

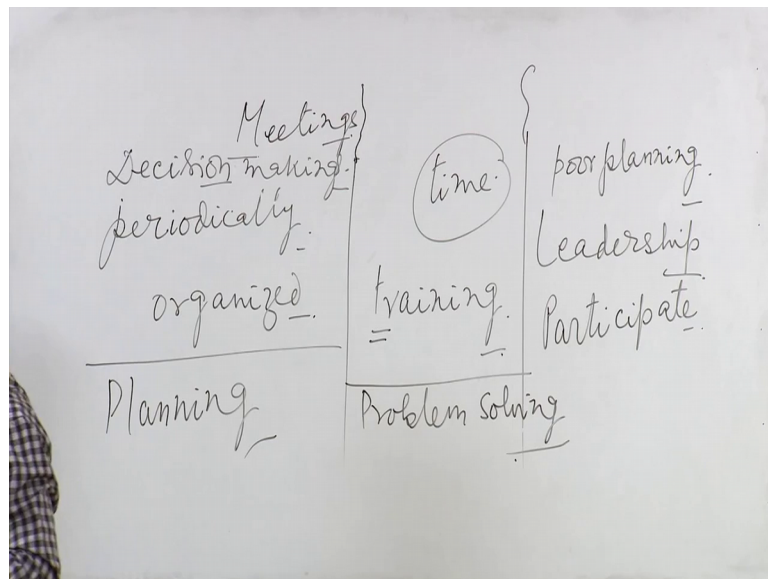
Soft Skills
Dr. Binod Mishra
Department of Humanities & Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee

Lecture - 44
Meeting Management

Good morning and welcome to lectures on Soft skills by Binod Mishra. Presently we are in the group communication skills part and in that part, the previous lectures we have discussed about various group communications and today we are going to talk about meeting management skills.

Now, as human beings we have been watching in the previous lectures that it is our tendency to collect or together in groups.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:59)



Now, before we come to meeting management skills, let us see what actually are meetings. Earlier we talked about group discussion and there we saw how group discussion helps people to show their leadership skills and other related skills, but then since most of you are either in the organizations or going to join organizations, you have often heard people say that a good amount of a professional time today, it is spent in meetings.

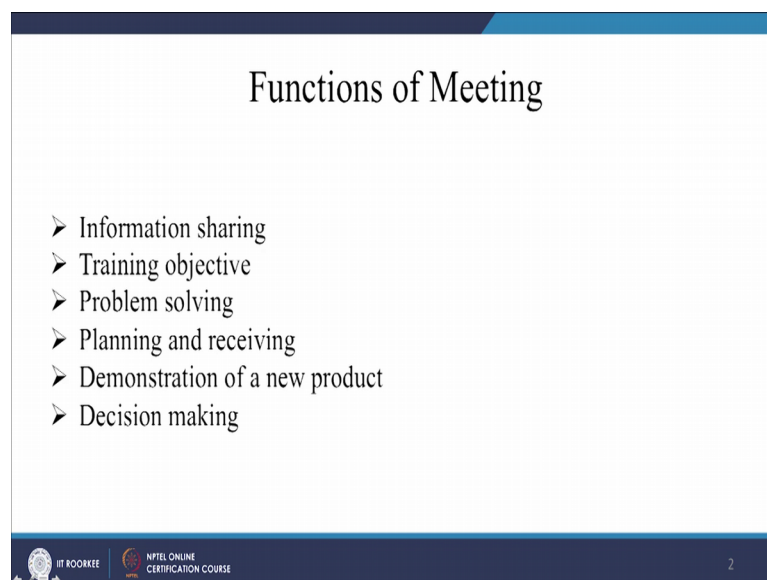
Sometimes people often get varied about these meetings which are at times held periodically and at other times meetings are organized sometimes in a fortnight, sometimes in a month, sometimes after two months, but then meetings have become a part of today's organizations. Now, do you really think that if you are invited to a meeting, you have something to do or what actually are the purposes behind a meeting. We shall discuss the various functions of a meeting and your role as an individual in the meeting and how actually meetings can be made useful because time and again you have heard people saying that we spend a lot of time on meetings.

