

Speaking Effectively
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Lecture 30
How to Lead a Meeting

Meetings, meetings, meetings. How many times you have rode the fact that you have to attend yet another meeting. Unfortunately in the workplace, in our professional life we are required to attend or to participate in a number of meetings. Meetings of so many different kinds that cannot be avoided. What we can do is to make best of it and look at a meeting in a positive way as a place, where we can find our group identity and also make effective contributions, either as a team leader or as a participant.

So in this module we will look at meetings. We will look at effective speaking in meetings and in the first unit I will take you through how to lead a meeting. Most of you those of you are have not started yet there careers or about to start on their career, would probably not be leading a meeting. They would be participating in a meeting. But at some stage or the other, you would be required to lead a meeting. So let us look at how does one, what is one needed to do to lead a meeting effectively.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:52)

Three Aspects of a Meeting

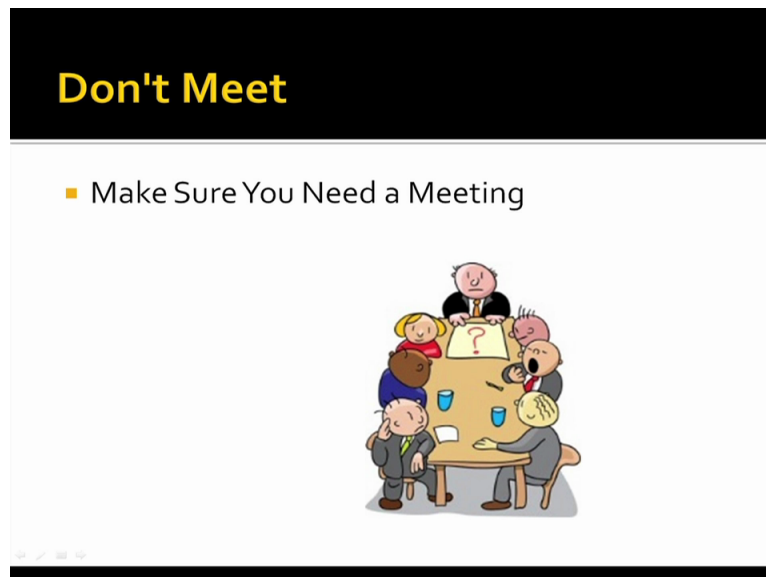
- Planning
- Facilitating
- Follow-up



Now there are 3 aspect of leading a meeting. The first is planning, the second is facilitating and third is follow-up. I am going to, in the next 30 minutes or so, we are going to take up each of these aspects. Let us begin with planning. So first of all, do we need to meet at all? Now, as you say, 'Oh! Yet another meeting. Once again I have to spare time for the meeting.' And people do not show up for the meeting. People have so many engagements that is difficult to get people together for meeting.

So first of all, a leader needs to decide, do you need to meet at all? Is it necessary to have a meeting? Is the work that you want to accomplish during the meeting, can it be done without meeting? Can it be done through email? Can it be done through calling people individually? Is it necessary for people to get together? So first of all, decide whether you need to meet or do not meet at all.

(Refer Slide Time: 03:04)



That is the first job of a leader. Make sure you need a meeting. Now, this is Jeff Haden, in his article, '9 hardcore steps to leading incredibly effective meetings'.

(Refer Slide Time: 03:18)

Never set a regular schedule

- Consistency breeds complacency
- After a while the "Monday meeting" becomes just another entry on a calendar, and attendees stop preparing and quit caring
- If at all possible, set a different date and time even for consistently held per-time-period meetings.
- If you meet weekly, alternate days of the week, mornings and afternoons, and even go so far as to set unusual times (like really early or really late in the day.)
- The more "unusual" you can make the meeting, the more likely your team is to see the meeting as notable and worth preparing for
- Jeff Haden. 9 Hardcore Steps to Leading Incredibly Effective Meetings

I have drawn his article to share these tips with you. In which he talks about what we have different kinds of meeting. So we have regular meetings like monthly meetings, weekly meeting, once in a year annual meetings or occasional meeting. So Jeff Haden suggest that instead of meeting regularly, never set a schedule, because according to him consistency breeds complacency.

