A brief introduction to meetings.
Make your meetings...

..more efficient..

..more fun..

BUT MOST OF ALL...

..just better.
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FOUNDER’S NOTE</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART 1. INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The origin of meetings</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Trends</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What kind of meetings are there?</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What can go wrong?</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART 2. BEFORE A MEETING</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Meeting types</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Meeting rhythms</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How to plan a meeting</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Cultural differences</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART 3. DURING A MEETING</strong></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Facilitating a meeting</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Interaction</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Feedback</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Meeting minutes</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Meeting roles</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Meeting personalities</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Group decision making</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. How to engage and keep energy high?</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART 4. AFTER A MEETING</strong></td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Meeting minutes and follow up</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. When’s your meeting been successful?</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONCLUSION</strong></td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. That’s all folks!</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **APPENDIX** | 70 |
| Agenda template | 72 |
| Overview meeting types | 73 |
| Meeting rhythms | 74 |
| Energizers | 86 |
It’s my mission to save the world from bad meetings so everyone can work better together. GAIKU’s goal is to guide you to more efficient and engaging meetings that give you better results in less time. Get ready for awesome meetings!

Please send your feedback to jasper@gaiku.io. I’d love to hear your comments or questions.

P.s. Many thanks to Elise and Hannah for co-writing this book.

Founder’s note

By Jasper Meerding, Founder & CEO of GAIKU

The world evolves around the human interaction that meetings provide. We need others to make decisions and move forward. So why is it then that people in business are not giving meetings enough attention? Why don’t we make each and every single one of them count and actually add value to our businesses and potentially also lives? This book will help you improve your meetings and make them more efficient and engaging.

I know from my personal experience that building a fast growing company with many different people means having a lot of meetings. Really. A lot. I have always been looking for the most efficient way to communicate with everybody and get everyone engaged in the team. Sometimes I ended up with my day full of one meeting after the other, not knowing what I accomplished at the end of the day.

Has anyone ever taught you how to hold an effective meeting? Probably not, because this is not something people usually get trained in. However, meetings are a core part of life. We need human interaction to solve problems and make decisions. So, I believe we should make every meeting count and add value to our businesses and potentially also lives.

When it comes to meetings, there’s a lot to keep in mind; no wonder most people dread meetings. I couldn’t agree more! But I also know that there is a way out. Let this book be an introduction to efficient meetings and help you get started on improving them!

How to use this book

This book will give you an introduction to meetings and practical tips on how to improve them. It’s divided into four parts. Part One is an introduction to meetings and all the things that can go wrong. Part Two includes the steps before a meeting starts, including how to plan and think ahead. Part Three is all about during the meeting itself and how to facilitate and engage the team. Finally, Part Four includes everything that happens after a meeting and how you can make sure that everything is followed through. Each part in the meeting process includes different subjects that we believe are most important as a facilitator, but also as a participant.
PART 1.
Introduction

We all know what meetings are and they usually don’t give us an exciting feeling. In fact, it’s rather the opposite. The Oxford dictionary describes it as above.

So yes, usually you have a specific item you want to discuss, or several items, and it’s formal and business related.

But how far back can we trace meetings? That’s uncertain. Some say it started around 1800 in Europe and North-America when the universities had a growing need to share information in academic circles. This increased the number of formal gatherings. But what if we think about thousands of years ago when the hunters and gatherers sat around a fire and discussed their next route to take or the next day’s plan? This could also count as a meeting as far back as two million years ago.

So, people have been coming together to talk for millions of years. Nowadays, office lives are filled with meetings, especially on management and executive levels. People are running from meeting to meeting. We’ve experienced it ourselves how tiring this can get. But as we see, it’s a very natural process for human beings. We need other people to help us with a certain problem or to develop a consensus. In the following chapters we will elaborate more on how to make your meetings better and more engaging.

CHAPTER 1
The origin of meetings

Meeting:
An assembly of people for a particular purpose, especially for formal discussion
“We held an urgent meeting to discuss how to obtain this hamburger”
Before we start diving into meetings, let’s look at some current workplace trends. In each country, in each city, and in every company things are changing. Trends continually influence the company culture and the workplace in general. Of course, there are many factors and trends which can affect your work, but we picked out a few ones we think are important and that can really change a company culture according to *Entrepreneur* and *Forbes*.