So, the first thing is that time is very important, but before we come to know how to make use of time, let us talk about the various functions of meeting.

What is a meeting? A meeting is actually a gathering of so many people. I mean more than 2 or 3 depending upon the number of the people that will discuss later, but then meeting is actually a sort of organized gathering and that gathering is for a specific purpose.

Now, what are the various purposes that meetings have to have?

(Refer Slide Time: 03:40)



The slide is titled "Functions of Meeting" and lists six functions in a bulleted format. The slide also includes logos for IIT Roorkee and NPTEL Online Certification Course at the bottom.

- Information sharing
- Training objective
- Problem solving
- Planning and receiving
- Demonstration of a new product
- Decision making

The first is that whenever a meeting is called, it has certain aims and objects. Now, meetings may be called to share some information, information sharing and there are several advantages of meetings also that we shall also discuss, but then you have some

new piece of information and you are an organizational head or say a unit head. You want to circulate that information in the group and in the group meaning, there by in your unit which you are heading.

So, meeting has a function of information sharing. You will find that whenever you are inducted as a new member in an organization. Again you are totally new to the organization. You do not know anything about the organization, but then since you have to work in the organization, you also are expected to understand what the organization deals in, what are the objectives of the organization and what your role is.

So, initially you will also be expected to get some training and this training also can be one of the objectives of a meeting. So, suppose nowadays you find that every now and then organizations are changing, new and new things have been launched, new practices are being followed and as we are in a multicultural global world where every moment there is a change. So, it is quite mandatory for our members of all the employees of an organization to understand what their roles are and how they will fit in their roles. So, for those meetings can also be organized for the purpose of training, but remember sometimes in an organization or say in a particular unit, there is a problem and that problem needs a solution, some decision has to be taken.

So, sometimes meetings can also be called to solve a problem because as we have said earlier groups have more resources because it is a collection of people who are from diverse backgrounds, diverse experiences. So, one of the major functions of meeting is to solve a problem. Sometimes you will also see that our organization has landed itself in a crisis and in that critical hour also some meetings will be called in order to find out what can be the relevant solution at that hour because as employees of an organization, it becomes our prime responsibility to understand the problems that the organization is going through. Hence, a problem solving also is the function of meeting. So, problems are there. So, problems will be solved only when so many people are there and in this situation somebody I mean your leader will call a meeting to discuss over how to tide over a critical situation.

On other occasions, you will find that a work is in progress or a work has finally been solved because of some reasons or the other. So, in order to understand, in order to take a stock of the situation, in order to understand the problem that is actually impeding the

process of a certain product or certain policy, so a meeting is once again called to plan. So, meeting is also called to plan. So, planning for new things sometimes you will find that you as an organizational head have come across such a problem where your customers or where people who are the shareholders, they have some problems and in a way there has been a conflict of interest, there has been a very conflicting situation in order to overcome that once again a meeting is called. So, meeting is called to plan, to receive. If a new product, suppose nowadays you will find that so many new products are being launched. Earlier you know if you take an example of the modes of transport, earlier from one place to another, you use to hire a rickshaw I mean if you are going for very short distance.

Nowadays, there have been several new things which have replaced that. For example, the e-rickshaw that is the new thing. Imagine when it could have been launched for the first time, but before launching it could also have seen whether it is feasible. So, meaning there by if you are going to launch a new product, first you have to demonstrate. First you have to announce amongst the internal members the specifications of that product because some way or the other when you demonstrate it, you come to know about its lapses or what new things can be added, but the overall function of every meeting is to make a decision. This is once again a different question that many meetings sometimes and just in a discussion and there is no decision, but primarily all meetings finally have to come to a decision.

Now, when meeting is so important, we have to understand how to conduct a meeting and what are actually the various skills that are required in order to make the meeting effective, in order to counter the allegation that meetings waste a lot of time and in order that meetings be meaningful.

