

DSC SPEED READS

**COMMUNICATIONS**

# Meetings

Helen Rice & Maria Pemberton

DSC



DSC SPEED READS

**COMMUNICATIONS**

# Meetings

**Helen Rice & Maria Pemberton**

DIRECTORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Published by  
Directory of Social Change  
24 Stephenson Way  
London NW1 2DP  
Tel. 08450 77 77 07; Fax 020 7391 4804  
email [publications@dsc.org.uk](mailto:publications@dsc.org.uk)  
[www.dsc.org.uk](http://www.dsc.org.uk)  
from whom further copies and a full books catalogue are available.

Directory of Social Change is a Registered Charity no. 800517

First published 2011

Copyright © Directory of Social Change 2011

The moral right of the authors has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. **No part of this book may be stored in a retrieval system or reproduced in any form whatsoever without prior permission in writing from the publisher.**

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior permission in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published, and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

ISBN 978 1 906294 25 0

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Cover and text designed by Kate Bass  
Typeset by Marlinzo Services, Frome  
Printed and bound by Martins the Printers, Berwick-upon-Tweed

All Directory of Social Change departments in London:  
08450 77 77 07

Directory of Social Change Northern Office:  
Research 0151 708 0136

For other titles in the DSC SPEED READ series go to:  
[www.dsc.org.uk/Publications/SpeedReadSeries](http://www.dsc.org.uk/Publications/SpeedReadSeries)

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Chapter 1: What is a meeting?</b>	<b>5</b>
■ Defining a meeting	5
■ Do you need a meeting?	5
■ What makes a meeting effective?	6
■ Ground rules, guidelines and terms of reference	6
<b>Chapter 2: Planning and preparation</b>	<b>8</b>
■ Purpose of the meeting	8
■ The agenda: planning content	8
■ Domestic arrangements	11
■ Working with the minute taker	12
<b>Chapter 3: Roles and responsibilities</b>	<b>14</b>
■ Chairing the meeting: role and skills	14
■ Becoming an effective chair	15
■ Participating effectively in meetings	19
■ Taking responsibility	20
■ Minute taking: producing clear and effective notes	21
<b>Chapter 4: Challenging characteristics and situations</b>	<b>23</b>
■ Challenging characteristics	23
■ Challenging behaviour	26
■ Problem situations	27
<b>Chapter 5: Getting win-win at meetings</b>	<b>29</b>
■ Influencing and persuasion	29
■ Negotiating effectively	31

# Introduction

*'Meetings are indispensable when you don't want to do anything.'*

*John Kenneth Galbraith*

## Who will this book help?

At work we spend a lot of time in meetings. Sometimes we can wonder why we are there at all, as nothing seems to move forward as a result. Poorly conducted meetings are costly in terms of time, results and often goodwill. Running effective meetings is a skill. This book will be invaluable for new or existing chairs or minute takers wanting to develop their skills, or meeting participants who want to stop wasting time and make their meetings work for everyone.

## What will it give you?

This book will give you a framework to run effective meetings. The guidelines are practical and include top tips to help you develop strategies to deal with difficult issues and people. It will help you be the very best you can be before, during and after meetings.

# Chapter 1

## What is a meeting?

*Being clear about why you are holding a meeting is the first step to making it effective. This chapter looks at whether to call a meeting at all, and the key elements that will make it a productive occasion.*

### Defining a meeting

A meeting is any occasion when a group of people come together to share ideas and experiences. The size, composition, type and purpose of the meeting being held differ hugely between organisations and at different levels in organisations.

However, all meetings have certain elements in common: they involve people communicating with each other and exist for a purpose, even if not all the participants agree what that is. Broadly speaking, meetings are concerned with gathering and giving information, persuading, problem-solving and decision-making.

### Do you need a meeting?

Meetings can become an end in themselves. Regular meetings – the monthly management meeting or weekly team meeting – can be held just because they

#### Top tip



Think about how you would achieve your objective without having a meeting. If it can be done without getting people into a room together, consider doing it. Meetings are expensive!

**Cath Lee, CEO, Small Charities Coalition**

## Top tip



Remember that the opportunity cost (the time taken away from other productive activities that participants would be involved in if they weren't at the meeting) of getting people together can be considerable. So don't be afraid to cancel if there is no need to meet.

**Ben Wittenberg,**  
Director of  
Publishing, Policy  
and Research, DSC

always have been. The first question you need to ask is whether a meeting is really necessary. If there is nothing meaningful to discuss, and no pressing issue to be resolved, you should consider cancelling it.

Sometimes regular meetings are held just so that people can update one another. Again, you should consider whether this is the best use of everyone's time, or whether written updates would suffice.

## What makes a meeting effective?

There are a number of key areas that need to be in place for a meeting to be effective.

### Checklist

- Purpose of the meeting** – this must be clear and relevant to everyone involved.
- Participants** – are the right people going to be present?
- Agenda** – will it be an effective meeting tool?
- The chair** – are they able to run the meeting effectively and enable all participants to contribute?
- Minutes** – do you have the right sort of notes to promote action after the meeting?
- Ground rules** – do you have a set of ground rules to help make the meeting work?

## Ground rules, guidelines and terms of reference

Having a set of ground rules can:

- provide a framework for behaviour standards
- help all participants to feel safe
- establish appropriate standards of confidentiality
- help new participants to identify the group 'norms'
- be referred to when there are instances of disagreement or conflict.

# DSC Speed Reads

Aimed at people who are short on time and need to absorb information quickly, these indispensable guides are:

- **Accessible** – practical guidance on a wide range of subjects
- **Condensed** – distilling experience and expertise in just 32 pages
- **Clearly signposted** – Top Tips, Case Studies and Where Next ideas

Covering a wide range of topics and building into an invaluable library, Speed Reads are an essential addition to any bookshelf.

## Meetings

Running effective meetings is a skill and a challenge to both the chair and meeting participants. If meetings are not chaired well everyone feels frustrated. This book will be invaluable for new or existing chairs and minute takers who want to develop their skills, and for meeting participants who want to make their meetings work for everyone.

**Helen Rice** is Chief Executive of Blackfriars Advice Centre in South East London. She is chair of both the Women's Resource Centre and Community Action Southwark. Helen was formerly Director of Learning and Development at the Directory of Social Change and Head of Consultancy and Training for Community Matters.

**Maria Pemberton** is Director of Operations for the Directory of Social Change. Previously she has worked for the Birmingham Post and Mail, the Daily Express, the Industrial Society, Youth at Risk and the RNIB. She is also a trustee of ChildHopeUK and CleanupUK.



**Mixed Sources**  
Product group from well-managed  
forests and other controlled sources

Cert no. TT-COC-002706  
[www.fsc.org](http://www.fsc.org)  
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council

ISBN 978-1-906294-25-0



9 781906 294250