

Tips for Managing Participant Energy in Meetings

An important part of meeting management is encouraging participation and consistent contribution. During meetings, participants' energy levels are likely to fluctuate, especially for meetings longer than one hour. This brings us, as the chair or facilitator, the challenge of managing their energy levels carefully.

Here are ten tips that will help you raise and maintain the positive energy and motivation levels you are seeking in meetings:

- *Minimise the meeting time*
 - *Plan sequence of agenda items*
 - *Invite meeting participants at the right time slot*
 - *Provide healthy, low carbohydrates refreshments where appropriate*
 - *Create an inviting meeting environment*
 - *Ensure meeting participants are introduced to one another*
 - *Provide regular breaks*
 - *Use a variety of group working methods*
 - *Rotate meeting roles*
 - *Re-focus the group*
1. ***Minimise the meeting time:*** through advanced preparation and briefing of participants; starting and finishing the meeting on time. Keeping meetings to one hour is good practice, unless you have other issues to consider such as travel time.
 2. ***Plan sequence of agenda items:*** aiming to bring a balance to the nature of the topic and method of communication e.g. presentation, discussion. Schedule the most important agenda items towards the start of the meeting when most participants' energy levels are likely to be at their highest.
 3. ***Invite meeting participants at the right time slot:*** so that they only need attend the meeting for the crucial time where they will be contributing, avoiding wasted 'down' time. Also consider which time of day will be the best time for participants, bearing in mind their natural 'body clock', personal caring commitments, working patterns and potential medication needs.
 4. ***Provide healthy, low carbohydrates refreshments where appropriate:*** to increase energy levels such as fresh fruit and water. Heavy sugary foods and caffeine can reduce participants' energy levels quite quickly after a few minutes of digestion.
 5. ***Create an inviting meeting environment:*** for the meeting with natural day light, space to move around, comfortable but not too relaxing chairs. Minimise the distractions such as noise, high levels of traffic, or interruptions.
 6. ***Ensure participants are introduced to one another at the start of the meeting:*** to avoid wasted energy being spent by participants concerned over whom everyone is and how they fit into the meeting group dynamics.

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7. **Provide regular breaks:** in line with the participant energy levels. Normal coffee/tea breaks should be scheduled, but consideration for a quick stretch break of 5 minutes for example will help, as well as any form of movement. If in doubt, ask the meeting participants if they are in need of a break.
8. **Use a variety of group working methods:** such as a 'round robin', paired or small group working, along with the use of the flipchart to develop fresh ideas. This will focus the group, increasing contributions and improving decision making. Use a pre agreed "car park" to log participant suggestions, action points and ideas that are important, but potentially detract from the current agenda topic item.
9. **Rotate roles:** such as the chair for team meetings, presenters and contributors throughout the meeting for variety and change of voice.
10. **Re-focus the group:** with summaries or questions such as "can anyone summarise where we are?" if the group are debating an item for too long and the energy levels are low; or change your voice tone to inject new enthusiasm and energy to a topic.

We have also prepared a [Meeting Preparation Checklist](#) that may help you.
You may also find our [Tips for Chairing Effective Meetings](#) helpful.

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About the Author

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