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# How To Rescue Floundering Meetings— —Even When Not The Leader!

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Being known as someone who keeps the meeting on track can quickly establish your reputation as a leader.

By Dianna Booher

Chances are you're attending meetings and more meetings this year: strategic meetings, planning meetings, project meetings, staff meetings, virtual client meetings. Some produce results; others, only boredom.

Granted, much of the blame for nonproductive meetings lies at the feet of the facilitator. (But that's another column altogether.) If you're trapped in a meeting meant to solve a significant issue yet you hear disaster unfolding all around, step up. Seize the opportunity to turn the impending mishap into a worthwhile effort—even when you're “just” a participant.

Being known as someone who keeps the meeting on track can quickly establish your reputation as a leader.  Here's how to make that happen:

## 5 Ways to Deliver Results Even When You're Not the Meeting Leader

### Ask For The Roadmap



5 Ways To Rescue A Meeting While Looking Like A Leader ICLIPART

When meeting leaders routinely fail to prepare an agenda, prod them to do better with questions like these: “What are we covering today and in what order? I need to let someone know the least disruptive time for me to step out for a few minutes?” “What are we discussing today? Should we have any specific data with us?” Gradually, the leader will get the point about the usefulness of an agenda.

## **Reframe The Issue To Be Resolved Or Decided**

Meeting discussions often flounder because the leader has failed to state the issue either clearly or succinctly. Do both and you will stand out in the group. Charles Kettering, the famed inventor and head of research at GM once observed, “A problem well stated is a problem half solved.”

For example, as your team struggles with a budget cut and brainstorms cheaper ways to market your services, you might reframe the issue so that the group refocuses in a completely new way: “What firm would like the opportunity to enter an arrangement with us, whereby they market our services in exchange for the leads to upsell their own products?”

Your reframing may spur creative thinking when others are ready to give up and “go with what’s comfortable.”

## **Guide From The Side With Strategic Questions**

When discussions seem to be going in circles or stall altogether, prompt with strategic questions to spawn deeper thinking: What’s the purpose behind X? Are there other ways to accomplish the goal other than what we’ve tried in the past? How is this done in other industries? Would all experts in the field agree with what you’ve just said? What do you think their perspective and feedback on this issue would be? Any precautions? Expected payoffs?

## **Identify And Quash Sidetracking Issues**

Some meeting participants fail to follow the meeting process: issue, reporting, analysis, discussion, summary, decision. Instead, it’s as if they wander off into never-never land fo

long periods and then pop to attention sporadically for the sole purpose of asking a side-tracking question.

Don't follow them on such rabbit trails. Stay aware of where you are in the meeting process on each given topic. Just as your GPS recalculates when you miss a turn, help your wayward colleagues reassess and stay on task when they stray from the main discussion.

Try these recalibrating statements: "You may be right, Kristen. Let's put that idea in the parking lot for a later discussion. Back to the issue of..." Or: "That's an intriguing question. But first, we need to decide how to ..."

### **Become The Accountability Cop**

How many times have you walked out of a meeting thinking, "So what did we decide?" or "So who's doing what now?" Don't let that happen in those meetings you attend. If your meeting leader fails to summarize conclusions and assign tasks, then become the accountability cop yourself.

Raise questions, ask for volunteers, and volunteer yourself: "What did we decide about X?" "Who's going to be responsible for Y?" "What should be our next steps to get Z done?" "Who wants to volunteer to do A?"

If you're attending a meeting that doesn't deliver, your own competence and credibility are on the line. Rescue the meeting, and watch your reputation with colleagues soar.

*Dianna Booher is the bestselling author of 48 books. Her newest is [Faster, Fewer, Better Emails](#). She helps organizations communicate clearly. Follow her at [BooherResearch.com](#) and [@DiannaBooher](#).*

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