Now, what are these and how can we go forward? As I have said earlier that there are usual complaints about meetings. Sometimes you will also get surprised when you get a notice for the meeting. Earlier we have talked about notice and we have talked about minutes of the meeting when we are discussing writing session, but since this is a part of the speaking section and this is a part of the group communication, here we are discussing what it makes to call a meeting and how a meeting can be made meaningful.

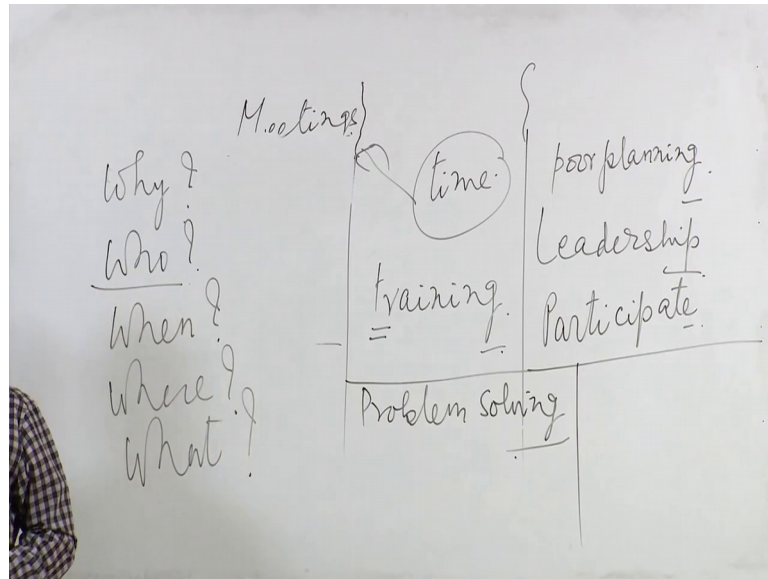
Now, the complaints which are there most of the time are that most of meetings do not come to a decision. Simply they are a waste of time and then, we start finding the reason. Many people all at times attribute that it was because of a poor planning because sometimes you get the notice of a meeting 2 hours before or 3 hours before.

Now, in such a situation you as a member who is going to participate in the meeting are at loss to understand what may be the agenda even if the agenda sent you are not totally prepared. Sometimes meetings also fail because of poor leadership. We have talked about the various skills that are involved in leadership.

Now, on several occasions meetings do not come to a proper decision or implementation because of the poor leadership. Even as employees we also do not at times participate. Imagine if the number of meetings is too many, I mean suppose if you have a weekly meeting every now and then, people who start thinking it as a routine affair and then, sometimes they go there half heartedly, sometimes they are disinterested and that is why the participation level is also less and meetings do not come to a valid conclusion.

Now, when you plan a meeting, now why does it happen because the person who call the meeting perhaps was not aware of the proper planning. We can understand that there can be emergency meetings. Of course that cannot be excused, but if meetings are organized at a very short notice or call that a very short notice, then the meeting will not have any proper outcome. So, in order that the meeting be made effective, let us try to answer and let us ask ourselves also because you sometimes may be in the position of a leader or the head or in charge of a particular unit and you may also be asked to call a meeting. So, it is better when you call a meeting, before calling a meeting you should ask yourself certain questions, so that meetings cannot end in a fiasco. When I say fiasco, I mean a meaningless meeting. You know all meetings have to come to certain decisions, certain outcomes, but then it totally depends upon how we organize it. So, let us ask yourself the question.

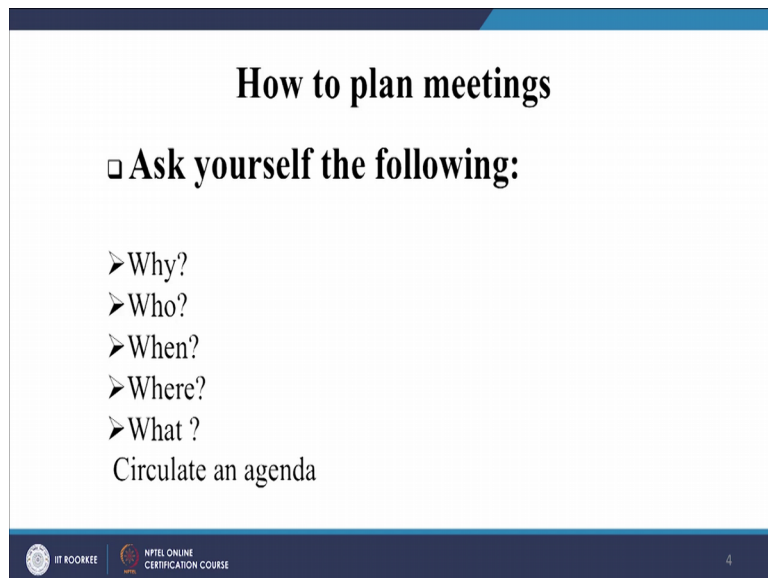
(Refer Slide Time: 13:41)



