# 5 Meeting Training

## A Suggestion

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**Abstract**

Given the number of scientific publications on meetings, it seems that the time is ripe for using scientifically based training to develop the skills of meeting leaders. The purpose of this chapter is to outline such a training course developed on the basis of empirical studies, with the target group consisting of participants with managerial responsibility for leading meetings. The suggested two-day training course comprises five modules: Module 1: "Sensitization to and analysis of prevalent meeting culture," Module 2: "Preparing meetings," Module 3: "Communication skills for meeting leaders," Module 4: "Techniques during the meeting," and Module 5: "Monitoring resolutions and following up on action items." For each module, we describe the scientific background and outline how this training component can be implemented. We also recommend adding a follow-up event to refresh participants' memory of the training to support its transfer to meeting practice.

**Keywords:** meeting, meeting training, meeting preparation, communication skills, transfer

Organizations are inconceivable without meetings; for example, senior managers are reported to spend 23 hours and middle managers 12 hours per week on meeting activities (Tobia & Becker, 1990). Researchers have studied many important aspects of meetings (e.g., Cohen, Rogelberg, Allen, & Luong, 2011; Leach, Rogelberg, Warr, & Burnfield, 2009), and the literature is nicely summarized in this book. In this chapter, we therefore argue that the time is ripe to develop scientifically based training that provides meeting leaders with the skills to increase the efficiency of meetings and improve employees' satisfaction with meetings. This chapter outlines a two-day meeting training course based on empirical results of meeting research. Wherever possible, we also integrate established findings from the general training literature. Therefore this training course is also based on adult learning principles and commonly accepted practice in the training and development literature and is centered on active participation and a mix of presentation and small-group discussion techniques (e.g., Arthur, Bennett, Edens, & Bell, 2003; Grossman & Salas, 2011; Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, & Smith-Jentsch, 2012).

In the following, we first explain why the target group of this training course consists of meeting leaders and give an overview of the training course's structure. We then describe five modules that such training should encompass. Each module description has three subsections: the learning objectives, the scientific background on which the module is based, and a training description, which illustrates how the module can be implemented. The chapter ends with some concluding remarks and reflections.

## Target Group

The training targets participants with managerial responsibility for leading meetings. This target group was chosen on the basis of studies indicating that the way in which leaders and team members interact influences the quality of meetings and their perceived organizational support (e.g., Baran, Shanock, Rogelberg, & Scott 2012). Allen and Rogelberg (2013) show that managers can use meetings to engage their subordinates, and Allen et al. (2012) find that many team members look forward to meetings if they are timely and punctual and if the shared information is relevant to them – design characteristics that can be influenced by the meeting leader (Leach et al., 2009). These studies thus show that meeting leaders play a crucial role: They can influence many meeting characteristics (e.g., by sending an agenda to the meeting participants in advance or by allowing them to come to the meeting unprepared) and influence the flow of the meeting (e.g., by focusing the meeting on the agenda or by allowing meeting participants to digress to other topics).

## Training Overview

The training that we propose in this chapter consists of five modules: Module 1: "Sensitization to and analysis of prevalent meeting culture," Module 2: "Preparing meetings," Module 3: "Communication skills for meeting leaders," Module 4: "Techniques during the meeting," and Module 5: "Monitoring resolutions and following up on action items." In addition, at the beginning there is a warm-up activity with a set of expectations and an evaluation at the end (similar to many other kinds of training). If there is enough time other modules can be added (cf. Olsen, 1998) on presentation methods, rhetorical skills, and techniques for conflict management; these additions are not described in this chapter due to space restrictions.

On the basis of our practical experience, we suggest running the training over 2 days, but it is also possible to shorten or lengthen it. Two days, however, should provide enough time to complete the exercises, and training that lasts longer might be too expensive for many companies. The training as we envision it is complemented by a half-day follow-up session as an additional learning opportunity that aids the transfer of skills to practice (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Baldwin, Ford, & Blume, 2009).

Given that the optimal group size (Vella, 1995) depends on the task at hand, we recommend a maximum of 15 participants. In general, groups need to be large enough to accomplish the work assigned to them. However, if they are too large, they may become dysfunctional (Campion, Medsker, & Higgs, 1993) and it is difficult to ensure that all trainees participate (Rau & Heyl, 1990), whereas smaller groups contain less diversity and may lack divergent thinking styles. The target group could consist of members of the same organization or of several companies. We suggest that the training be always led by two trainers, especially for role plays because this enables trainers to divide the group into two equal groups, providing all the participants with the opportunity to practice the role of the meeting leader intensively.

The room used for the training should enable different seating arrangements to promote learning effects (Wannarka & Ruhl, 2008). A semi-circular seating arrangement seems appropriate for phases in which trainers give input, a herringbone arrangement can be used in small-group exercises, and a conference table arrangement can be applied to simulate meetings.