**Generation Z**

Generation Z is joining the work floor. Born between 1994-2000, this generation is now reaching their 20s and entering companies via internships and entry-level positions. They are eager to get to work and they have an entrepreneurial spirit that drives ambition, focuses on career growth, and that needs structure and stability. Just like Millennials, members of Generation Z are not planning to stay at their jobs for more than three years. So, a challenge for businesses is to keep young talent in the company. This is driving a change in the company culture to keep innovating and to challenge employees.

**More performance reviews**

Performance reviews nowadays are considered ineffective by managers and employees. Manager positions are more and more filled by younger people. This is causing managers to change their methods of feedback. Today’s employee wants frequent feedback, open communication, and more collaboration with their co-workers. It’s not a solo job anymore.

The majority of big corporations have a very bureaucratic process when it comes to performance management, but younger companies are changing the way they handle performance evaluations. Employees expect more coaching from their managers, therefore annual evaluations don’t cut it. Checking in more frequently, say every month or even every week, increases employee productivity and makes employees more likely to achieve their goals. *Fast Company* covers more insights and examples of companies who changed the way they did performance reviews and here’s an article by Lori Goler, the Head of People at Facebook, about why she thinks that performance reviews work.

**Diverse culture**

Focus has shifted toward building a diverse and inclusive culture. Companies strive for an equal male-to-female ratio and employees from different backgrounds and cultures. It’s not easy to achieve, but research has shown that diversity drives innovation and diverse teams are more engaged in their work and their team. What’s not to like?

**Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

With improvements to AI, the way companies operate has drastically changed. Many companies are trying to incorporate AI and find solutions through this technology. HR managers are finding ways to automate training, onboarding, retention, and implement digital solutions for recruitment. Other departments will soon follow in finding ways to incorporate AI automation into their daily lives.

**Digitized workforce**

Technology is reinventing job roles, and companies have to reconsider how they design their jobs, organize work, and plan for future growth using these technologies. The workplace is changing all the time and people change along with it. It’s a challenge for all companies to keep up with the changes and embrace these technologies.

So, what do these trends have in common with meetings? They change the way we see a workplace and how we interact with one another. Interaction occurs on the work floor but also during meetings. Maybe you are already using technology like video conferencing, during your meetings, but we also use technology to schedule meetings or to document meeting minutes. This has become commonplace, and also influences how we work together. 20 years ago we had to sit together in the same room to have an effective meeting, now you can be on the other side of the world. This makes it all a lot easier, but people are also more easily distracted. With this, there is the need to be engaged and feel valuable. Options for this are limitless and often employees are looking for something better. This makes it hard to keep talent working in your company. Because meetings are such a big part of the work week, keeping them lively and engaging, by using digital tools, is one way to enforce employee satisfaction.
What kind of meetings are there?

Nowadays we have different kinds of meetings. Why? Because we have different goals. And with different goals come different kinds of meetings. Below we discuss five common meeting goals.

**Information sharing meetings** are all about sharing information. Most of the time they are educational, such as with seminars and lectures, and other times the presenter is sharing information to persuade the group. Besides being educational most of the time, information sharing meetings can also be focused on reporting results and discussing KPI’s. The challenge with these meetings is that they can easily become boring and filled with too much information, so it’s important to keep attendees engaged. We’ll discuss different participation and engagement strategies in chapter 16 of this book.

**Decision-making meetings** are an important part of every company. These meetings are always centered on coming to a consensus. However, making group decisions can be challenging. Incomplete information and narrow perspectives can stand in your way of coming to optimal decisions. Chapter 15 will discuss techniques you can use immediately to aid you in making painless group decisions.

**Problem-solving meetings**. The outcome is often a big, important decision. However, the difficulty of identifying the real problem, intragroup conflict, defensiveness, and time restraints are often challenges that bring more problems. To come to the best solution, you first should clearly define what the problem is, as well as to agree on criteria for the solution. So, good preparation is key. In chapter 7 we discuss how to prepare a meeting.