Why this meeting? Meaning there by is it not possible to stop the meeting and have only a discussion. Now, there are several questions involved into it.

First is why are you calling this meeting?

(Refer Slide Time: 13:58)



Ask yourself what is the reason behind this meeting. Then, if you satisfy yourself by getting the proper regents of meeting, ask yourself who are the people that should be called for the meeting because meeting is very important. Earlier we said it is time and the time is not only of one person. The time is not only of you, but other people also.

Maybe everyone is not at the particular location, everyone is not in the particular area. So, there are people who can be the part of the meeting, they also may have to travel from a long distance.

So, ask who are the people whose presence is important in the meeting. There is no need to call people unnecessarily or without any objective for a meeting. Then, again comes the question of time. When should the meeting be held, where should the meeting take place and what now? These are the questions that will actually give you proper reasoning as to why meeting should be called, why should the meeting be called. You will have some reason who are the people I mean people who are part of that, people who actually can help a lot in the decision making process.

Now, when for that you will have to check the calendars, you will also have to think about the time of the people, I mean people who are part of the meeting because every one may not be free at the time that you are going to call a meeting and then, what would be the appropriate location and then, what I mean what other things are required for the meeting in some way is of the other as we have talked earlier and agenda is always circulated because the agenda gives the members the first hand information about the items that will be discussed in a meeting.

Now, when you are going to decide about all these questions, the first is check calendars.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:11)

Points to remember

- Check calendars.
- Check availability.
- Find out suitable time.
- Change meeting venues and time.
- Avoid scheduling a meeting during a dead zone.

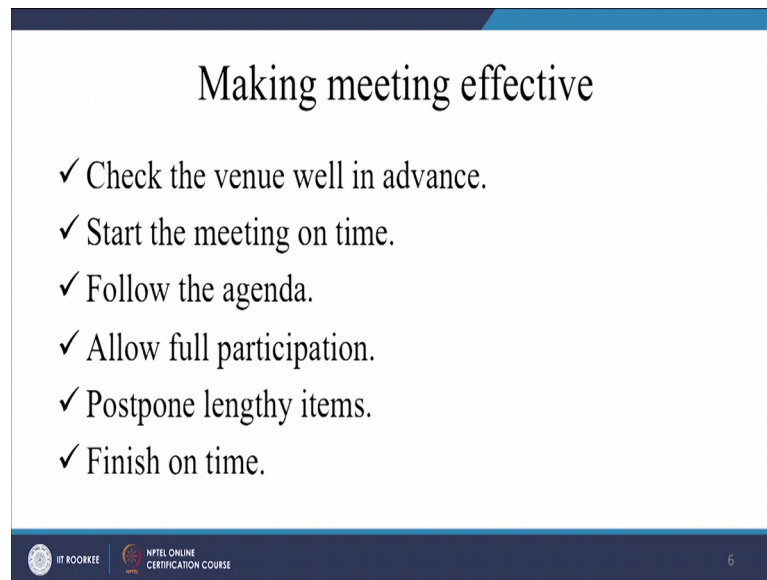
IIT POORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 5

Now, what will be the suitable date? Usually a date which can have the convenience of the members who can be the part of the meeting that will be the most suitable date and in order to understand the convenience of the people, you will have to check the availability of the people. I mean there may be a person who might be very important to this meeting, who might be knowing about the particulars of a particular department and his presence is very important, but he is out of the town. So, it is always better to take his or her convenience first and then, also take other peoples convenient time for that it is not needed that you should call upon them telephonically. You can pass on message through electronic mails as it is very feasible nowadays.

