

*Introduction – for all participants*

You are directors of a food processing company called Adel Passam Inc. (API). The company has been linked with a scandal involving a businessman and property developer called Jordi Cass. It has been revealed that six years ago Cass bought land from the local city authority at 20% of its true market value. He sold the land one year later at a 500% profit. Cass was an adviser to API at the time as a property consultant. The press has suggested that directors of API knew of the scandal, but said nothing because the company and in particular the founder and managing director, Mikel Adela, stood to profit from Cass's deal. Also Cass was – and still is – a friend of Mikel Adela's son, Sam Adela, a director of the company. Mikel Adela died a year ago. Another API director, Marta Lucas, is married to the man who was leader of the ruling Democratic People's Party on the City Council when the land was originally sold to Cass.

*Situation*

The Board of API meets to discuss what action they should take. They are worried that the reputation of the company will be damaged and that its excellent relationship with the local community and its employees will suffer.

In your group, each student should choose a role from the list:

**Participants**

Sam Adela (Chair)

Jay Worthy (Legal Advisor to API)

Marta Lucas (Director)

Anton Hassim (Director)

Pat Joyce (Director)

Bernie Callam (Accountant)

The Chair of the meeting should look at File card 24. Other participants should look at File cards 25–29.

**TRANSFER**

Summarize your impressions of the Adel Passam meeting you have taken part in. Classify it according to one of the following types:

- decision making meeting
- information giving meeting
- discussion meeting.

How effective was the meeting?

How effective was the Chair?

How could the meeting have been better?

In what ways did the work covered in this unit help with the meeting?

**TRANSFER**

If you have taken part in a decision making meeting recently – or if the Adel Passam meeting was a decision making meeting – can you identify any clear structure to the decision making process, which was:

- similar to that described by Haynes (see p. 104)
- similar to the DESC model in the Skills Checklist (see p. 111)
- of a different kind? If so, what?



## Language Checklist

### Discussion in meetings

#### *Stating opinion*

It seems to me ...  
 I tend to think ...  
 In my view ...  
 We think / feel / believe ...  
 There's no alternative to ...  
 It's obvious that ...  
 Clearly / obviously ...

#### *Asking for opinion*

I'd like to hear from ...  
 Could we hear from ... ?  
 What's your view?  
 What do you think about ... ?  
 Do you have any strong views on ... ?  
 Any comments?

#### *Interrupting*

Excuse me, may I ask for clarification on this?  
 If I may interrupt, could you say ... ?  
 Sorry to interrupt, but ...  
 Do you think so? My impression is ...  
 What? That's impossible. We / I think ...

#### *Handling interruptions*

Yes, go ahead.  
 Sorry, please let me finish ...  
 If I may finish this point ...  
 Can I come to that later?  
 That's not really relevant at this stage ...  
 Can we leave that to another discussion?

## Skills Checklist

### Participating in meetings

#### *Types of meetings*

- Decision making meeting
- Information giving meeting
- Spontaneous / emergency meeting
- Routine meeting
- Internal meeting
- Customer / Client / Supplier
  - first meeting
  - established relationship

#### *Structure of decision making meetings*

- study / discuss / analyze the situation
- define the problem
- set an objective
- state imperatives and desirables
- generate alternatives
- establish evaluation criteria
- evaluate alternatives
- choose among alternatives

#### *The DESC stages of a meeting*

- D Describe situation
- E Express feelings
- S Suggest solutions
- C Conclude with decision

#### *Goal of decision making meetings*

Objective: to get a consensus in a time- and cost-effective manner

#### *Importance of communication*

- Two-way process
- Participants must be aware of others' needs
- Full communication and understanding is essential
- Four elements in communication: awareness – understanding – empathy – perception

#### *Reaching a consensus*

- Discussion leads to consensus
- Consensus is recognized and verbalized by leader
- Decisions checked and confirmed

## Quick Communication Check

### 1 Stating opinion

Complete the following phrases.

- 1 It s\_\_\_\_\_ to me that the price is too high.
- 2 I t\_\_\_\_\_ the price is too high.
- 3 I b\_\_\_\_\_ the price is too high.
- 4 In my o\_\_\_\_\_, the price is too high.
- 5 In my v\_\_\_\_\_, the price is too high.

### 2 Asking for opinion

Complete these exchanges.

