# **Guidelines for Effective Team Meetings**

## EFFECTIVE DISCUSSION SKILLS

Successful team meetings must facilitate discussion by encouraging team members to:

* Ask for clarification about the topic being discussed or the logic in another person’s arguments.
* Ask members to repeat or represent ideas in different ways until clarification is reached, using examples, pictures, or diagrams.
* Encourage equal participation.
* No one member should be allowed to dominate the discussion and no one should be left out.
* Listen to one another’s ideas. Don’t debate or defend each idea when presented.
* Periodically, summarize what’s been presented and restate the discussion points in summary form. Then verify with the team that the summary covers all key points.
* Stay on topic; digression, irrelevant discussions, or overlong examples should be avoided.
* Manage the discussion time allotted.
* If portions of the agenda take longer than expected, accelerate or postpone other agenda items.
* Close discussions when there is nothing more to be gained; don’t over discuss the topic.
* Verify decisions and commit to action items.
* Summaries of decisions should be presented at the close of the meeting, along with assigned action items, ensuring all members are in agreement.
* Evaluate the meeting process.
* Is the team getting what they need from the discussion? If not, what can be done differently?

## TEAM BUILDING GOALS FOR EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

* Get to know each other.
* Learn each member’s background and skills, and determine how each learns and works best.
* Learn to work closely as a team and rely on each other.
* Determine each member’s strengths and capitalize on them.
* Determine how the team will make decisions.
* Since teams represent a diversity of expertise and responsibility, a formal decision-making process must be outlined and agreed upon for the team to be effective.
* Set meeting ground rules and develop a Team Charter.
* Attendance: determine legitimate reasons for missing a meeting and establish a procedure to inform the team leader of a member’s absence.
* Promptness: meetings should start and end on time.
* Participation: emphasize the importance of both speaking freely and listening attentively.
* Interruptions: determine if and when interruptions from cell phones or pagers will be tolerated.
* Meeting place and time: determine a regular meeting time and place, and establish a procedure for notifying members of meetings.
* Rotation of meeting duties: determine how to rotate setting up the meeting room, taking minutes, or other meeting duties.
  + While the project manager is responsible for keeping the records of teams meetings, teams often rotate the responsibility for taking minutes, writing reports, and sometimes setting agendas.
* What other guidelines are important for your team to determine?
  + Acceptable language and behavior.
  + Appropriate humor and dress.