So after a while the Monday meeting, we all have the Monday meeting new blues and after a while the Monday meeting become just another entry on a calendar and you say 'Oh! Yet another weekly meeting or yet another monthly meeting'. And attendees start preparing and quit caring. So if it all possible set a different date. Do not do all your meetings, tough meetings on Mondays. Maybe you can vary them and have it on Tuesdays or different day.

A different date or different time and if you meet weekly, alternate days of the week, mornings and afternoon and even go so far as to set unusual times, like really early or really late in the day. The more unusual you can make a meeting, the more likely your team is to see the meeting as notable and worth preparing for. So never set a regular schedule. I said the first part of the meeting or leading a meeting is, planning for the meeting. What is the pre work prior to the meeting? You need to distribute and review this pre work. The first important, what are the priorities?

(Refer Slide Time: 05:16)

Distribute and Review Pre-work Prior to the Meeting

- Priorities – what absolutely must be covered?
- Results – what do you need to accomplish at the meeting?
- Participants – who needs to attend the meeting for it to be successful?
- Sequence – in what order will you cover the topics?
- Timing – how much time will spend on each topic?
- Date and time – when will the meeting take place?
- Place – where will the meeting take place?

What is that needs to be covered? What are the results you need to accomplish at the meeting? That is the second thing. The third is, who needs to attend the meeting for a meeting to be successful? What is the sequence in the order in which you would cover the topics? The timing, how much time would you spend on each topic? Date and time, when will the meeting take place and where will the meeting take place?

So these are the some of the issues that you need to consider is this part of planning of the meeting, the homework that one needs to do before the meeting proper. These are the things you need to keep in mind. Now the first thing in a meeting as in a presentation is, what is the objective of having a meeting? Why have you call this meeting, first of all? Your objective needs to be very clear.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:19)

Make your objective clear



- Stephen Covey says in the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, "Begin with the end in mind."
- A meeting must have a specific and defined purpose.
- Standing meetings with vague purposes, such as "status updates," are rarely a good use of time.

Stephen Covey says in the 'Seven Habit of Highly Effective People', "Begin with the end in mind." What you want to accomplish with the meeting after calling the meeting? You need to be very clear about that. A meeting must have a very specific and define purpose. So standing meeting vague purposes, such as status updates, are really a good use of time. So first thing is make your objectives clear. The second important part of planning of a meeting is you need to decide who needs to be present at the meeting?

(Refer Slide Time: 06:59)

Consider who is invited Ensure Appropriate Participation at the Meeting



- When you're calling a meeting, take time to think about who really needs to be there
- If you're announcing a change, invite the people who are affected by the announcement
- If you're trying to solve a problem, invite the people who will be good sources of information for a solution
- When people feel that what's being discussed isn't relevant to them, or that they lack the skills or expertise to be of assistance, they'll view their attendance at the meeting as a waste of time

Consider who is invited. Ensure appropriate participation at the meeting. Now many of us attend meetings where just by being member of a certain group, of a department, of an institution, we are called to meetings. But in meetings of this kind, one does not quite know what one is expected to do, except that the person who is calling the meeting assumes that this is a democratic way of arriving at the sessions.

So I know people who take every small decision to the entire group because they do not want to sound undemocratic and sometimes it is a very clever ploy to make sure that they get support from the maximum (numb) number of people and avoid responsibility. In my opinion that is a waste of time because you do not need to call the entire group. You should call only the people who really need to be there. So if you are announcing a change, invite the people who are affected by the announcement.