- What's your (a) \_\_\_\_\_ on this?
- It's a (b) \_\_\_\_\_ idea.
- Do you have any particular (c) \_\_\_\_\_ on the subject?
- It's (d) \_\_\_\_\_, but I need more (e) \_\_\_\_\_.
- Mark, can we (f) \_\_\_\_\_ from you on this?
- I (g) \_\_\_\_\_ with Madeleine, she's absolutely (h) \_\_\_\_\_.
- Let's hear what others (i) \_\_\_\_\_.
- Well, I think ...

think  
interesting  
great  
agree  
hear  
information  
opinion (2)  
right

### 3 Interrupting

Underline the correct word to complete these sentences.

- 1 Can I say / tell / talk something here? I think ...
- 2 Excuse me, Mr. Chairman, I want to interrupt / disagree / not agree with what Mr. Ancram has said. It's not the case that ...
- 3 I'm sorry, may I add / interrupt / opinion? It seems to me ...
- 4 That's not the truth / true / sure!
- 5 I'm afraid / pardon / sorry but I'd like to go / move to / continue another point.

### 4 Handling interruptions

Replace the underlined words in the exchanges below with words or phrases in the box that mean the same.

- 1 - Can I come in here?  
- Sure, say what you want to say.
- 2 - Jacques, one point ...  
- Please, let me conclude what I was saying.
- 3 - But the agreement is for six months!  
- Can we come back to that point later?
- 4 - Can I ask about the insurance?  
- That doesn't have any relevance to the topic.
- 5 - We should discuss the contract.  
- Can we leave that today? I think that's for another meeting.

talk about    not talk about    interrupt  
return    anything to do with  
finish    go ahead

Key  
1  
1 seems, 2 think, 3 believe, 4 opinion, 5 view  
2  
(a) opinion, (b) great, (c) opinion, (d) interesting, (e) information, (f) hear, (g) agree, (h) right, (i) think  
3  
1 say, 2 disagree, 3 interrupt, 4 true, 5 sorry, move to  
4  
1 interrupt, go ahead, 2 finish, 3 return, 4 anything to do with, 5 talk about, not talk about