So, decide the suitable time and then, think about a venue. Now, when we think about the venue, there are several things. Now, what do we mean by venue? The place where meetings can take place. It is not essential that if you are in Mumbai and you are going to call meeting in a say Pune, now if it is possible you can call a meeting even if you feel that some people are located nearby, you can think of a common place where all these people can gather, but then if you feel that you have to call a series of meetings, it is always better to change venues, but keeping into consideration that it does not entail a lot of cost, fine.

Now, when you think about the appropriate timing of the meeting, many people may have different views. Some people would laugh to have the meeting in the first half say in the morning, some would like to have the meeting in the afternoon, but then see to it that you do not keep a meeting say in the evening after 7 pm or something like that everyone is a professional, everyone has certain work and we have to make a balance between our work and personal life. So, these are the points that should be taken into consideration when you have decided the venue. No.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:42)



Making meeting effective

- ✓ Check the venue well in advance.
- ✓ Start the meeting on time.
- ✓ Follow the agenda.
- ✓ Allow full participation.
- ✓ Postpone lengthy items.
- ✓ Finish on time.

IIT ROORKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 6

Now, you have circulated the information or the notice about the meeting, now it becomes your duty to check the venue well in advance. When I say check the venue well in advance, what do I mean? I mean if the room is accommodating, I mean can it accommodate all these people you have called for the meeting.

Sometimes the meeting can be for a people who are only 6 or 7 in number, sometimes it can be 20 in number. So, you have to decide whether the room can accommodate. Apart from the room, you also have to see the gadgets. Even before meeting you have to see whether proper electricity, electrical facilities are there, whether you are organizing this meeting during summer, you have to ensure that there are proper coolers or ACs working fine. More over you also have to see before announcing that the agenda is well prepared and systematic. Again when you are going to make the meeting effective, you also have to see that every member suppose it is a meeting which has got say 10 members, 20 members at every seat, there is a proper pad, pen and if it is you know convenient to provide everyone with mike if the number of participants are too many, but if the number is small, there is no need. More over you also have to think about refreshments and all the total ribbons upon your investment and for your capability as well.

Now, when you start the meeting see to it that you follow the agenda. Somebody will be appointed as the leader or the secretary, somebody as secretary will write the minutes as we have talked earlier. So, you appoint somebody to take or to record, but remember

while recording the person who is recording must know that everything should not be recorded because when there is a meeting, sometimes while discussion goes on some unusual unpleasant situations also arises, but that should not be a part of the minutes as we have discussed.

Now, start the meeting on time. When you start the meeting, please start the meeting on time. Sometimes you may find that not all people have gathered, but if the time for the meeting has been announced, it is better to start the meeting in time. Some people may be late. Follow the agenda, allow full participation. Please see as leader it is your responsibility to allow that everyone participates in the meeting. For that you have to have certain amount of control as a leader and if you follow it democratically, you will find that every member in the meeting participates in the meeting.

Sometimes the discussion deviates in a way. It is your responsibility as a leader of the meeting or as the head of a particular unit or whatsoever to see that the meeting does not get side tract. Please see that the meeting is finished well in time. While people are taking notes, they also have to see that they are using a very positive and constructive language and the tone, I mean the language used that has to be very official. It should not have a sort of informality and here should to be taken that the meeting is task oriented or task centered.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:29)