The contents of the meeting training outlined in this chapter are conveyed using different methods, such as short presentations, group and dyad phases, and role plays. Given that behavioral modeling facilitates transfer of learning to the workplace, the training uses role models and the opportunity to practice what was learned from the models (Salas et al., 2012; Taylor, Russ-Eft, & Chan, 2005). In role plays, participants have the chance to practice the role of a meeting leader (Seibold, 1979). In the first step, they role play how they would usually lead their team. In the next step, the observing participants give their feedback. If necessary, the "player" can repeat the role play again, incorporating the feedback of the other participants. Studies have shown that trainees who have the opportunity to make errors perform significantly better than those in error-avoidant conditions (Keith & Frese, 2008). Furthermore, the training encompasses several direct references to professional practice in individual modules (for example, by collecting authentic examples), because learning within one's own world of experience is more sustainable (Blume, Ford, Baldwin, & Huang, 2009). In addition, the provision of feedback runs as a common thread throughout the training because of the importance of feedback, especially when it is timely, constructive, and diagnostic as well as actionable and task focused (Cannon & Witherspoon, 2005).

## Module 1: Sensitization to and Analysis of Prevalent Meeting Culture

### Learning Objectives

Module 1 begins on the first day (outlined in Table 5.1) and its primary objective is to create a pleasant atmosphere in the group and to break the ice between the participants. Further goals are to present an agenda for the training, to draw attention to the expectations of the trainees, to define what leading a meeting actually means, to reflect on negative experiences in meetings, and to list rules for good meetings.

### Scientific Background

The initial phase of any training program is crucial to its success, because a good climate established at the beginning of the training should put the trainee in a positive frame of mind (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009: Baldwin et al., 2009). Moreover, it is important to make the trainees' expectations explicit (cf. Hicks & Klimoski, 1987): The trainer should neither generate false expectations about the training nor be overzealous about its implementation, and the trainees should be made aware of the training agenda and how to transfer the training to practice (Salas et al., 2012).

Table 5.1. *Training Day 1*

| Time | Topic | Methods |
|---|---|---|
| | Module 1 | |
| 8:00 a.m. | Greeting | |
| 8:20 | Presentation/introduction round (plus establishing the training agenda) | Group discussion |
| 8:50 | What does "leading a meeting" mean? | Collecting ideas & presentation |
| 9:00 | Different kinds of leadership styles and meeting types | Presentation & discussion |
| 9:30 | Collecting negative experiences in meetings: What disturbs a meeting? | Moderation cards |
| 10:15 | Break | |
| 10:30 | Developing rules for successful meetings | Small groups |
| 11:30 | Presentation of the groups' suggestions of meeting "rules" | Presentation & discussion |
| | Module 2 | |
| 12:15 p.m. | Lunch | |
| 1:15 | Meeting design characteristics | Presentation & discussion |
| 2:15 | Preparation of prospective meetings | Exercise in dyads |
| 3:00 | Break | |
| 3:15 | Visualization and presentation of the agenda and the ideas | Presentation, feedback, self-reflection |
| 3:45 | Reflection of the first day | Group discussion |
| 4:00 | End of the first day | |

Furthermore, the initial discussion and reflection about past experiences sensitize the trainees to topics that will be tackled later on (Goldstein, 1980). For example, reflection promotes learning by enabling trainees to exchange their experiences with others and get feedback (Collins, 2006). Leading a meeting implies that one knows the definition of meetings and about different types of meetings. Based on the understanding that meetings are a get-together of three or more people with the intention of interacting and sharing information (Volkema & Niederman, 1995), various meeting types can be differentiated. Leach et al. (2009) describe five meeting types: information-sharing meetings, training meetings, recognition meetings, meetings about routine issues, and meetings about special problems. These types could provide a framework and basis on which to differentiate the process of leading.

Finally, Module 1 also includes the topic of meeting ground rules, because an early introduction to such rules fosters trainees' awareness of their importance (see Cohen et al., 2011).

## Training Description

Module 1 takes up the morning of the first day of training. At its beginning, the trainer introduces herself in an exemplary manner that the trainees can understand easily. It is advisable for the trainer to communicate something personal about herself to build a relationship with the trainees and to make a connection between herself and the topic (e.g., by referring to her own experiences of meetings). Although the length of the trainees' self-introductions is determined by the number of participants and the amount of time available, it should always include their names, professions, experiences with meetings, and expectations regarding the training.