**Innovation meetings** are some of the most important meetings. Innovation is the key to successful organizations. The focus of innovation meetings is to come up with new ideas, to design or redesign products, or develop entirely new approaches for your business, like free-flowing creative meetings and brainstorm sessions. Attendees will build on each other’s ideas, creating a product of their collective intelligence. Innovation meetings often start with thinking outside the box: brainstorming, associating, and sharing ideas in a broad scope. In chapter 15 we discuss tips for facilitating a brainstorm session.
There are a lot of things going wrong when it comes to meetings. An average employee attends 62 meetings per month, but did you know that 50% of all meetings are seen as time wasted? That’s $37 billion salary cost of unnecessary meetings for U.S. businesses! 47% of employees think that meetings are the #1 time waster at work.

CHAPTER 4
What can go wrong?

We attend a lot of meetings, but what’s going wrong? Why do we feel like we’re wasting so much time? Many things go wrong and everyone experiences different meetings in their company. Below we discuss some of the most common meeting problems.

Poor or inadequate preparation
Sometimes people go to a meeting because it was scheduled in their agenda, without knowing the purpose of the meeting. They arrive unprepared. What’s to be done? Make sure that everyone knows why you are meeting. It all starts with the invitation: include a clear goal, agenda items, and what needs to be prepared. We will discuss more of this in chapter 7.

Can’t make decisions
We all been there: our meetings seem to drag on as group members struggle to reach a consensus and make decisions. The responsibility for coming to decisions lies with the leader. The one in charge of the meeting or agenda must consider how decisions will be made to avoid endless discussion. Check out chapter 15 to learn about decision-making strategies.

Can’t finish on time
Meetings often run over time and some agenda points don’t even get covered. Why does this happen so often? Well, meetings don’t always start on time in the first place. Second, the meeting is not planned well. And third, meeting time is not managed well. What can help you finish on time? Start on time! Plan your meeting and make sure to assign different meeting roles (see chapter 13).

Dominator
This one is a real productivity killer. The same two or three people seem to talk all the time. It might be because they think they know best and want to push their ideas, or they want to score compliments from their leaders by talking all the time and incorporating a hidden agenda. The result? Other people start to feel unsafe and are unable to share their opinion. That doesn’t sound like a productive >>
meeting at all. Fortunately, you can do something about it. Again, a good leader is key. What can the leader do? Chapter 14 will give you effective tips on how to handle this and other different personalities in your meetings.

People are not engaged
When people are not engaged, decisions may be made that are later questioned and not implemented as hoped. Without some regular interaction, office and department members become isolated, making collaboration and cooperation more difficult. Chapter 16 will give you participation strategies.

Lack of follow through on tasks
There’s nothing that can measure the effectiveness of your meeting better than what happens afterwards. Your meeting has been a waste of time if people don’t follow through on action plans, tasks, and decisions. Chapter 17 will give you all the information you need to make sure your meeting has been worth its time.

No meeting skills
Like we said before, meetings are a core part of life but no one seems to be educated on how to hold them effectively. No goal, no agenda, no time limit, no communication skills, etc. This lack of skills could be one of the reasons meetings are unproductive and not engaging.

Don’t feel confident and safe
Speaking in public is a huge trigger of anxiety for some people. They experience their mind going blank and feeling stupid because they think it makes them look like they don’t know their job. If people don’t feel confident speaking up, it might cause your meetings to lack information or expertise, and discussions might not run very smoothly. Chapter 14 will teach you how to handle different meeting personalities.

Cultural differences
Another aspect that’s causing meeting problems nowadays, is cultural differences. The way time is perceived, rules on how to behave, how to greet someone, body language, etc can differ a lot between countries. These aspects can cause misunderstanding and can make communicating a lot more difficult. Chapter 8 will elaborate more on this topic.

50% is seen as time wasted

62 meetings a month
PART 2.
Before a meeting

CHAPTER 5
Meeting types

Once there is more than one person in a company, structured communication must be a priority. This communication needs focus and alignment to make sure that problems are spotted and solved quickly. We’ll first outline the four recurring meeting types and their purposes: daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly. Then we will show how you can implement these types in a certain meeting rhythm: Scrum, Rockefeller Habits, Holacracy, and Kanban.

Daily meetings
A daily meeting is a short, fast-paced meeting that is held every day, ideally during the start of the working day, for 5-15 minutes.

How does it work?
During this meeting, each team member answers the following three questions or a variation on that:
- What did I do yesterday?
- What will I do today?
- Are there any impediments in my way?

Why hold a daily meeting?
Think about transparency, engagement, and commitment. It’s not a status update meeting in which everyone lets the boss or manager know what tasks they’ve accomplished. Rather, the focus is on each other’s accomplishments and remaining work in order to achieve commitment and transparency in your team.

