on this topic. Productivity can be increased by an effective meeting process. Sales can also be increased with an effective meeting process, especially when a meeting with the organisation's customers went well. A huge and profitable contract can come to the organisation with the help of an effective meeting process. Let us ask the question again with this last statement in mind. Can bad meetings cause an organisation to go under...? No proof exists, but it is dangerous to ignore. The answer is simple. Learn how to design and facilitate these meetings for the most efficient and effective outcome for the benefit of the organisation and its stakeholders, before it is too late.

This study has looked at effective meeting processes and produced results from a questionnaire. Some of the results were negative and others were positive. This study provides information and support to managers about effective meetings regarding what managers should do and what they must stay away from. The business world out there is not a perfect world and the author knows that it is not always possible to act within the borders of what has been said. However, to conclude this study, the following is the most important meeting environment to operate in: (1) Managers must ensure that their meetings contribute to their core business or profit of the organisation; (2) Managers must ensure that their meeting process does not make their employees negative; (3) And lastly, managers should ensure that their meetings carry a positive image about the business to the outside clients or oppositions. Demand effective meetings. Make your next meeting count.

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Appendix A

Meeting checklist for managers (Haynes, 2007:8)

• An agenda is prepared prior to the meeting. • Everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the agenda. • Advance notice of meeting time and place is provided to those invited. • Meeting facilities are comfortable and adequate for the number participants. • The meeting begins and ends on time. • The use of time is monitored throughout the meeting. • Everybody has an opportunity to present his or her point of view. • Participants listen attentively to each other. • There are periodic summaries as the meeting progresses.	• No-one tends to dominate the discussion. • The meeting typically ends with a summary. • The participants periodically evaluate the meeting. • The meeting typically ends with a summary of accomplishments. • People can be depended upon to carry out any action agreed to during the meeting. • Minutes of the meeting are provided to each participant following the meeting. • The meeting chair follows up with participants on actions agreed to during the meeting. • The appropriate and necessary people attend each meeting. • The decision-making process used is appropriate for the size of the group
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Appendix B

Meeting planner checklist

Item.	Done	Comment
Agenda		
Priorities		
Sequence		
Timings		
Attendees		
Date		
Time		
Venue		
Variety		
Notification		
Notes from last meeting		
Directions/map		
Materials (as required by agenda items)		
Reference material for ad-hoc queries		
Results and performance data		
Equipment (make separate check-list)		
Electrical power (if applicable)		
Domestics		
Catering arrangements		
Note paper, pens, name plates		
Refreshments.		
Guest care/instructions		

Appendix C

An example of a meeting room checklist

No.	Consideration	Yes	No
1.	Size of room in order for number of attendees.		
2.	Meeting room set-up. Possible to see chairperson and any visual aid or flipchart?		
3.	Is there enough space between tables and chairs?		
4.	Is there a smoking place for the smokers?		
5.	Temperature control in order?		
6.	Extra equipment needed available? (Audio and video)		
7.	Outside noises like streets or working areas in order?		
8.	Enough space for whiteboards, flipcharts?		
9.	Any other technology needed, such as Internet connections?		
10.	Are rest rooms for both genders available?		
11.	Is the location of the room general knowledge to all the participants?		
12.	Transport and parking for attendees suitable?		
Notes:			
.....			
.....			

Appendix D

Example of a meeting evaluation form

Meeting evaluation form			
Please mark the open space with an X	Yes	Could be better	No
The meeting starts on time.			
The ground rules were available and were followed.			
The agenda was followed.			
Everybody came prepared.			
Everybody participated.			
The meeting accomplished the purpose.			
The venue used was in order.			
Follow-up actions are in place.			
Leadership during the meeting was in place			
The discussion was relevant.			
The meeting ended on time.			
Some suggestions for future meetings:			
.....			
.....			
.....			

Appendix E

Agenda template

Meeting description			
Purpose of meeting:			
Date/time:			
Location:			
Chairperson:			
Aim of meeting:			
.....			
Agenda topics	Time allotment	Who to address	Expected outcome
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Appendix F

Example of a code of conduct checklist (Davey, 2007:9)

Questions to ask		Yes	No
1.	Does the organisation group need a Code of Conduct?		
2.	Does the current Code of Conduct in use cover every thing?		
3.	Is the Code of Conduct simple to understand by all participants, starting at the lowest level?		
4.	Do all the meeting participants know the organisation meeting Code of Conduct?		
5.	Is the Code of Conduct assessable to all the members? Easily available?		
6.	Is the Code of Conduct reviewed on a regularly basis?		

Appendix G

Example of format of minutes that can be used

Name of organisation:				
.....				
Purpose of meeting:				
.....				
.....				
.....				
Date: Time:				
Chairperson:				
<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Points of agreement</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Person responsible</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

Appendix H

Questionnaire that was used in this study

Research questionnaire



Kindly complete the following questionnaire by making a cross (X) in the relevant block. The information contained in this questionnaire will be treated as confidential. The information is required for a dissertation regarding "Effective Meeting Management."

Personal information

Age in years	0 > 20	21 > 30	31 > 40	41 > 50	51 > 60		
Gender	Male				Female		
Work experience in years	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-30	>31	
Position in your organisation	Technical	Process	Engineer	Manager			
How much of your time do you spend in meetings?	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%
How productive are the meetings that you attend?	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%

Answer the following questions by making a cross (X) in the relevant block.