If you are trying to resolve a problem, invite the people who will be good sources of information for a solution. When people feel that what is being discussed is not relevant to them or that they do not have the skills or expertise to be of assistance, they will view their attendance in the meeting as a waste of time. So, the second important point to keep in mind is, who should be invited? Think of appropriate participation in the meeting. Call only those people who you think will contribute effectively or have a role to play in the meeting, unless your institution policy demands that everyone should be present at the meeting.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:58)

Publish an agenda that only lists action items

- Create an agenda that lays out everything you plan to cover in the meeting, along with a timeline that allots a certain number of minutes to each item, and email it to people in advance.
- Should never include the words "information," "recap," "review," or "discussion."
- Can be one or two sentences, like, "Determine the product launch date," "Select software developer for database redesign."
- The goal of a good meeting is to decide or do something
- Jeff Haden. 9 Hardcore Steps to Leading Incredibly Effective Meetings

The next thing is to frame the agenda of your meeting. To set the agenda of the meeting. Now, in preparing the agenda, again Hayden says that, you must think of an agenda which only list action items. Create an agenda that lays out everything you plan to cover with the meeting, along with a timeline that (allo) allots a certain number of minutes to each item and email it or send hard copies to people in advance. An agenda should never include information such as information, recap, review or discussions.

It could be just be two sentences like, determine the product launch date or select software (deve) developer for database redesign. The goal of a good meeting is to decide or to do something. Now we do have meetings where the objective is to inform. Sometimes in an organization which is not vertical, very often decisions have to be passed down the hierarchy by the head of an institution to people.

And those who are not present at a particular meeting and then another meeting is called where the person who was representing a larger group, shares that information with the rest of the group. So there are meetings where one needs to inform. There are not all the meetings are not meeting where one makes decisions. Now never use the meeting again, he says, to share information. Information should be shared before the meeting.

Now if I need to make a decision during a meeting, should not I have the information I need to make that decision? So whatever information you think is relevant, documents, reports, data, etc.

You could send them to the participants in advance. using meetings as a way to share information is unproductive, a waste of time and well, lazy. That is what he says. If anyone in the meeting says, "I am just thinking out loud", then you have not done your job, their thoughts should have already be together.

Use the pre work in the meeting. So what if I work you have done prior to setting the meeting, it should be brought out in the meeting.

(Refer Slide Time: 11:41)

Use the Pre-work in the Meeting



So now let us think of the purpose. The purpose of meeting should not merely to inform, nor should the purpose of the meeting merely be to promote team cohesion. We do have meeting of this kind where people are invited so that they can get to interact with one another as a group and the assumption is that when group gets together, they will get to know each other and it will improve interpersonal relationships. But that is a different kind of meeting, those are interpersonal the relationship is interpersonal rather than productive.


So team members do need to work together but we do not have to hangout in order to become a unit. Great business relationship are created when people can count on each other to do their part, need commitments, get things done, in short produce tangible outcomes. So we do not need to have a meeting to promote team cohesion. Now that we have come to the second part of leading a meeting, the second part of leading a meeting is, to facilitate the meeting. How does one facilitate a meeting?

So what are the things that one needs to keep in mind that what is the objective of the meeting? it is not just to make decisions. Decisions if the decisions are made and they are populated or communicated to the group. When does not always get a good feeling. The ultimatum of the meeting in (ma) my understanding is a (me) meeting where everyone comes out looking happy.

Now this is not always the case and an ideal meeting and a real meeting are very different. Because in a real meeting there are always people who come out looking unhappy. They are unhappy with the decisions that are made in the meeting.

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Effective Meeting Facilitation



- Once in the meeting, to ensure maximum satisfaction for everyone, there are several things you should keep in mind:
- Establishing ground rules early on will create a framework for how your group functions
- Ensure the meeting stays on topic.
- List all tasks that are generated at the meeting. Make a note of who is assigned to do what, and by when.
- At the close of the meeting, quickly summarize next steps and inform everyone that you will be sending out a meeting summary.

But one should try to see that make sure that maximum satisfaction for everyone and what are the things that one can do to make sure that everyone comes out looking satisfied? First of all, (gra) establish ground rules early which will create a framework for how your group functions. Second is to ensure that the meeting stays on the topic. List all the tasks that are generated at the meeting. Make a note of who is assigned to do what and by when.

At the close of the mating quickly summarize next steps and inform everyone that you will be sending out a meeting summary. So now let us examine how to facilitate a meeting in more detail. First of all, start on a time and end on time.