# 12 What do you mean by ...?

## AIMS

- Asking for and giving clarification
- Delaying decisions
- Ending the meeting

## 1 Asking for and giving clarification

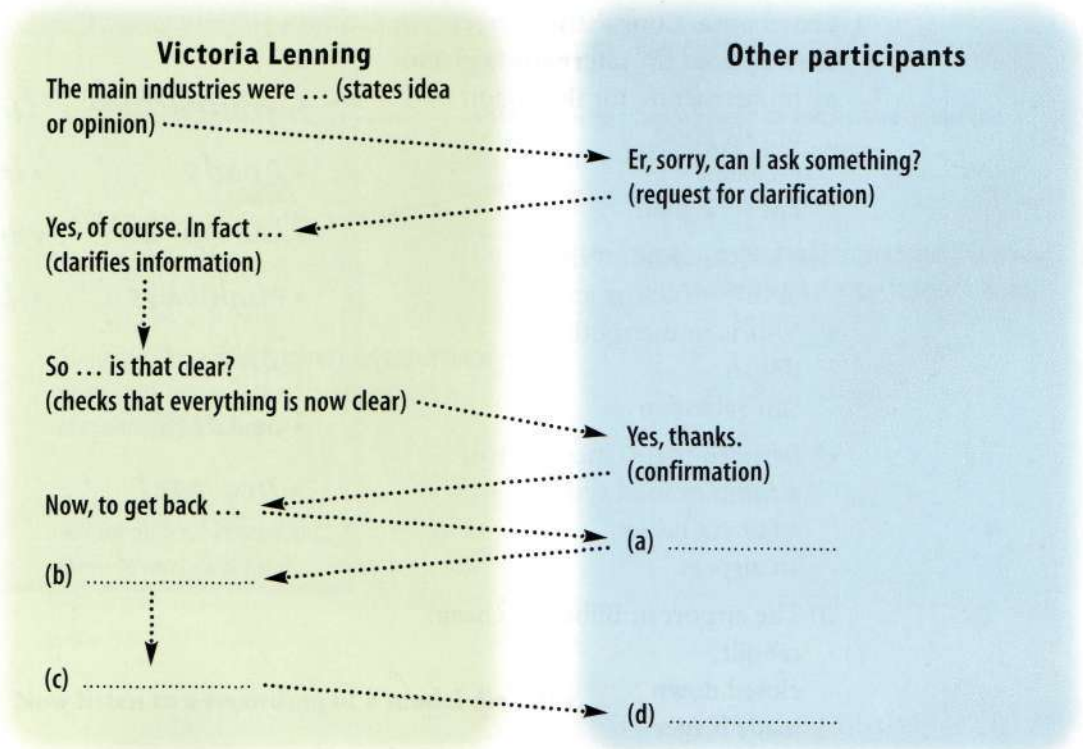


1 Listen to part of a meeting in which Victoria Lenning, a director of an Anglo-American company, is talking to colleagues about a possible site for locating a factory in the Basque Country in northern Spain. She is explaining the historical background to industry in the region. Listen once and identify the following:

- two historically important industries in the region
- the status of these industries now.



2 Victoria is twice interrupted by requests for clarification. Listen to the extract again and follow the structure for the first part of the exchange. Then write in the phrases used for the same functions in the second part.



## Practice 1

Work in pairs to complete the following mini-dialogues.

*Extract 1*

a: Brunei has a tropical climate.

b: Excuse me, \_\_\_\_\_ by "tropical"?

a: \_\_\_\_\_, it's hot almost all year, with heavy rainfall in the rainy season. \_\_\_\_\_?

b: \_\_\_\_\_, I understand.

*Extract 2*

a: Every new product needs a USP.

b: \_\_\_\_\_ USP?

a: Unique Selling Proposition.

b: Er, can you \_\_\_\_\_ what that is?

a: USP \_\_\_\_\_ the special characteristics of a product which make it different and desirable – so consumers will want it. Er, \_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_ now?

b: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ . Thank you.



Now listen to a recording of these dialogues.

## 2 Delaying decisions

Listen to another extract from the meeting about a possible site for locating a factory in the Basque Country. The speaker, Victoria Lenning, is giving more details about the infrastructure of the region.



1 Listen once. Choose the correct answer from the alternatives given.

a) Infrastructure for the region is:

- mostly good
- excellent
- not very good

b) The main improvements

in infrastructure are in:

- Vitoria in the south
- Bilbao
- San Sebastian

c) Between these cities there is:

- a complex road system
- a fast train link
- an airport

d) The airport in Bilbao has been:

- rebuilt
- closed down
- made bigger

Infrastructure	Links
• Roads	• International
• Rail system	• Inter-urban
• Highways	• Local
• Airport	
• Seaport	
• Dry port	



2 Below is part of the tapescript that you have heard. Use your own words to complete the phrases, all of which suggest that a decision needs to be delayed, or more time is needed.

VICTORIA: (a) Well, let's not ..... I think it would be a bad idea to assume we're going to choose a city. (b) It ..... to think about one of the smaller towns.

FRED: ... smaller places, yes. So, should we get details on these possible places?

VICTORIA: (c) We could do that, but we ....., I think, ..... a few things. For example, tax benefits, grants and anything like that – for locating to a smaller place, not one of the main cities. Then we could make a better decision.