I once worked for a big corporate in the Netherlands and they tried to discuss everything in one meeting so that sometimes we ended up sitting in a meeting room for more than five hours. They didn’t distinguish agenda points for different meeting types and that’s crucial to have effective meetings. It was the worst!

Daniel Fernandes | Backend developer at GAIKU
Weekly meeting

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss tactical issues that come your way each week and review the goals you set for yourself and your team. How far along are you and what are the next steps?

It’s important to prepare for this meeting and think about issues beforehand, but always keep in mind that it should be relevant for the whole team (if not, meetings could continue for days).

A rough planning of a weekly meeting:
1. Start with good news for 5 minutes.
2. Numbers [KPI’s] are shared very briefly and reviewed for ten minutes.
3. For 20 minutes the team synchronizes on customers, employees, and partners.
4. You finish talking about subjects that need further discussion. This could be anything and can take from 10 to 30 minutes.

Monthly meetings

Monthly meetings are typically one to three hours long and best held in the morning when people have the most energy. This meeting is used to solve strategic issues relating to the whole company.

Stick to two or three issues in a meeting and make sure you schedule at least one hour per topic so that the team can dive into a topic without the distraction of deadlines and time management. At the end of the meeting, set new goals for the next month and make them measurable.

The biggest challenge in implementing this meeting is failing to schedule enough time for them or putting too many items on the agenda. When you’re scheduling a monthly meeting, make sure that more than enough time is scheduled for each topic. If it means clearing everyone’s calendars for an entire day, so be it.

Quarterly meetings

The final meeting type we’re discussing is the quarterly. Plan this meeting for half a day, where the only focus is to define the new quarterly goals. This meeting is typically off-site, providing an opportunity to step away from the daily and weekly issues. During this meeting the business can be reviewed in a more holistic, long-term manner.

The meeting agenda should be:
- Comprehensive Strategy Review. Industries and competitive threats change, so it’s important to review strategy about four times a year.
- Team review.
- Quarterly goal reviews and next quarter goals. How you divide these goals depends on your team and company. You may also divide them further into three parts so you have your monthly goals as well or leave that to the person responsible for it.

One of the challenges you might face is the tendency to overburden and over-structure the meeting. The meeting shouldn’t feel like a presentation to executives but should be focused on reflection and discussing the state of the organization.

Don’t forget to also celebrate the achieved quarterly goals from the past quarter. We make sure to celebrate successes each quarter at GAIKU. The whole team may not be directly working on quarterly goals, but we make sure that everyone gets to celebrate the achievements since we are working towards the same end goal.

Look at chapter 5 for an overview of these four types.

I actually enjoy the quarterly meetings where different departments come together and give a status update about their goals. It might not always be relevant for everyone directly, so you shouldn’t go into discussion too much. But in the end, we’re all working towards the same goals so it’s good to see where everyone is standing. It reminds you that you’re in it together.

Elise Veerman | Content creator at GAIKU
### Meeting rhythms

You probably know what a rhythm is, but what does it have to do with meetings? A rhythm is defined as “timed movement through space”. The presence of rhythm creates predictability and order in a composition. Using a rhythm, meetings will happen regularly to maintain strategic momentum of your practice. You and your team should frequently discuss goals, KPI’s, status and everything else that will keep you on track to hit your strategic goals.

**Scrum**

Scrum works really well for development teams because it iterates continuously on the work flow and the work that needs to be done. It has very short time planning, which makes it a flexible framework and adaptable.

**Kanban**

Kanban is a framework that has a continuous work process without having a fixed ‘sprint’ like Scrum has. It has a constant delivery flow that doesn’t get interrupted and can be changed at all times. Kanban is used widely in companies that produce products in factories but also works well for development teams.

**Rockefeller Habits**

This meeting rhythm brings you guidance and structure in how to plan your meetings with clear boundaries. The frequency of meetings and deliverables are fixed and assures a constant focus on monthly, quarterly and yearly goals. This makes sure your team is aligned on what to deliver during these meetings and makes it more productive.

**Holacracy**

Holacracy focuses on self-managing teams to empower employees to take responsibility and make decisions. It removes the management level that most companies have by implementing ‘cycles’ that can be changed every month according to the workflow. They reason from the idea that people who make the product know what needs to be done and are able to make decisions based on this instead of the manager on top.