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Start on time, end on time



- If you have responsibility for running regular meetings and you have a reputation for being someone who starts and ends promptly, you will be amazed how many of your colleagues will make every effort to attend your meetings
- People appreciate it when you understand that their time is valuable
- Do not schedule any meeting to last longer than an hour.
- Sixty minutes is generally the longest time workers can remain truly engaged

If you have the responsibility for running a regular meetings and you have a reputation for being someone who starts and ends (pro) (pr) promptly, you will be amazed, how many of your colleagues will make every effort to attend your meeting. That does not always happen because we have meeting where people do not start on time and the meeting drag on endlessly. We do not we hate going to those meetings because one might have another task to follow up and one is never sure how long the meeting will take.

So those who keep to the time and or a state or perhaps give you an idea how long the meeting will take, you do not mind attending those meetings. People appreciate it when you understand how valuable the time is. Do not schedule any meeting to last longer than an hour because people do not have the patience. 60 minutes is generally the longest time people can remain truly engaged.

Sometimes we have these marathon meetings, brain storming meetings, decision making meetings, emergency meetings where people are expected to be there for hours and they are waiting, 'okay, when am I going to, when is a meeting going to end and when I am going to get home or get on to my work?' So try not to have those meetings unless it is absolutely necessary.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:09)

Ban technology



- The reality is that if people are allowed to bring iPads or BlackBerries into the room, they won't be focusing on the meeting or contributing to it.
- Instead, they'll be emailing, surfing the web, or just playing around with their technology.
- Eyes up here, please.

From there the next thing is to ban technology. How often have you got people sneaking at their SMS, messages, their phones, their Blackberrys, their iPads, to check their mails, to check their emails, to send messages and if people are doing that you can take it for granted that they are not going to contribute in the meeting because they are not paying attention to what you are saying. So instead they will be emailing, surfing the web or just playing around with their technology.

So make sure that eyes are up there looking at you or whoever speaking. Stick to your schedule. Once you are in a meeting, put the agenda up on a screen or a whiteboard for others to see. Does not always have to be on a white board or a screen. If it is an informal meeting or it is a small group meeting perhaps you can just state the agenda of the meeting. You say this is the agenda and if you have circulated the agenda items in advance, you can just begin the meeting by saying that we are meeting for this purpose and these are the items on the agenda.

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Stick to your schedule



- Once you're in the meeting, put that agenda up on a screen or whiteboard for others to see
- At the end of each agenda item, quickly summarize what was said, and ask people to confirm that that's a fair summary
- Then make notes regarding follow-up
- Note items that require further discussion.
- Watch
- Watch body language and make adjustments as necessary. Maybe you need a break, or you need to stop someone from speaking too much.
- Close on a note of Achievement

At the end of each agenda items quickly summarize what was said and ask people to confirm that it is a fair summary. Very often we leave we move onto a new point without resolving the prior point in the agenda and at the end of it, people have forgotten what you said or what each person said or what the decision was. So the best thing is to summarize what was said and get the peoples consent in case they have not agree that they would say no, I did not say this or this is not the decision we took. So it is a good way of revisiting each point instead of at the end of a meeting. Now make notes regarding follow-up. Note items that needs for discussions.

While you are at the meeting you must watch the body language and make adjustments necessary. So if you find somebody is looking at their watch, make sure maybe you need a break or maybe you need to stop someone from speaking too much and when you end the meeting, close on a note of achievements. Now the second important part of leading a meeting is how to deal with people? The first part was planning a meeting, facilitating a meeting. The second part is how to deal with people? Remember not to take.

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Dealing with the people Take no hostages



- If certain people are dominating the conversation, make a point of asking others for their ideas
- Nothing derails a meeting faster than one person talking more than his fair share
- If you notice one person monopolizing the conversation, call him out. Say, "We appreciate your contributions, but now we need input from others before making a decision." Be public about it.

Now, who's think of a meeting where you have not been very effective? I have often been in a meeting, at meeting where people are screaming at one another and the chair the person who has called the meeting is not able to control the group because the rules are not stated (cle) clearly. The person who is leading the meeting is not paying attention to people who are creating trouble or perhaps does not use the right way of telling them what to do. So, very often we find that in a meeting there are certain people who like to hog the discussion.