Then, trainees reflect on the question of what leading a meeting actually means. They share their answers to this question with the group, and the trainer writes all the answers on a flip chart. This step constitutes the participants' first reflection about their own role as a meeting leader. The trainer might also give some general theoretical inputs about different leadership styles (e.g., consideration vs. initiating structure; Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies, 2004) and the importance of adapting to the situational context (cf. Hersey & Blanchard, 1988) in the framework of meetings (this also serves as preparation for Module 4). Then the trainees talk about their experiences in meetings and exchange stories about meetings that illustrate different meeting cultures in organizations; this fosters their understanding of the importance of organizational culture for meetings. At this point, it is probably helpful for the trainer to mention different types of meetings – for example, information-sharing meetings vs. meetings about special problems – and to explore the different challenges they pose for the leader. For example, discussions about problems are likely to be more emotional than sharing information with meeting participants. Thus, the leader is sometimes more in a facilitator role and sometimes more in a mediator role, depending on the meeting type.

In the next activity – the development of ground rules for meetings – the trainer uses moderation cards. Moderation cards in different sizes and colors are an adaptable tool that can be used to collect the ideas of participants. These cards' advantages are that their use involves everybody in the process, even reserved participants, and they make the training more dynamic, interactive, and visually diverse. Trainees are given moderation cards on which they write down their own negative experiences with meetings (this also serves as preparation for Module 4). The cards are then collected and placed on the bulletin boards; then the participants try to identify categories of experiences and to find headings for them. The development of headings is an effective way, in the context of facilitation, to draw the focus onto the issues (Harvey et al., 2002). In the final activity of Module 1, trainees discuss which meeting rules could be helpful for handling which situations. (Alternatively, the trainer could ask trainees to form small groups in which they develop concrete steps to help resolve sample situations and to use these generated steps to formulate meeting rules.) The focus could be on rules for preparing meetings and for communicating within meetings (the former also serves as preparation for Module 2; the latter for Module 3). Finally, the trainees present the results of their work in small groups. Afterward, the trainer discusses all of the results with the entire group; for example, which common rules were generated, which were different in each small group, which rules can be deduced from the scientific literature, and the like.

## Module 2: Preparing Meetings

### Learning Objectives of Module 2

The main objective of this module is to develop self-assurance in planning a meeting from beginning to end. By the end of Module 2 the participants should realize the importance of goal-oriented preparation and learn to plan meetings systematically. In particular, they should learn how to implement a realistic time schedule and to differentiate during the preparation phase what should be accomplished with every single item on the agenda. Additionally, they should learn how to decide who to invite to the meeting and who is important for which item on the agenda.

### Scientific Background

Planning is known to be important for the effectiveness of meetings (e.g., Volkema & Niederman, 1996; see also Chapter 4). In particular, Cohen et al. (2011) show that the perception of meeting quality can be predicted by four categories of design characteristics (physical, procedural, temporal, and attendee characteristics) that can be influenced in the meeting preparation stage by the meeting leader. We briefly describe these characteristics next.

Physical characteristics of the meeting setting include aspects of the room (e.g., lighting, noise level, temperature) and the meeting modality (face to face vs. supported by technology). These variables can affect attendees' moods and emotions and, in turn, their work attitude (Cohen et al., 2011). Characteristics of the space, refreshments, temperature, and lighting are particularly correlated with perceived meeting quality (Cohen et al., 2011). Furthermore, efficacy and satisfaction can be influenced by the choice of stand-up versus sit-down meetings, because stand-up meetings can shorten the meeting length, whereas sit-down meetings might produce more satisfaction (Bluedorn, Turban, & Love, 1999).

Procedural characteristics include the use of agendas and ground rules (Cohen et al., 2011). Studies have shown that most of the problems in meetings occur in the premeeting phase (Di Salvo, Nikkel, & Craig, 1989; Romano & Nunamaker, 2001). Thus, meeting preparation plays an important role in conducting meetings effectively. Particularly important procedural aspects include the distribution of a written agenda before the meeting, a verbal agenda during the meeting, and the completion of the agenda (Leach et al., 2009). Announcements/invitations, handouts, agendas, minutes, and evaluations represent primary communication tools for planning (and managing) organizational meetings (Volkema & Niederman, 1996). Furthermore, Cohen et al.'s (2011) participants perceived a higher meeting quality when they had prior access to a formal agenda, and practitioners (e.g., Scholtes, 1988) suggested including the presenter's name, the expected action, and a time estimation for each agenda item. Moreover, the identification of the goals behind each agenda item provides both the meeting leader and the attendees with an orientation during the meeting. Rogelberg, Shanock, and Scott (2012) found that attendees enjoy meetings more when meetings have clear goals and relevant information is shared, and explicit goals are generally shown to be beneficial for performance (Locke & Latham, 2002).

