

**4 Read the following text and identify:**

- a) a potential problem at the end of a presentation
- b) three ways to avoid the problem.

**Open for questions: The silent disaster**

A nightmare scenario is as follows: the speaker ends his talk with the words "Any questions?" This is met by total silence. Not a word. Then an embarrassed shuffling, a cough ... . How can this be avoided? A possible answer is that if the presentation has been good and the audience is clearly interested, *someone* will have *something* to say.

- 5 Another way to avoid the nightmare of utter silence is to end with an instruction to the audience. This should ensure immediate audience response. Giving an instruction is often useful in sales presentations and where the audience has special requirements. Here are two examples:

**A sales presentation**

- 10 After talking about his or her products or services, the speaker wants the audience to explain their needs and says:

*"Okay – I've told you about the ways Snappo can help companies like yours. Now for us to do that, we need to know more about the way you work. For example, tell me about your particular situation, tell me what in particular may interest you ... ."*

- 15 This places a responsibility on the audience to respond – unless of course they have a completely negative view of both the presenter and the message! Assuming they are well-disposed towards the potential supplier, it is probably in their interests to offer some information and begin discussion.

**A Training Manager**

- 20 Speaking to an audience of Department Managers, vice-presidents, or potential trainees, the Training Manager has outlined recommendations and explained what is available. He/she can end with:

*"Okay! I've told you what we can offer. Now tell me what are your impressions, what are your priorities and what else do you need to know now?"*

- 25 Another option is for the speaker to have a question prepared. Ask something which you know the audience will have to answer. This often breaks the ice and starts discussion. It may be possible to single out an individual who is most likely to have a question to ask you or a comment to make, or it may be apparent from earlier contact perhaps during the reception or a coffee break, that a particular individual has something to say or to ask.

- 5 Handling questions is thought by many speakers to be the most difficult part of a presentation. Why do you think this is? How do you think difficulties can be minimized?



Listen to Penny Yates talking about the difficulties that can arise in dealing with questions after a presentation. As you listen, check any of the following pieces of advice that she gives.

- Be polite.
- Listen very carefully.
- Ask for repetition or clarification.
- Keep calm.
- Tell the truth (most of the time!).
- Don't say anything you'll regret later.
- Check understanding if necessary by paraphrasing.
- Agree partially before giving own opinion: *Yes, but ...*



- 6 A Conference on Land Development in South America included presentations on Financial Support for Business. Listen to four extracts of different speakers' handling of questions and discussion. Use the table below to mark which extracts are examples of good (✓) or bad (✗) technique. Give reasons for your answers.

Technique (✓/✗)	Why?
1 _____	_____
2 _____	_____
3 _____	_____
4 _____	_____

## Practice 2

Imagine that you have given a talk on *Marketing in Japan* at a conference on business trends. What would you say in these situations?

- At the end of your presentation, move to comments / discussion / questions.
- A member of the audience suggests that you said that *many small retail outlets, small stores, had actually closed down in recent years*. In fact, you said this process has been going on for a long time. Politely correct the other person.
- Ask the audience for comments on why this has happened.
- Agree with someone's suggestions, but suggest other factors. One is the increasing number of take-overs of smaller companies.
- A member of the audience says the following: "I ... I understand that a report showed that 700 new soft drinks came out in Japan in 1990 and one year later 90% had failed. That's a pretty amazing figure ..." Paraphrasing this, ask if in the U.S. or Europe that could not happen.
- Someone suggests that in Japan there has always been an emphasis on quality and on products. In the West market research has been more developed. Agree, but say the situation is changing.
- A speaker says something you don't understand. What do you say?



### Practice 3

Divide into groups of four. Each person should prepare, in about two to three minutes, part of a short presentation on any topic he/she knows well.

Describe just one or two aspects of the topic in some detail for about three to four minutes. Then end what you say with a brief summary and/or conclusion. Finally, move to questions/comments or discussion.

Your colleagues should:

- ask questions
- ask for more details
- ask for clarification / repetition
- paraphrase part(s) of what you said
- offer more information based on their knowledge and / or experience.

For each contribution, respond appropriately.

Repeat the exercise until everyone in the group has been *in the hot seat*.

## TRANSFER

Give the end of a presentation on a topic of your choice. Include either a summary or a conclusion and move to questions and/or discussion.

## Language Checklist

### The end of the presentation

#### *Ending the main body of the presentation*

Okay, that ends (the third part of) my talk.

That's all I want to say for now on ...

#### *Beginning the summary and/or conclusion*

I'd like to end by emphasizing the main point(s).

I'd like to end with ...

- a summary of the main points.
- some observations based on what I've said.
- some conclusions / recommendations.
- a brief conclusion.

#### *Concluding*

There are two conclusions / recommendations.

What we need is ...

I think we have to ...

I think we have seen that we should ...

#### *Inviting questions and/or introducing discussion*

That concludes (the formal part of) my talk.

(Thanks for listening) ... Now I'd like to invite your comments.