You would find that they like to make their presence felt, they are domineering by the nature. Even if they are not (dom) domineering by nature, they want to have a say at the meeting and they tend to hog all the conversations. so if you find that there are people of this kind make sure that ask others for the ideas and because nothing derails a meeting faster than one person taking more than his fair share. If you notice that one person is monopolizing the conversation, call him out say, 'we appreciate your contributions but now we need to get input from others before making a decision.'

You can be public about it. Now what are the things you need to do to make sure of that you can involve each (partici) participant in actions.

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Involve Each Participant in Actions

- Control the Garrulous
- Draw out the silent
- Protect the weak
- Encourage the clash of ideas
- Watch out for the suggestion-squashing reflex
- Come to the most senior people last

First of all, control the garrulous, those who tend to take too much time saying on what they want to say, those who want to dominate the conversation or do not let anyone else speak. Try to control them. The second part is to draw out the silent. There are people in the group either because of the status difference or because they are reticent by the nature, there are people who remain silent throughout the meeting even if they have something important to contribute and you are losing out by not getting their inputs because they have not had a say.

They have not had a chance to have their say in the meeting. So, draw out the silent, protect the weak. Very often when I have watched this happening in meetings that there are people, there is a core group, there is a group which controls things, a coterie and if there is a person who is not part of the group or who's not as strong as the rest of the group, that person is not allowed to have a say either because that person is younger than everyone else, not senior enough. Sometimes it can be very senior enough person who is being isolated.

So as a group leader, you must make sure, you must not watch silently even if you are part of the other group, you must make sure that you protect the weak. And encourage the clash of ideas because a clash of ideas is productive. If everyone gives a cent, if everyone agrees to agree is it is not a great meeting because that means you have not generated interesting ideas. Instead agree to disagree, have as many ideas as possible, have opposing ideas, let people express their dissent in

a polite manner but let them do it. So that we get the best decision. watch out for the suggestion quashing reflex.

Now remember real meetings are about ego. Real meetings are about taking free credit. Real meetings about showing your power. So whenever you find that you find people when somebody is coming out with a great idea, you will find the others would try to squash the reflexes to squash the suggestion. Because you feel, 'okay this person is making a very good impression and is going to get away with all the credits.' So you try to withdraw the idea, you try to rubbish the idea by saying, 'no, this is not a great idea.'

So you must try to look out for people who follow their reflex of squashing other people's ideas. And since it is always the junior people, it is always the younger people who do not, who are shy to speak up in the meeting, who needs muster their encouraged in order to speak at the meeting. You must try to first shroud the senior junior colleagues first and then come to the senior ones last. They would also have their say. But let those who might be intimidated by the senior colleague, have your say first.

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Allow digression

- Tangents can be surprisingly useful, but it's your job to decide whether to let a discussion go or cut it off.
- Here's a simple guide: If a discussion involves ideas, solutions, or suggestions, let it run.
- If a discussion involves complaining or finger-pointing -- without very quickly shifting to how a problem can be eliminated -- cut it off.
- Be professional, but don't worry too much about hurt feelings.
- Good employees appreciate a controlled, on-point, productive meeting, and poor employees quickly learn that whining isn't welcome.
- Jeff Haden

Now what are the rules for (dig) digression? I am being contradictory because earlier I said that you should stick to your schedule. I said that you must always stick come with the pre prepared schedule and you must always follow a predetermined time for each agenda and make sure that

nothing goes out of way. Now this kind of controlling meeting can actually be counter-productive. Because sometimes digressions can be productive. When one goes off the agenda or one starts thinking freely, sometimes more creative idea emerge.

So tangents can be surprisingly useful, but you have to decide whether to let a discussion go or cut it off. Now here is a simple guide. If a discussion involves ideas, solutions or suggestions, let it run. If a discussion involves complaining or finger-pointing without very quickly shifting to how a problem can be eliminated, cut it off and trust me most of the digressions I have encountered are of this kind. Where two people gets into complaints or finger pointing at who did what wrong? Instead of trying to resolve a problem.

So be professional but do not worry too much about hurting feelings. Good employees appreciate a controlled, on point, productive meeting and poor employees quickly learn that whining is not welcome. Now, we will come to the third part of a meeting which is follow-up.