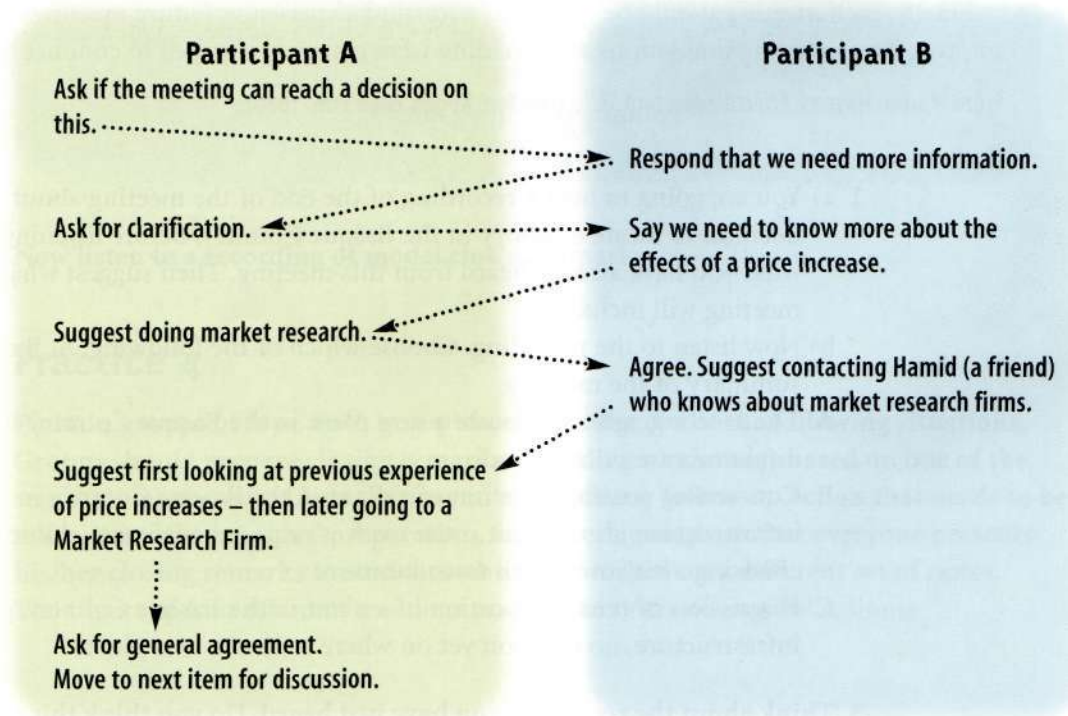
JOHN: (d) Yes, I agree, but also, ..... (*pause*) Er ... you've talked about the improved transportation links, the trains, the airport, the port in Bilbao. What about the links, to these er ... the smaller towns? If it's a mountainous or hilly region, it could take an hour – or more – for a truck to reach a main road. (e) So ..... at this stage. I think we need to look at the road and train links for smaller towns ...



Now listen to the recording again and compare your answers.

## Practice 2

You are at an internal meeting to discuss increases in the price of your products. With a partner, use these cues to make a dialogue. Try to use new language from this unit.



Now listen to a recording of a model dialogue.

### 3 Ending the meeting



#### 1 Read the following text and identify:

- a) three recommendations on how a meeting should end
- b) what should happen *after* a meeting.

Regardless of the type of meeting (information or decision making), it is important to close with a restatement of objective, a summary of what was accomplished, and a list of agreed action that needs to be taken.

After the meeting, it is essential to follow up with action. A brief memorandum of conclusions should be written and distributed. Inform appropriate people who did not attend the meeting about essential decisions made.

Finally, each meeting should be viewed as a learning experience. Future meetings should be improved by soliciting evaluations and deciding what action is required to conduct better meetings.

From Marion Haynes, *Effective Meeting Skills* (London: Kogan Page Ltd., 1988).