Concluded, the best approach is to look at what your company or team needs and the problem that you want to solve. Then, find a viable solution that really benefits your team and enables you to grow.
How to plan a meeting

Organizing a meeting is just as important as the meeting itself. However, meetings are often unorganized, without purpose or agenda, and they go off-topic. Because of this, meetings are the number one time waster in the workplace. We know you probably attend and organize a lot of meetings, so we’ve listed seven steps that will help you plan a successful meeting.

Step 1. Decide if you really need to hold this meeting
First of all, do you really need this meeting? Very often meetings are scheduled unnecessarily. “Let’s schedule a meeting” has become the default response to a lot of business issues. Have a few ideas to share? Let’s schedule a meeting. Struggling with completing your tasks? Let’s schedule a meeting. Want to keep your co-worker informed? Let’s schedule a meeting. Of course, a meeting can be the right solution in many cases, but it’s not always the right answer. When you’re building the strategic plan for the year ahead, it’s clear you need to meet. Take some time to figure out why you need this meeting. Ask yourself questions like “Do I need outside input to make progress?” “Does moving forward require a real-time, face-to-face meeting?” Maybe an email, quick call, a Slack message, or even just a conversation by your desk will do the job.

Step 2. Start planning simple details
So, you’ve decided you need this meeting. Start planning your meeting with simple details:
- Who should be attending?
- Where should the meeting be held? Choose a location with healthy working conditions. Make it easy for people to hear, see, interact, and move around. Step 6 will give you a list of things to consider for your meeting room.
- What time should the meeting start?
- How long should the meeting last?
- What tools do you need during the meeting?

Step 3. Have a clear goal
Determine the goal of your meeting. Are you going to brainstorm? Is it a scrum session? Are you having a gathering to share important information? Ask yourself, before you start writing the agenda:
- What is the goal of this meeting?
- What are the results your group needs to achieve by the end of it?
- Know why you called the meeting, what you hope to accomplish as a result, and what action you expect from it. Write it down. These objectives give you a reason to meet and will keep you focused during the meeting.

Step 4. Set an agenda
The meeting agenda is very important. It outlines the plan and sets boundaries for the meeting. With the agenda, you provide a focus for the meeting. Prioritize the list of agenda points from most important to least important. This way you’ll make sure the most important topics are handled first.
Preparing an agenda doesn’t have to be a difficult task. Use a digital tool to write down all agenda items. Send the agenda to the attendees beforehand and ask them if they want to add anything.

What to prepare beforehand:
- Date, time, and location of the meeting
- The purpose and expected outcome of the meeting
- Invitees
- Agenda items. Create an outline (or template) based on the agenda. This will make it easy for you to simply write down notes and decisions under each agenda point as you go along.
- An estimated time frame for each agenda item
- The person responsible for each agenda item
- This could be the one that proposed the item or the one with the most information on the subject

See chapter 5 for more information on meeting types and their agendas.

I used to call them meta-meetings: meetings where you discuss a next meeting. I mean, what’s the point? People get so caught up in talking about a next meeting for two hours long and no one was really engaged. This could’ve been done on the mail or only by the heads of the departments maybe. They had no idea how much time, and indirectly money, they were wasting.
Step 5. Send an invite
Send an invite to every attendee stating that there will be a meeting, the goals of the meeting, and the meeting agenda details such as date, time, and location. Also, send relevant documents or information if people need to prepare something for the meeting and make sure they have enough time to do so. Ask those invited to accept or decline the meeting.

Step 6. The meeting room
When you’re organizing a meeting, you’ll want to consider more than just chairs, a projector, and microphones. You’ll want to create the right environment for your meeting, from lighting to the seating. A meeting area that’s comfortable, stylish, and fully equipped will help you communicate better and can effectively lead to attracting clients or finalizing important deals.

Let’s take a look at different aspects of meeting rooms that can contribute to a successful meeting.

Lighting. How bright is the room? Lighting plays an important role in the meeting room experience. Soft lighting may be good for reading and viewing of screens, but on the other hand, it might also cause participants to doze off. Boardrooms might require more brightness, and rooms with projectors might require dimming lights. Make sure the room is bright enough!