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Follow up

- It's quite common for people to come away from the same meeting with very different interpretations of what went on.
- To reduce this risk, email a memo highlighting what was accomplished to all who attended within 24 hours after the meeting.
- Document the responsibilities given, tasks delegated, and any assigned deadlines. That way, everyone will be on the same page.

What you could do to lead a meeting effectively? We come to the third part now which is to follow-up a meeting. It is quite common for people to come away from the same meeting with very different interpretation of what went on. Because everyone has a different way of absorbing others idea and everyone personalizes whatever is discussed and they remember the parts that

concern them and they tend to forget what does not concern them or maybe they were not paying attention.

So how does one make sure that everyone remembers what was discussed at the meeting and there is a record of that? So to reduce this risk, email a memo highlighting what was accomplished to all who attended within 24 hours after the meeting. So that people who disagree with what happened, they have a chance to correct you. maybe you have understood something right or the person who is taking notes has got some points of somebody's statement, wrong.

So this is your chance to make sure when you circulate the minutes, if it needs to be formal after meeting within 24 hours or it does not have to be a formal minutes. It could be just a simple email listing all the points that (co) were discussed at the meeting. Document the responsibility given, task (delegate) delegated and any assigned deadlines. That way everyone will be on the same page.

So it is also not enough just to state what happened at the meeting but also outline the plan of action and according to the decision made at the meeting, document who's expected to do what. So there is clarity and there is a follow-up. There is an action on what was discussed at the meeting.

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Clearly identify decisions, takeaways, and action steps

- Every meeting should result in tangible outcomes.
- Make sure everyone knows what was decided and what will be done -- otherwise, all you did was talk.
- A discussion is never an outcome.
- Jeff Haden

Now clearly identify decisions, takeaways and action steps. Every meeting should result in tangible outcomes. Make sure that everyone knows what was decided and what will be done otherwise, all you did was talk. So a discussion is never an outcome. So create accountability. We must be very clear about who's responsible for which actions.

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Create accountability

- Who is responsible for which actions? Make sure everyone knows. Never let ownership be fuzzy or unclear; an action item without a clear owner is an instant orphan.
- Jeff Haden

Make sure everyone knows. Never let ownership be fuzzy or unclear, an action item without a clear owner is an instant orphan.

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Publish a meeting recap, but only include action items

- State what was decided, what will be done, who will do it -- and nothing else.
- Never include statements like, "Discussed possibility of re-aligning department responsibilities."
- If all you did was discuss realignment: 1) Shame on you; why didn't you make a decision? and 2) Including "discussion" in a recap implies that discussions without decisions are worthwhile.
- Don't give general discussions credibility by including them in the recap; team members might start to think general discussions *do* have value.
- Jeff Haden

So now publish, when you are publishing a meeting recap, whether it is a minute or an email, how must you do it? just remember the action items. Do not include all the irrelevant details of the meeting. Only include the action items. State what was decided? What will be done? Who will do it? And nothing else. Never include statements like, discussed possibility of realigning department responsibilities.

If all you did was discussed realignment, shame on you why did not you make decisions and including discussion in a recap implies that discussion without decisions are (wor) worthwhile. Do not give general discussions credibility by including them in the recap, team member might start to think that general discussions do have value.

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Conduct initial follow-up offline

- Establishing accountability places responsibility on individuals, not necessarily the team as a whole
- If you need a follow-up meeting, fine -- but do so after progress has been made and reported on offline
- As the leader, you should follow up individually, and team members should send progress emails to the team
- Only meet when additional decisions need to be made
- Never meet just to share updates that could have been shared offline
- Jeff Haden

Now conduct initial follow-up offline. Establishing accountability places responsibility on individuals, not necessarily the team as a whole. If you need up a follow-up meeting, fine, but do so after progress has been made and reported on offline. As a leader you should follow up individually and team members should send progress emails to the team. Never meet when additional decisions need to be made. Never meet just to share updates that could have been shared offline. So with this we move on to how to participate in a meeting?

How to contribute effectively to a meeting? Because yes, you will soon come to this stage, but most of you at this stage of your career, who are starting out, probably will just may contributing to a meeting and not leading a meeting. We will take that next.