1	Totally agree or Excellent
2	Partially agree or Good
3	Neither agree nor disagree or Satisfactory
4	Partially disagree or Fair
5	Totally disagree or Poor

No	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
1	Is it possible to do your work effectively without any meetings?					

No	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
2	Is too much of your time taken up by meetings?					
3	Do you have formal training regarding meetings or the facilitation of meetings?					
4	Are you aware of a "Code of Conduct" regarding meetings for your organisation?					
5	Did your organisation determine the return on investment of meetings? (ROI)					
6	Do you think it is possible to determent the ROI of a meeting?					
7	How do you score yourself regarding a good meeting facilitator?					
8	Is their clarity regarding the goals of your organisation's meetings that you have to attend?					
9	The general participation of the attendees in the meetings is satisfactory.					
10	There is a decision-making process that is explained to the attendees at the beginning of the meeting.					
11	There is enough leadership in meetings that I attend.					
12	A general and satisfactory problem-solving process is used by the organisation.					
13	Is the organisation's meeting process in place?					
14	I prefer long-distance meetings in the place of face-to-face meetings through the use of technology.					
15	The facilitators of meetings in general perform a good job.					
16	The success of an important meeting is measurable by looking at the outcomes.					
17	The organisational meetings will be more effective if an outside facilitator is used.					
18	The outcome of a meeting is not measurable in the short term.					
19	The reasons for a meeting that went bad could be prevented by means of better control and planning.					
20	I make use of a planning process for the meetings where I am the chairperson.					
21	Participants in our meetings are positive and well prepared for the meetings.					
22	Many meetings can be replaced by the use of e-mails or a phone call.					
23	The importance of a person could be measured by the number of meetings that he/she attends.					

No	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
24	The organisation benefits from most meetings.					
25	The organisation can benefit from effective meeting management.					
26	Most effective meetings have a well-prepared agenda.					
27	I receive meeting minutes on time, well prepared, with a task list and a due date.					
28	We make use of a well-designed meeting process.					
29	Time management during the meeting process is important and is normally on track.					
30	Communication during the meeting process is normally effective.					
31	The attendees of the meetings' attitudes are positive regarding meetings.					
32	Meetings are seen as a work session and not an escape session from work.					
33	Attendees during a meeting pay more attention to their cell phones than to the goal of the meeting.					
34	I like meetings and look forward to a day full of scheduled meetings.					
35	I normally know what the goal and deliverables of the meetings that I attend are.					
36	There is a better way of reaching organisational goals as opposed to the use of meetings.					
37	The number of meetings can be reduced by means of better planning.					
38	We use ground rules during meetings and adhere to them.					
39	We see meetings as a process to accomplish goals.					
40	Technology changes the way we conduct meetings.					
41.	We make use of virtual meetings on a regular basis.					
42.	The meetings I attend are in general too long.					

Recall one of the worst meetings you ever attended. What specifically made it so horrible?

.....

.....

.....

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Recall a meeting you have facilitated that did not go as well as you had hoped it would. What were some of the things that you did that did not work?

.....

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.....

What specifically are the sticky points you are worried about during a meeting, of which you are the facilitator?

.....

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.....

.....

.....

Appendix I

Meeting effectiveness checklist

Before the meeting		
No	Description	In place
1.	Determine the meeting's desired outcomes, goals.	
2.	Decide upon any special guest that should be involved in the topic.	
3.	Decide on a process to accomplish your outcome and the time required.	
4.	Select an appropriate site for the meeting.	
5.	State the desired outcome and agenda in advance.	
6.	Determine any preparation work in advance.	
Beginning of meeting		
1.	Start on time.	
2.	Review and confirm your objectives and agenda.	
3.	Make the timeline clear.	
4.	Review previous meeting agenda, if applicable.	
5.	Establish attendees' roles and introduce each other.	
During the meeting		
1.	Stick to agenda and time commitments.	
2.	Stay focused.	
3.	Make use of technology.	
4.	Change techniques when you feel stuck.	
At the end of the meeting		
1.	Establish action items and responsibilities.	
2.	Summarise the session and set the date, place and objective for the next meeting (if applicable).	
3.	Evaluate the meeting.	
4.	End the session positively and on time.	
After the meeting		
1.	Prepare and distribute minutes after meeting as soon as possible.	
2.	Follow up on actions for the next meeting.	
3.	Prepare for next meeting.	
General comments		
.....		
.....		
.....		
.....		
.....		

Appendix J

Table 10: Questions in the questionnaire relate to each other

Item	Subject	Questions involved	Total	Percentage
1.	Training	3.	1	3 %
2.	Time spent in meetings	2, 37 and 42.	3	7.5 %
3.	Attitude towards meetings	1, 9, 21, 23, 24, 25, 29, 31, 32, 33, and 34.	11	27.5 %
4.	Meeting process	4, 10, 12, 13, 19, 20, 26, 27, 28, 30 and 38.	11	27.5 %
5.	Measuring outcome and ROI	5, 6, 16 and 18.	4	10 %
6.	Uses and roles of facilitator in the meeting process	7, 15 and 17.	3	7.5 %
7.	Goals	8, 35 and 39.	3	7.5 %
8.	Virtual meetings	14, 22, 40 and 41.	4	10 %

Appendix K

Historical article about meetings