Technology. Before you start your meeting, make sure to test your technology. Is the WiFi working? Is your meeting software working? How about the speakers, projector, and lighting? You want your meeting to go smoothly, so test these things before the meeting starts!

Heating and cooling. One of every event and meeting organizer’s biggest nightmares is trying to control the heating, ventilating, and air conditioning system of a room. It’s often impossible to find a temperature that everyone in the room likes. It’s best to start with a cooler environment at the beginning of the meeting because it’s only going to get warmer with extra people in the room. Also, people are less likely to doze off when they’re feeling slightly cool.

Accessories. Last but not least, what are accessories you might need during your meeting? Make sure there are good markers and something to write on, for example: a whiteboard, a glass wall, or a flip chart.

Step 7. Remote teams
Planning a meeting can be challenging. Working with a remote team makes it even more challenging. Coordinating between multiple schedules and time zones can make it difficult to plan a meeting. Every team has its own meeting flow, and what works for one team doesn’t necessarily work for another. It helps to plan a daily standup, especially for remote workers who you don’t talk to that often. Daily standups help a team sync up and they take away impediments faster. Additionally, it’s nice to hear everyone’s voices every day. More on the daily standup in chapter 5.

The most important thing is to apply structure in your company, so every team member has the same expectations of what needs to be discussed in the meeting. Clarity and structure save time, and it all comes down to the preparation for the meeting. Be clear about what is going to be discussed in the meeting, what the goal is, and what the outcome should be.

Planning and organizing a meeting shouldn’t be difficult. This chapter gave you seven easy steps to plan a successful meeting. It’s important to consider if you really need a meeting, and when you do, make sure to have a clear goal and agenda. You’ll have an efficient meeting up and running in no time!
International companies have employees all over the world. Working with multicultural teams offers a lot of advantages, like deep knowledge of different product markets, culturally sensitive decisions and strategies, and 24-hour work rotations. However, besides these advantages, there are also problems that come with working in a multicultural team and company. In this chapter, we’ll discuss what the differences are and how you can cope with culture-based challenges.

**What are some differences**

People are different and meetings with multicultural employees and/or clients require a unique approach. The way you hold a meeting in Japan is different than in Brazil. This makes having cross-cultural meetings difficult but could also give you a broader perspective of the company or situation. To anticipate and respect other cultures that might enter the meeting, be prepared and do your homework on this subject.

Are you working with people from different cultures? Below you will find the most common differences from different parts in the world.

We can see that there are different ways of starting a meeting, holding a meeting, communicating with one another, and having different opinions about what is polite. We’ll discuss this further in the next paragraphs.

**Differences in how time is viewed**

Time is the same everywhere, but it’s not viewed the same around the world. Imagine having a meeting with someone and the person is multitasking between phone calls, and people are walking in and out of the room. Would you think this is a ‘waste of time’ or an efficient way of working? Overall there are two ways to look at situations like this: the polychronic way or the monochronic way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Chit-chat</th>
<th>Agenda</th>
<th>Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Chit-chat</td>
<td>No agenda</td>
<td>Direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Minimal chit-chat</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Europe</td>
<td>Minimal chit-chat</td>
<td>Sticking to it firmly</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>Chit-chat</td>
<td>Agenda but very relaxed</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong and Japan</td>
<td>Chit-chat</td>
<td>Sticking to it</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand and Australia</td>
<td>Minimal chit-chat</td>
<td>Sticking to it</td>
<td>Direct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Monochronic: In this type of culture people are very aware of time. There are many expressions in English-speaking countries and Northern European countries like ‘wasting time’ or ‘lose time’. There is a grand awareness of the concept of time and turning up late for an appointment or meeting is seen as rude and disrespectful. Everyone’s time is considered valuable and should be spent usefully. People in a monochronic culture focus on one thing at the time, plan carefully, and are concerned with completing tasks in a systematic way. That’s why meetings in this culture usually stick to the agenda, start on time and don’t allow interruptions during the meeting. Going ‘off track’ is not something that is considered positive and should be avoided. Efficiency is an important aspect that is valued throughout companies and the Japanese take this especially seriously. Sticking to the agenda and to the time set for a meeting is very important. If a meeting goes over time, that reflects on the people in the meeting. They seem inefficient and unclear in communication or they didn’t prepare well enough to end the meeting on time because of that. Therefore it is utterly important to end the meeting within the allocated time to not ‘lose face’ and save your dignity.