Temporal characteristics describe how the meeting time is used: the meeting length, promptness, start and end, and use of a break (Cohen et al., 2011). The studies by Cohen et al. (2011) found that meetings that started and ended on time were rated more favorably than those that did not. Rogelberg, Leach, Warr, and Burnfield (2006) found a positive correlation between time demands of meetings and employee well-being when the perceived meeting effectiveness was high and a negative correlation when the perceived effectiveness was low.

Attendee characteristics include the presence of a facilitator or a leader and the number of attendees (Cohen et al., 2011). Niederman and Volkema (1999) emphasized the importance of the leader in controlling the flow of information, assisting in the decision-making process, and helping the attendees reach the meeting goal. As the number of attendees increases, the participation per attendee decreases, and it becomes even more important that somebody is performing the role of a meeting facilitator (Cohen et al., 2011).

Despite the necessity of planning a meeting thoroughly and paying attention to the design characteristics, the leader should not forget that some flexibility is required in leading meetings. Such flexibility might be gained with experience, because the leader's number of years of experience is positively correlated with him beginning the meeting by allowing attendees to generate the agenda and thereby allowing the meeting to deviate from the agenda in advance (Niederman & Volkema, 1999). Experience might also give leaders a sense of how much they should allow deviations from an agenda; for example, leaders might regularly allow adjustment of the agenda at the beginning of the meeting, but only allow later adjustment in exceptional cases.

## Training Description

This module begins after lunch on Training Day 1. To learn to prepare meetings effectively, trainees are first provided with information about basic characteristics of meetings (i.e., the aforementioned temporal, physical, procedural, and attendee characteristics). These characteristics are discussed, particularly in terms of which manifestation might be the most effective. During this discussion, the trainees exchange their own experiences and are introduced to the results of empirical studies by the trainer.

Afterward, the trainees work in dyads on preparing for the next real meeting of one member of the dyad, using the knowledge they have just learned. They then switch roles, and the other dyad member prepares for an upcoming meeting. The trainer asks the following questions: "Which aspects of a meeting are important to you? What goals are you pursuing with the items on the agenda? Who needs to be invited to the meeting? Which attendees do you need as experts for which items on the agenda?" In their dyads, the trainees compile the items on the agenda and try to explain the intention behind each item. On the basis of these explanations, they apply the SMART (specific, measurable, accepted, reasonable, time-bound) rule to each goal, which enables them to express their objectives more clearly and challenges them to think carefully about their intentions. This activity provides the trainees with structure in their preparation and should make them more sensitive to the importance of meeting preparation. Afterward, the dyads present to the whole group their agenda designs, goal setting, time estimations for each item on the agenda, and invitation lists. The group then reflects on the dyads' presentations and attempts to resolve ambiguities. On the basis of their practical experiences, the trainer and the trainees discuss, for instance, the estimated time required for agenda items with respect to the issue and the target. For example, if one participant presents an agenda with possibly faulty time estimation (e.g. only allotting 10 minutes for a verbal exchange between 15 meeting participants), the group has the possibility to make suggestions for improvement.

At the end of the first day, the trainees have the chance to give feedback and to express their learning wishes and their expectations for the next day. The trainer then draws the first training day to a close.

## Module 3: Communication Skills for Meeting Leaders

### Learning Objectives

Module 3 starts the second day (outlined in Table 5.2), and its objective is to familiarize trainees with general communication techniques that are also needed during meetings. In particular, trainees should learn to understand the difference between functional and dysfunctional communication and to realize the importance of communication skills, as well as to practice active listening, different kind of questions, "I" messages, and feedback techniques.

### Scientific Background

Meeting leaders encounger both functional and dysfunctional communication (Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012). According to the model of Shannon and Weaver (1949), communication is the transfer of information between a sender and a receiver, and this transfer can be disturbed by different factors. For example, if the meeting leader is the sender, then the attendees (i.e., the receivers) need to understand what the leader wants to communicate. Similarly, if an attendee is the sender, the leader (as the receiver) needs to decipher the message of the attendee. Thus, to lead a meeting successfully, it is necessary to understand (and to lead) the communication process during the meeting (see also Wodak, Kwon, & Clarke, 2011).