Now we have (half an hour) for questions and discussion.

Alright. Now, any questions or comments?

So, now I'd be very interested to hear your comments.

### Handling questions

#### *Understood but difficult or impossible to answer*

That's a difficult question to answer in a few words.

- It could be ...
- In my experience ...
- I would say ...
- I don't think I'm the right person to answer that. Perhaps (Mr. Holmes) can help ...
- I don't have much experience in that field ...

#### *Understood but irrelevant or impossible to answer in the time available*

I'm afraid that's outside the scope of my talk / this session. If I were you I'd discuss that with ...

I'll have to come to that later, perhaps during the break since we're running out of time.

#### *Not understood*

Sorry, I'm not sure I've understood. Could you repeat?

Are you asking if ... ?

Do you mean ... ?

I didn't catch (the last part of) your question.

If I have understood you correctly, you mean ... ? Is that right?

#### *Checking that your answer is sufficient*

Does that answer your question?

Is that okay?



## Skills Checklist

### Structure (3) Ending the presentation

#### *A summary*

- Restates main point(s).
- Restates what the audience must understand and remember.
- Contains no new information.
- Is short.

#### *A conclusion*

- States the logical consequences of what has been said.
- Often contains recommendations.
- May contain new and important information.
- Is short.

#### *Questions*

- Inviting questions implies that the audience is less expert than the speaker.
- Beware of the “nightmare scenario” – total silence! Have one or two prepared questions to ask the audience.
- Keep control of the meeting.

#### *Discussion*

- Inviting discussion gives the impression that the audience has useful experience, so is often more diplomatic.
- You still need to control the discussion.

#### *Inviting discussion and questions*

- Often the best solution.
- Keep control, limit long contributions, watch the time.

#### *Handling questions*

- Listen very carefully.
- Ask for repetition or clarification if necessary.
- Paraphrase the question to check you understand it.
- Give yourself time to think – perhaps by paraphrasing the question.
- Check that the question is relevant. If not, don't answer if you don't want to.
- Refer questioner to another person if you can't answer.
- Suggest you'll answer a question later if you prefer.
- Check that the questioner is happy with your answer: eye contact and a pause is often sufficient.
- Keep control.
- Don't allow one or two people to dominate.
- Be polite.
- Signal when time is running out – “Time for one last question.”
- At the end, thank the audience.

#### *Finally*

- Refer to next contact or invite future contact.
- Refer to documentation, handouts or other information.
- Invite further comments or questions via email.
- Say goodbye and thanks.



## Quick Communication Check

### 1 Introducing a summary or a conclusion

Choose the correct word.

- 1 That *ends / brings / leaves* the main part. Now we *meet / come to / can do* the conclusion.
- 2 That's really all I *wanted / can / think* to say. I'd like to *recommend / summarize / conclude* the three things I have described.
- 3 Can I *finish / recommend / suggest* now with some recommendations?
- 4 To conclude, I'd like to *speak / tell / say* what I think is the most important thing.

### 2 Summarizing, concluding and recommending

Change the two paragraphs below with words from the boxes.

Okay, I think that is the (a) \_\_\_\_\_ of the (b) \_\_\_\_\_ part of my talk. I'd now (c) \_\_\_\_\_ to say a few words in (d) \_\_\_\_\_. What we have to remember is the importance of good research. In order to get good (e) \_\_\_\_\_ we must provide enough (f) \_\_\_\_\_, so I would like to ask for more people and more money. It's as simple as that. Money and people are the vital resources we need. That's all.

main  
end  
conclusion  
like  
resources  
information

summarize  
said  
concludes  
then  
described  
conclusion  
first

That (g) \_\_\_\_\_ what I want to say so can I (h) \_\_\_\_\_ the main points? (i) \_\_\_\_\_ I talked about the objectives of the Calypso project. (j) \_\_\_\_\_ I (k) \_\_\_\_\_ the problems, essentially the lack of resources and the time difficulties we had. We also had personnel problems. Finally I (l) \_\_\_\_\_ that during this time, our competitors have introduced new products. In (m) \_\_\_\_\_, therefore, it is now extremely important to launch a new Calypso product during the current year. Thank you for listening.

### 3 Introducing questions and discussion

Make correct phrases by matching the verb on the left to the correct words on the right.

- |             |            |                     |
|-------------|------------|---------------------|
| 1 conclude  | <u> b </u> | a) your views       |
| 2 hear      | _____      | b) my talk          |
| 3 have time | _____      | c) some comments    |
| 4 make      | _____      | d) a question       |
| 5 ask       | _____      | e) for a discussion |

Key  
1 ends, come to, 2 wanted, summarize, 3 finish, 4 say  
2  
(a) end, (b) main, (c) like, (d) conclusion, (e) information, (f) resources,  
(g) concludes, (h) summarize, (i) First, (j) Then,  
(k) described, (l) said, (m) conclusion  
3  
1 b), 2 a), 3 e), 4 c), 5 d)

# MODULE 4

# MEETINGS





# 10 Making meetings effective

## AIMS

- What makes a good meeting?
- Establishing the purpose of a meeting
- Chairing a meeting

## 1 What makes a good meeting?



Some comments on business meetings:

**“Two or more people getting together for a specific business purpose.”**

Gower Publishing Ltd., 1988. Extracted from *The Gower Handbook of Management*, p. 1185.

