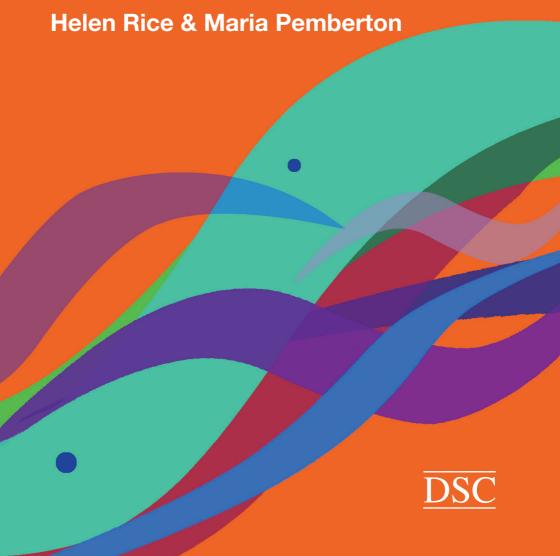
COMMUNICATIONS

Meetings



DSC SPEED READS

COMMUNICATIONS

Meetings

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DIRECTORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

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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_

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.

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