Meeting leaders should therefore be aware that communication in groups generally falls into four types: problem-focused communication, procedural communication, socioemotional communication, and action-oriented communication (Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012). Problem-focused communication refers to understanding the issue, finding adequate solutions, and evaluating these solutions. Positive procedural communication concerns sentences that are aimed at structuring and organizing the discussion, whereas negative procedural communication leads to losing track of one's thoughts; for example, as a result of lengthy monologues and redundant explanations by individual participants (Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012). Socioemotional communication concerns the showing of solidarity, agreeing

Table 5.2. *Training Day 2*

| Time | Topic | Methods |
|---|---|---|
| | Module 3 | |
| 8:00 a.m. | Introduction to the second day | Presentation |
| 8:15 | The importance of communication skills in leading meetings and the four communication types | Presentation & discussion |
| 9:00 | Presentation of various communication techniques during the meeting | Presentation & discussion |
| 9:15 | Communication techniques: exercise for active listening | Role plays |
| 9:45 | Input on questioning, "I" messages, and feedback | Presentation |
| 10:00 | Break | |
| | Module 4 | |
| 10:15 | Task-oriented and attendee-oriented leading in meetings | Presentation |
| 10:25 | Simulation of a meeting, integrating the learned techniques | Simulation |
| 11:30 | Self-discovery and feedback | Self-reflection |
| 12:00 p.m. | Lunch | |
| 1:00 | Coping with uncivil meeting behavior during the meeting | Presentation, small groups, worksheet |
| | Module 5 | |
| 2:00 | Monitoring resolutions, the best way to prepare for the next meeting | Presentation |
| 2:45 | Break | |
| 3:00 | Exercise "blind leading" | Group dynamics exercise |
| 3:45 | Feedback | Group discussion |
| 4:00 | End of the training | |

statements, cognitive-solving statements, and cognitive flexibility. Positive action-oriented statements describe the readiness of teams to take action to improve their work. Complaints, by contrast, are an important example of negative, counteractive statements (Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012), because Kauffeld and Meyers (2009) found that complaining in meetings creates further complaining conversations and inhibits the expression of solution-oriented statements.

The leaders of meetings can influence the occurrence of the four communication types. Their success in doing so depends on their ability to structure the discussions and to create conditions for better communication. For example, the use of structuring statements such as procedural suggestions and questions, distributions of tasks, and visualization can break dysfunctional circles of complaining (Kauffeld & Meyers, 2009). Consequently, meeting leaders should have a large repertory of communication techniques that they can use during meetings.

There are several communication techniques that help create a good communication atmosphere in meetings: engaging in active listening, verbalizing emotions, using “I” messages, asking open questions, expressing and accepting feedback, nonverbal mirroring, and integrating contributions. Active listening, a particularly important social skill (Gearhart & Bodie, 2011; Kubota, Mishima, & Nagata, 2004), can be conceptualized as a three-stage activity according to Drollinger, Comer, and Warrington (2006): sensing, processing, and responding. The first stage includes maintaining eye contact, nodding, and making sounds of approval; the components of the second stage are checking comprehension, repeating in one’s own words, and summarizing; and the third stage is characterized by verbalizing feelings, putting oneself in the position of the other person, and sounding out wishes. Thus, active listeners typically show respect and are able to challenge assumptions (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2010).

Maintaining a positive relationship between leader and participants is also crucial and requires the leader to address the attendees in an appropriate manner. This can be achieved by using “I” messages: Kubany, Richard, Bauer, and Muraoka (1992) found that accusatory “you” statements were rated as more aversive and produced more negative emotional and behavioral response inclinations than “I” messages, and statements including “anger” words aroused more negative emotional and behavioral response inclinations than statements including “distress” expressions. Furthermore, meetings likely benefit from the leader’s ability to foster openness on the part of the attendees by phrasing questions in an open-ended way. For example, Nelson-Gray, Haas, Romano, Herbert, and Herbert (1989) found that subjects who were asked open-ended questions talked significantly more than those who were asked closed-ended questions. At the same time, meeting leaders should know that closed-questions also have their place; for instance, when the leader needs to get some relevant information or wants a decision on a specific issue (c.f. Waterman, Blades, & Spencer, 2001).

Furthermore, several other effective communication techniques are mentioned in the literature. Giving feedback appropriately is another important communication skill. Bandura and Cervone (1983) emphasized that giving feedback in combination with goal setting has a powerful effect on performance. Speaking up when a goal is unclear seems to improve focused communication, task performance, and relationship quality (Bang, Fuglesang, Ovesen, & Eilertsen, 2010). Techniques such as directing attention to the agenda (Volkema & Niederman, 1996), making structuring statements, and emphasizing the topic of the meeting ensure that contributions are to the point. Stressing deadlines, delegating tasks during discussion, using a flip chart or other visualization techniques, weighing costs and benefits, and summarizing results (Kauffeld, 2006) are also cited in the literature as useful skills for meeting leaders.

## Training Description

Module 3 begins Training Day 2. After presenting the four communication types (problem focused, procedural, socioemotional, and action oriented), the trainer gives a brief overview of the communication model of Shannon and Weaver (1949), and the trainees write communication techniques that they consider particularly important on a flip chart. In the next step, the trainer presents the three stages of active listening: sensing, processing, and responding. After these explanations, two trainees volunteer to engage in a role play that shows the group how active listening works (the trainer might start by modeling the skills, and then the trainees practice the role play, because some trainees might misunderstand active listening, especially paraphrasing). After watching the models, trainees have the chance to practice active listening in dyads. At the end of this active listening role-play exercise, they give each other feedback in their dyads.