Polychronic: the polychronic culture in, for example, Latin America, Southern Europe, and the Middle East, has a very different take on time. They multitask and believe that time cannot be controlled and is flexible. A company where this culture is dominant won’t necessarily stick to the agenda of the meeting and instead meeting attendees could be expected to do multiple tasks during the meeting, walk out of the meeting, or take calls.

Differences in communication
In the Netherlands, the culture is down to earth and direct. Communication should be clear and it’s not about reading between the lines, which would be inefficient. Most Northern European countries are like this just like some other English-speaking countries like Australia.

The way people in the Netherlands communicate says a lot about a culture. Because monochronic cultures are trying to be as efficient as possible, too much chit-chat before a meeting and indirect communication is not always acceptable. Direct communication is honest and straightforward. When you think something is not right or should be slightly different, this will be said during the meeting. On the other hand, in many countries in the world where a polychronic culture rules communication is careful and related to saving face. They want to protect another’s esteem and honor.

If you’d like a more in-depth research on specific countries, check out this [website](https://www.example.com).
Tips on how to manage
Of course, you don’t want to clash during meetings with clients or colleagues. So how can you make sure your multicultural meetings run smoothly?

The Harvard Business Review writes about this subject. They identify four problem categories that can create barriers to a team’s success:

1. Direct versus indirect communication (like we saw in the table)
2. Trouble with accents and levels of fluency
3. Different ways of looking at hierarchy and authority
4. Conflicting norms for decision making

Make sure, as the facilitator, that you know the root of the problem so you can find an appropriate solution.

Expectations
Be specific before the meeting starts about what you expect from people in the meeting. You want to be clear about how you will run the meeting and establish the ‘norms’ at the beginning.

Be clear
Don’t leave anything to the imagination. People always have a different view on things if it’s not laid out clearly. Confusion is even more likely when there is a cultural difference. When you say, for example, the meeting starts ‘on time’, people can still interpret this as more or less within ten minutes from the start. Be clear about what you mean and don’t assume that people understand it immediately. This way everyone has the same idea and it helps to avoid irritation. As a facilitator, it’s important to involve every member and at the same time respect everyone’s cultural assumptions.

Taking all this into consideration, our last advice would be to do your homework before meeting with any culture. This way everyone will feel respected and you can truly enjoy a diverse team.

I’ve been to meetings where the hierarchy was very different than what I was used to. Luckily we were quickly used to each other at that moment so that was good. But I can imagine that when I would have a meeting in Japan, our very different cultures would really clash in a way. My advice would be to read about cultural differences before entering the meeting. You’ll know what to expect or how to behave, and you would better understand other people’s behavior.

Arjen Halma | CPO at GAIKU
Facilitating a meeting

By definition, facilitating means “to make easier or less difficult; help forward.” Every meeting usually needs a meeting facilitator, someone to help participants stay involved, to lead discussions, and to identify and solve problems. Teams will almost always develop better, more creative solutions when the meeting has good facilitation and will be more likely to support the implementation of the solutions. So, it’s the meeting facilitator’s role to guide the group through an effective process, without influencing the decisions.

Start with good news

Starting a meeting positive is something that helps to develop a positive mindset and an open environment in that meeting. There’s an opportunity for everyone to share their thoughts on what’s happening and level with each other. What did you think was something positive for you personally, or regarding your job, or the company in general? Sharing this will give you an easy start and a chance to connect with each other that exalts business.

Practice leadership

Think about a general meeting you have during the week and count the hourly rates of everyone in that room. It’s probably quite a lot. On top of that, factor in the cost of things a person could actually be achieving instead of sitting in a meeting. That even doubles the amount of lost money. That’s where leadership comes in. Good leadership is key during a meeting to ensure its effectiveness. In chapter 14 we’ll look more into meeting personalities and how to deal with them, but it’s sure to say as a facilitator you can make or break the meeting. You’re the one responsible for one or two hours of someone’s day, make sure it counts.
Facilitate more drama

According to Patrick Lencioni, the author of Death By Meetings, there are two things going wrong with the overall meeting culture. One, meetings are boring because they lack drama and two, they are ineffective because they lack contextual structure.