Meeting etiquettes

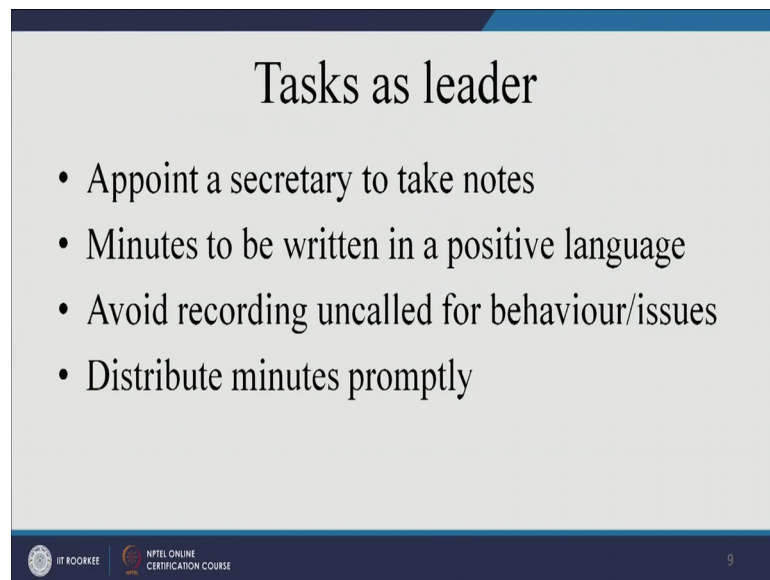
- Take notes
- Arrive before time
- Use positive and constructive language
- Neutral and energetic tone
- Be ideal/task-centred

IIT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE | 7

Now, when the meeting starts as a member of the meeting, as a participant in the meeting, you should wait for your turn to speak. As a leader if you are a leader, you should see that somebody who is not speaking or not participating, you should try to encourage him and while asking him to say something. The language used even you may get angry at times, but you should not show your anger. You can say well Mister X, what is your opinion on this matter and as employees, all of us should try our level best to see that meeting is effective, it is meaningful. Some sort of etiquettes, also have to be maintained, such as nowadays we are always in age where cell phones dominate most of the time. So, care should be taken not only by the leader, but by individual members also that they should switch off their cell phones during meeting and they should not use satirical language. Sometimes you will find that the meeting continues for a long time because apart from the agenda items, something more also comes into a discussion.

So, when things go off the hand and when the leader does not seem to have a control over a domineering person, as one of the participants you can always ask is the meeting over or may I know if the meeting is over. So, that will give a message and the meeting will be concluded.

(Refer Slide Time: 24:24)



The slide is titled "Tasks as leader" and contains a bulleted list of four tasks. The slide has a light blue header and footer. The footer includes the IIT Roorkee logo, the text "IIT ROORKEE", the NPTEL Online Certification Course logo, and the text "NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE". The number "9" is in the bottom right corner of the footer.

Tasks as leader

- Appoint a secretary to take notes
- Minutes to be written in a positive language
- Avoid recording uncalled for behaviour/issues
- Distribute minutes promptly

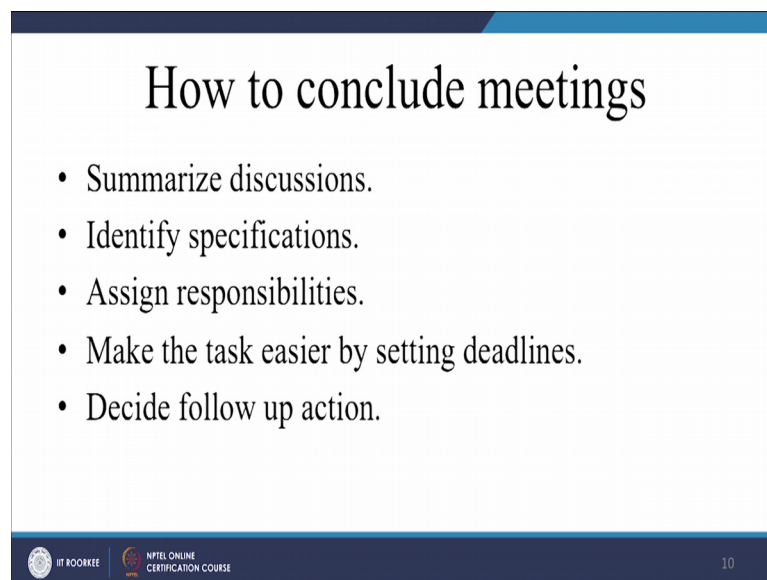
IIT ROORKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 9

Now, after the meeting is concluded, please thank the leader and once the meeting is over please see that whatever things you have discussed they are summarized, but remember as secretary taking down the notes will see that no unusual uncalled for behaviors are

recorded and ensure that the minutes will be circulated to everyone, all the members of the meeting. So, you have certain important roles as a leader if you are leading or heading the meeting.