In the next part of Module 3, trainees learn about different types of questions: closed questions, open questions, questions that activate, questions that affirm, questions that control, and suggestive questions. They learn which type they could adopt in which communication context and the importance of avoiding leading questions. A leading or suggestive question is one that implies that a certain answer should be given in response, such as, "you surely share my opinion that . . . ?" Because one of the important communication skills of a leader is to express expectations in a constructive way, the trainer explains the different types of "I" messages, and trainees are asked to find examples from their own lives. If time allows, the trainer could recommend developing "I" message examples for meeting situations and comparing their impact with the impact of "you" messages in communications. Then, the trainer teaches the importance of feedback rules by writing feedback rules for the speaker and for the recipient (Hewson & Little, 1998) on a flip chart. A 15-minute break follows.

## Module 4: Techniques and Skills during the Meeting

### Learning Objectives

In this module, the goals are to make trainees familiar with several meeting techniques and to give them the opportunity to reflect on the difference between a task-oriented and attendee-oriented leadership style during meetings. Furthermore, trainees should learn to handle interactions with difficult team members.

### Scientific Background

During meetings, leaders often have to accomplish many communication tasks: They have to structure the meeting, facilitate discussions, efficiently inform attendees, make sure the meeting starts and ends on time, visualize and collect suggestions, and much more (Nixon & Littlepage, 1992). Thus, leaders' communicative skills are crucial during meetings, and their effect on attendees' mood, motivation, and performance is great (Malouff, Calic, McGrory, Murrell, & Schutte, 2012). For instance, Baran et al. (2012) showed that perceived interactional justice is an important predictor of the quality of relationships between leaders and subordinates and that leaders' interactional fairness during meetings can make attendees' participation in meetings more likely (see also Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012).

Meetings can be led in a more task-oriented or in a more attendee-oriented way. A task orientation in meetings means a focus on information (e.g., giving an orientation, making suggestions, asking for opinions; see Beck & Keyton, 2009), is likely to include goal setting (Locke & Latham, 2002), and shares similarities with the initiating structure as a general leadership style (Judge et al., 2004). Meeting leaders should thus learn which orientation they consider appropriate given a particular meeting situation and the characteristics of the meeting participants.

Leaders also need to be prepared for the fact that some attendees may not be as cooperative as hoped. According to Odermatt, König, Kleinmann, Bachmann, Schmitz, and Röder (2014), there are five types of uncivil meeting behaviors (UMBs): absenteeism, unrelated activities, nonparticipation, dominant communication behavior, and inappropriate verbal statements. Absenteeism, the first type, involves attendees arriving late or leaving meetings occasionally (see also Di Salvo et al., 1989; Kauffeld, 2006). Unrelated activities refers to behaviors such as conducting personal business or chatting and socializing with other attendees during the meeting (see also Kauffeld & Meyers, 2009; Romano & Nunamaker, 2001). Nonparticipation represents situations in which people are not actively involved in the communication and seem to be absent; for example, by showing a facial expression of disinterest (see also Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001; Kauffeld, 2006). Dominant communication behavior comprises egocentric behavior during the meeting such as cutting others off, monopolizing the discussion, and interrupting others (see also Cortina et al., 2001; Di Salvo et al., 1989; Kauffeld & Meyers, 2009; Romano & Nunamaker, 2001). Inappropriate verbal statements include verbally abusing other attendees and making fun of others (see also Cortina et al., 2001; Di Salvo et al., 1989; Kauffeld & Meyers, 2009; Romano & Nunamaker, 2001).

To cope with uncivil meeting behaviors of attendees, leaders can borrow techniques developed for teachers and classroom management (e.g., Little & Akin-Little, 2008; Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008). Like teachers, leaders of meetings should react in a timely, efficient, and (ideally) unobtrusive way if inappropriate behavior occurs; to prevent an escalation of the situation, they should not react too strongly (e.g. van Tartwijk, den Brok, Veldman, & Wubbels, 2009).

## Training Description

At the beginning of this module, which begins mid-morning on Training Day 2, the trainer provides theoretical input about leadership styles and their consequences for the meeting process. In interaction with the group, the trainer discusses the task-oriented and attendee-oriented leadership style in meetings. The trainer might recommend changing styles in accordance with the respective setting.