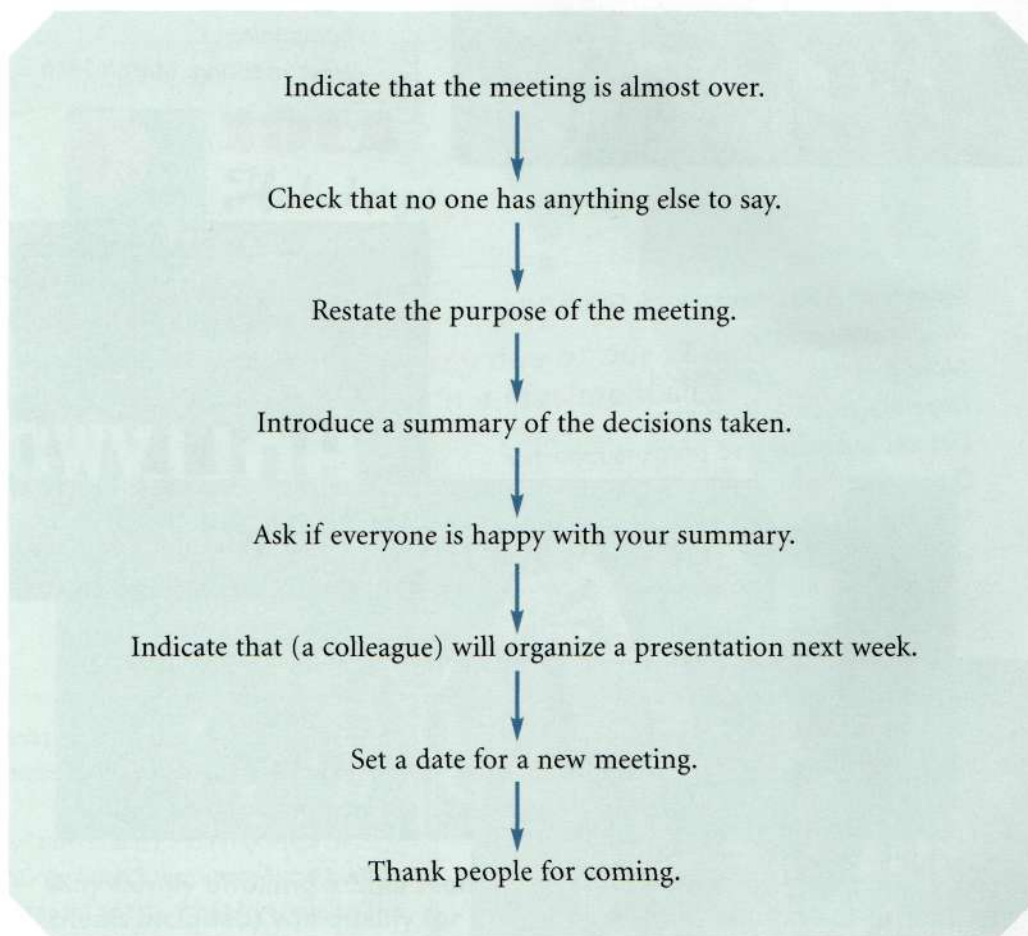


- 2 a) You are going to hear a recording of the end of the meeting about a possible decision to locate a factory in the Basque Country. Before listening, briefly discuss what you have already heard from this meeting. Then suggest what the end of the meeting will include.
- b) Now listen to the recording. Choose which of the following, A, B or C, is the best summary of the meeting.
  - A The meeting agreed to locate a new plant in the Basque Country in Spain as infrastructure is very good.
  - B Concerning possible location of a plant in the Basque Country in Spain, infrastructure is good, but more work is required on financial implications of choosing a city or a small town location.
  - C Discussion of possible location of a plant in the Basque Country, good infrastructure, no decision yet on where to locate new plant.
- 3 Think about the recording you have just heard. Do you think this ending follows the rules suggested by Haynes above? Suggest ways that this ending could be improved.



### Practice 3

In pairs use the outline below to create a Chair's closing remarks for a meeting. To make this more realistic, add names and other details as required. Practice your closing remarks together.



Now listen to a recording of model closing remarks.

### Practice 4

Work in groups of four. Each group should choose *one* of the following situations. Groups should prepare closing remarks, including a summary based on one of the sets of notes presented here. Be sure to mention any follow-up action that needs to be taken. After five minutes' preparation, form fresh groups so that everyone presents his/her closing remarks to students who have worked on a different set of notes. The Chairs of four different meetings made these notes during discussions:





New training courses for telemarketing staff  
Allow \$40,000 budget  
Peter to identify three possible training companies  
Next meeting: March 14th 2 p.m.

Merger of Atlas North with Dransfield  
No decision taken  
More financial info. needed  
Depends on local markets  
Detroit subsidiary to present report in 3 months  
Meeting in L.A. December



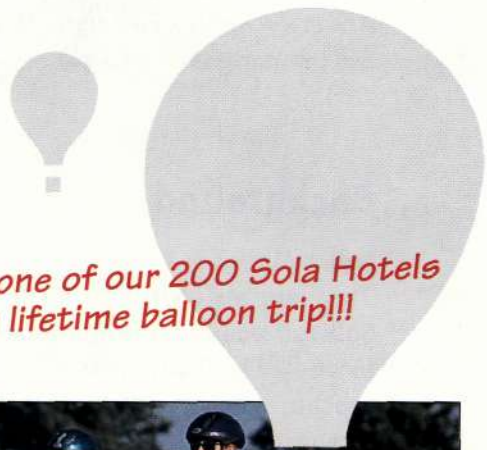
Hospital Management Committee  
Purchase of new Ultrasound Scanner for Intensive Care Unit (ICU)  
Commission report on alternatives  
Redirect funds from Radiology Unit  
Decision by March at the latest  
Joan to find out views of affected staff  
No meeting set

Lawsuit against company for wrongful dismissal of Jane Kee  
Accept blame  
Offer compensation of \$50,000  
Personnel Dept. to produce confidential internal report on new guidelines for employees' contracts  
Three weeks to complete report



## Role play

This role play is an opportunity to cover work from the entire Meetings module, including this unit. During preparation, look again at the Skills and Language Checklists for all three Meetings units.



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