Now, when you are going to conclude the meeting, you have to take into consideration that when you have heard everyone, you should summarize and whatever came out of the meeting and in these specifications of the meeting, they have to be identified and if you feel that some action is to be taken, you have to assign the responsibility to some people. You can also tell them a deadline, you can also provide deadline or give a time limit for the task to be taken into consideration. To be furriest, you can make the tasks easier by setting deadlines and do decide a follow up action.

(Refer Slide Time: 25:38)



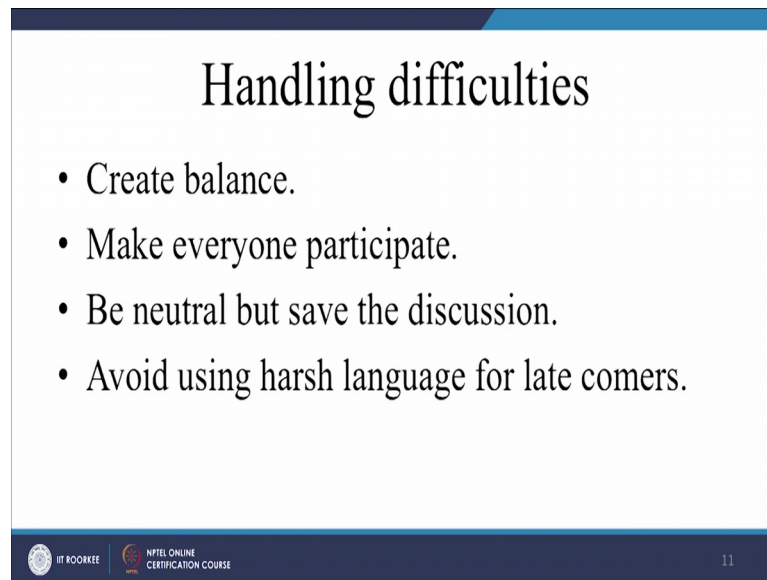
How to conclude meetings

- Summarize discussions.
- Identify specifications.
- Assign responsibilities.
- Make the task easier by setting deadlines.
- Decide follow up action.

IIT ROORKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 10

Since, we are living in an age where we have to work in one capacity or the other in organizations, we have to understand these skills that are required to make a meeting effective. It is always better that so many people meet and the discuss and they finally come out with some conclusions on which some action has to be taken, but sometimes there are also difficulties and here comes as again I will repeat the role of leader.

(Refer Slide Time: 26:23)



The slide is titled "Handling difficulties" and lists four key points for managing meeting challenges. The background is white with a blue header and footer. The footer contains logos for IIT ROORKEE and NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE, along with the slide number 11.

- Create balance.
- Make everyone participate.
- Be neutral but save the discussion.
- Avoid using harsh language for late comers.

So, it is the leader's responsibility to create a balance and to ensure that everyone has participated. The leader when finds that two people in the meeting they actually disagree and the disagreement level goes to the point of a conflict, it is now the leaders responsibility that by being neutral he can try to save the discussion, not by using the harsh language, but in a very polite, in a very convincing, in a very persuasive language. I mean somebody sometimes also come across some people who are late for the meeting. So, it is better not to say anything, but you know people who are late to the meeting, they will themselves realize that they are late.

Sometimes the leaders also say we started without you and these things have taken place or these things have been discussed. It is up to the leader how to conduct a meeting, but the conduct of a successful and effective meeting depends not only on the leader, but also on the participants of the meeting. A proper balance between the members and the leaders may result in the fruitful discussion and hence, the meeting can be considered to be suggestive and meaningful. You have many meetings to attend, but please see that you attend not only as a mute spectator and as a listener, but as an active participant because your participation will ensure and lead to the success of a meeting.

Thank you very much.