Next, the trainees are asked to role play a meeting situation (cf. Taylor et al., 2005). The trainees suggest examples of problematic situations, and then the group votes for the most interesting issue. After the group decision, the trainee whose example was chosen provides a short description of that specific meeting, focusing on the topic and the psychological particularities of the meeting. Once the trainees have signaled that they understand the situation in this specific meeting, the role

Table 5.3. *Module 4 Worksheet Using Absenteeism as an Example*

| Type | Example | Reaction |
|---|---|---|
| Absenteeism | Arriving late | 1. Greeting the person arriving in a friendly manner but briefly, and continuing with the meeting<br>2. "Unfortunately, we had to begin the meeting without you"<br>3. "It would be nice if we could begin punctually in future meetings" |
| | Leaving the meeting occasionally | 1.<br>2.<br>3. |
| Unrelated activities | Conducting personal business during the meeting | 1.<br>2.<br>3. |
| | Chatting with other members | 1.<br>2.<br>3. |

play is enacted in small groups. Some trainers may find this kind of exercise to be challenging because they may be too shy to engage in role plays or find it difficult to empathize with somebody else's meeting situation. Nevertheless, the goal should be to role play one's own examples, which should be feasible if the trainees come up with similar meeting examples. If this is not the case, the trainer should prepare an easy example. (If trainees' workplaces are very different, it might make sense to use more general situations such as a family situation, because the goal is not to understand the workplace of particular trainees but rather to implement the newly acquired skills about leading meetings.) In the simulation, trainees should also apply the aforementioned communication techniques (e.g., active listening, I-messages, etc.) to minimize complaining interaction and to promote solution-oriented interaction. The role of the leader of the meeting should rotate, so that several attendees have the opportunity to try out the new skills. Afterward, trainees reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and give each other feedback. Depending on the available time and the skill level of the trainees, the trainer could raise the degree of difficulty of the role play by giving some of the participants the roles of problematic participants, such as someone who tends to talk off subject, who engages in side conversations, who is constantly negative or antagonistic, who presents ideas with a hostile demeanor, or who arrives late or often leaves early.

Finally, trainees receive a worksheet that lists examples of uncivil behavior during meetings . Their task is to develop in small groups three kinds of sentences to address to uncivil persons in order to interrupt the conflict, with the first sentence being more general and the second and third being more direct; for an example, see Table 5.3. The first sentence might be sufficient to stop uncivil behavior, but if a participant continues with it, then the leader should communicate more directly with him or her. The small groups then share their sentences with the others, and the entire group discusses the similarities and differences between their sentences.

## Module 5: Monitoring Resolutions and Following Up on Action Items

### Learning Objectives

The main objective of this module is to learn the importance of resolutions with respect to preparing the next meeting. In particular, trainees should understand the structure of minutes and the importance of making action plans. Additionally, they learn to specify who will write the minutes or send them as a photo protocol (from a flip chart) and by what date.

### Scientific Background

The module on monitoring resolutions admittedly has a weak scientific background, because meeting research has seldom focused on this topic. Nevertheless, it probably makes sense from a general perspective to view a particular meeting not as a solitary event but as one meeting in a series of meetings, thus linking the end of one meeting to the (hopefully successful) beginning of the next.

Several actions need to be taken before meetings conclude. First, meeting attendees (or leaders) have to specify who does what and when (i.e., make an action plan). Second, leaders have to turn their attention to the minutes. The minutes have an important function: They increase attendees' participation because they are aware that the spoken contents of the meeting are being written down (Leach et al., 2009). Alternatively, if all important issues are written down on a flip chart, minutes can be replaced with a photo protocol (i.e., a series of annotated photos of the flip charts). Third, leaders should copy and distribute the minutes plus an action plan and prepare for the next meeting based on this information. Nixon and Littlepage (1992) found that putting decisions in writing and acting on decisions in a timely manner are positively related to perceived meeting effectiveness (see also Allen et al., 2012).

### Training Description

In this last module, which begins after lunch on the second day, the trainees are given guidelines about how to structure an action plan. Then the trainer communicates the importance of taking minutes, presents their structure, and discusses how to delegate the writing of minutes to another meeting attendee. Furthermore, trainees are given an example of a photo protocol as a model to put into practice.