**“The fewer the merrier.”**

© Milo O. Frank 1989. Extracted from *How to Run a Successful Meeting in Half the Time* published by Corgi, a division of Transworld Publishers Ltd. All rights reserved.

1 What makes a good meeting? Suggest what you think are the characteristics of a successful meeting.



2 Listen to the recording of Paul Beck, an engineer, talking about the characteristics of successful business meetings. He makes *five* of the eight points below. Identify the correct order of these points.

- |   |                          |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| There is a written agenda.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Emotions are kept under control.            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Clear objectives – known to everyone.           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Good preparation.                           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Respect for the time available / time planning. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Everyone gets to say what they need to say. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Good chair – effective control.                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Reaching objectives.                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |



## 2 Chairing a meeting



*“Mr. Skelton, can I go out and play now?”*

What do you think the functions of the chairperson are during a meeting?



- 1 Listen to a recording of a meeting at Hilo Co., a small subsidiary of a multinational company. The meeting is to discuss the decline in profits. Listen once. Say which of the following are given as reasons for the fall.**

Prices are too high.	Yes/No
The company has wasted money on research and development.	Yes/No
Sales are down.	Yes/No
The sales budget is too low.	Yes/No
No one likes the Sales Director.	Yes/No
The products are old.	Yes/No



- 2 Listen again, paying attention to the role of the chair in the discussion. Check (✓) which of the following functions the chair performs at this meeting.**

Thanks people for coming.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prevents interruptions.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Starts the meeting on time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Makes people stick to the subject.	<input type="checkbox"/>
States the objective.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gives a personal opinion.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Refers to the agenda.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Summarizes.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Changes the agenda.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asks for comments.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Talks about a previous meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Decides when to have a break.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Introduces the first speaker.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Closes the meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 3 Suggest phrases which could be used by a chairperson in the following situations in a meeting.**

- To welcome the participants to a meeting.
- To state the objectives of the meeting.
- To introduce the agenda.
- To introduce the first speaker.
- To prevent an interruption.
- To thank a speaker for his/her contribution.
- To introduce another speaker.
- To keep discussion to the relevant issues.
- To summarize discussion.
- To ask if anyone has anything to add.
- To suggest moving to the next topic on the agenda.
- To summarize certain actions that must be done following the meeting (for example, do research, write a report, meet again, write a letter, etc.).
- To close the meeting.

## Practice 1

Work in groups of four. Decide on a chair and have a brief meeting using one of the situations below.

After a few minutes' preparation, the chair starts the meeting, introduces the agenda, invites the first speaker to make his/her proposal, prevents interruptions, brings in other speakers, summarizes, etc.

### Situation 1

#### Meeting

To identify ways to advertise clothes and lifestyle products to youth markets in Europe.

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Finish: \_\_\_\_\_  
Place: \_\_\_\_\_ Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Agenda

1. Budget to be decided at a later meeting.
2. Preferred markets: Suggestion: Eurozone, especially France, Germany, Italy and Spain.
3. Advertising media: Lifestyle magazines / television / Internet / sports sponsorship / others? *Note: TV advertising is the most expensive.*

### Situation 2

#### Meeting

To decide on training needs and how to spend \$100,000 on training.

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End: \_\_\_\_\_  
Place: \_\_\_\_\_  
Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Agenda

1. Decide priorities: marketing / information technology / languages.
2. Allocate costs.
3. Decide outline program.

## 3 Establishing the purpose of a meeting



- 1 Below is an incomplete agenda for a meeting of an Environmental Research Unit. Listen to the recording of the beginning of the meeting. You will hear the opening remarks from the chair, James Rizzo. Note the objectives of the meeting by filling in the blanks in the agenda.

### Environmental Research Unit

#### Quarterly Meeting

May 24 20—  
Room A 32, South Side Science Park

Participants: James Rizzo (Chair), Sonia Borrelli,  
Vince Reublinger, Russell Mendez.

Time: 10:00 End: 12:00

#### Agenda

1. (a) \_\_\_\_\_ present projects
  - 1.1 Hydroclear
  - 1.2 PCB reduction
2. (b) \_\_\_\_\_
3. (c) \_\_\_\_\_
  - government
  - United Nations / World Health Organization
  - Industry

## Practice 2

- 1 In groups, work out a brief agenda, with an appropriate order, for a meeting of the marketing department of Axis Finance Inc., a medium-sized financial services company. Your agenda should include the points listed here:

- review of marketing performance in the current year
- marketing plans for next year
- minutes of previous meeting
- any other business
- new products
- date of next meeting
- personnel changes
- Chair's opening address
- apologies for absence.