If there is additional time, the trainer could add a group dynamics exercise about leading and being led. This exercise should raise trainees' awareness of their

Table 5.4. *Follow-Up Event*

| Time | Topic | Methods |
|---|---|---|
| 9:00 a.m. | Welcome and introduction | Presentation |
| 9:15 | Short recap of the main training | Presentation |
| 9:30 | Which contents of the training were realized? | Discussion |
| 9:45 | Simulation of a typical meeting is | Rotation principle |
| 10:00 | Feedback and some learning principles | |
| 10:30 | Break | |
| 10:45 | Next goals for implementing the new meeting leadership skills | Dyads |
| 11:00 | Dyad's presentations of goals to the whole group | Group discussion |
| 11:15 | How to get further support from the organization | Group discussion |
| 11:30 | Feedback | Group discussion |
| 12:00 p.m. | End of the session | |

responsibility as a meeting leader. (It is also possible to conduct this exercise in Module 1.) The trainer asks half of the group to come to the middle of the room and to close their eyes, while the other half are asked to choose a partner whose eyes are closed. Their task is to lead their partners around the room for 5 minutes. Then the roles are switched. Finally, trainees come together and share with each other how they experienced this exercise and discuss how it relates to leading a meeting. Thus, this exercise gives trainees another, slightly unusual opportunity to reflect on the question of what leading a meeting means, which was already discussed in Module 1 (to which the trainer should refer).

The trainer then summarizes the issues presented in the training and encourages trainees to further develop their competencies in their role as meeting leaders. The training ends with a general feedback round, which should be supplemented with some type of formal evaluation.

## Follow-Up Event

### Learning Objectives of the Follow-Up Event

The main objective of the follow-up event (outlined in Table 5.4) is to briefly repeat the learning steps of the 2-day training and to check the implementation of the learned skills. Additional goals are to reflect on experiences related to the training effects, to determine the next goals each attendee would like to accomplish relative to their meetings, and to plan how to handle difficult meeting situations in the future.

### Scientific Background

Transfer of training refers to the extent to which knowledge and skills acquired during training are applied to the job (Baldwin et al., 2009) and has long been a fundamental concern for researchers and practitioners alike. Organizations should provide tools, interventions, and support to enable trainees to work on their skills; for example, by helping leaders of trainees to coach them and to assign them tasks that require use of the new skills (Salas et al., 2012).

A major problem after any training is that of skill decay. Arthur, Bennett, Stanush, and McNelly (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of skill decay studies and reported that trainees had lost more than 90% of what they had learned one year after training. To minimize skill decay, Salas et al. (2012) recommended scheduling refresher training and for people to attend training shortly before they will have the chance to use the new skills (i.e., in our context, close to the next meeting that trainees have to lead).

### Training Description

The follow-up event is important for implementing the learned steps in practice. In general, it should take place roughly 3 months after the training: It is not recommended to schedule it much earlier than this because the trainees need to have the possibility to practice the new skills, and if it is scheduled much later, the effects of the meeting training are likely to have already decayed. (We also recommend planning another follow-up event 6 months later if that is possible.)

In the follow-up event, the trainer welcomes the trainees and asks them to take turns talking about their achievements and difficulties in implementing their intentions from the meeting training. Then, the trainer gives an overview of the main topics of the training on the follow-up day. If there are no questions from the trainees, the trainer suggests that they reflect on the difficulties of implementing the new meeting skills in a role play. Either the trainer brings a case example with him or her, or a trainee suggests an example. One possibility is to videotape the role play and to analyze the recording in more detail (although this takes more time). After discussing the role play, the trainees form dyads and specify the next meetings skills they hope to apply in the meeting, which are then presented to the group.

The final task is to come together and gather ideas on how the organization could support the trainees in their further use of their new skills. The trainer could feed back these ideas to the organization to ensure the sustainability of the effects of the training. If there is sufficient time, the trainer could suggest practicing some techniques from Module 3 (e.g., active listening, asking questions, or other relevant exercises). The follow-up event ends with a feedback round.

## Conclusion

As this book shows, research on meetings has progressed enormously in recent years, and this research can now be used to inform practitioners about how to develop interventions that help improve the efficiency of and the satisfaction with meetings. The training concept that we have described in this chapter is one such intervention.

Ideally, a training intervention for increasing meeting leadership skills is embedded in a larger system of individual development initiatives. In particular, it is recommended that a thorough needs assessment be conducted to determine for which leaders the meeting training is particularly appropriate (cf. Holton, Bates, & Naquin, 2000). Furthermore, changing the way in which meetings are conducted is likely also facilitated by support from the top management to help ensure a supportive transfer climate (Burke & Baldwin, 1999).

At least three caveats should be mentioned. First, meeting research seems to have largely refrained from studying the monitoring of meeting resolutions. Moreover, Module 1 touches on the topic of different meeting cultures, although empirical research on this topic is still lacking. We hope that future research will fill these gaps in the literature. Second, there are supplements to group training (as outlined in this chapter) such as “on-the-job training;” for instance, a coach could observe a manager leading a meeting and give feedback. Third, and most importantly, research is needed that evaluates whether the suggested training intervention works. Although there is good evidence that training generally works (Arthur et al., 2003), it would be very reassuring to know that meetings become more efficient and are perceived as more satisfactory after leaders undergo the training that we suggested in this chapter.

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