To keep meetings engaging there needs to be some conflict. Most leaders in meetings avoid just that and focus on ending their meetings on time because they don’t want to be seen as inefficient or as a time waster. On the other hand, there are the so-called ‘staff meetings’. Participants in these meetings are often unsure if they are supposed to be debating, brainstorming, or listening to what is being said. There is no clear context for these meetings, just the inclusion of anything that comes up. That could be anything from the budget for next quarter to discussing the events for that week to the results of the latest marketing campaign.

So, how can you make sure that you make the best decisions and no one’s time is wasted? Facilitate drama and passionate discussions to engage the whole team and lead these discussions towards a profound decision. Notice the conflict and ignore the natural tendency to do something about this conflict. This is a good thing and support this conflict by asking questions and get to the root of the problem. Try to define and summarize the participant’s position by asking questions, like “I’m hearing … and …, is that your point of view?”. These kind of summaries will help participants address the conflict. Participants will have the feeling they achieved something afterwards and that everyone had the opportunity to weigh in during these discussions.

Of course it all depends on your objective during a meeting, but keeping in mind these two points can significantly improve the meeting culture you have. Read the easy-to-read Death by Meeting if you want to know more on the above.

I’ve been to a meeting once with 150 people, that lasted for two days. The result? We scheduled smaller meetings with only a few people. What a waste of time! I believe good meetings start with sharing a goal and a clear outcome that you want at the end of the meeting. They should be held with less than ten people, preferably of the same discipline, and they should be pragmatic and quickly come to a result.

Joost ten Brink | Backend developer at GAIKU
Meetings are here to make things better and allow participants to work together. People seem to forget that sometimes, and come into the meeting cranky and unmotivated. Sitting in a one or two hour meeting with a few cranky people will bring down the positive and energetic vibe. Even though attending meetings is not a passion for most people, there are a few things that could make it easier for everyone.

First of all, show up on time. Of course, like we read in chapter 8 about cultural differences, timeliness can differ in parts of the world. Just be aware of what people expect.

Also, try to engage in the meeting and ask questions. Not every item is as relevant to you, however you can engage by asking follow-up questions and, if the situation allows it, share your point of view. The key is to ask questions that inspire a new way of thinking and expand their range of vision.

Here are a few ways to construct open-ended questions:
1. To get more clarity: 'Can you explain...?'
2. Create better working relations by asking: 'How have sales been going?' instead of 'Did you meet your target?'
3. Encourage thinking analytically: 'What are the consequences of executing it like this?'
4. Help people reflect on this: 'Why did this work?'
5. Create ownership (in case of a passive team): 'What do you suggest we do in this case?'

What not to ask? Avoid questions with a negative perspective like, 'Why didn’t you finish this on time?', or a few closed questions in a row that make it more like an interrogation than an open conversation like, 'What time is it?', 'How many people are coming?' and 'When will the report be ready?'

Asking questions makes sure that you are aligned as a team, that you’re better at solving problems, and also give others the opportunity to think further than they would otherwise. For more on asking questions and other examples check out this article by the Harvard Business Review.

Virtual meeting etiquette
What’s written above is important, but when you’re working remote even more etiquette rules are applicable. This is due to the lack of body language that is not present like in a physical meeting.

A very important guideline: be clear on the ground rules of the meeting. A virtual meeting stands or falls on its structure so make sure that rules are crystal clear. You could either tell everyone at the beginning of the meeting or send it beforehand. Some examples of rules that could be important: who the facilitator is, if people are muted or not, that there’s an agenda to follow, if questions are welcome or not during the meeting, and who writes the minutes.

Here are some tips to get the most out of your virtual meetings:
- Begin with a warm-up or small talk to get everybody relaxed. For example, start by asking remote attendees to introduce themselves and also to describe what’s happening in their country, town, or office. You can start doing this while people are arriving, so that you don’t get distracted while waiting for the rest.
- Close all apps on your computer and set your phone on silent to stay focused.

What to specifically look out for as the facilitator:
- Make sure to engage everyone, even more than a regular meeting, by calling their name and asking questions. Ensure that everyone has a say. Try to use private chat functions to ask unresponsive participants why they aren’t engaging, to avoid putting them on the spot if you feel resistance in any way.
- Make sure everyone follows the ground rules that you’ve established at the beginning of the meeting.
Feedback is an essential part of a healthy company and also one of its largest challenges. Some people don’t like giving feedback, some don’t like receiving feedback, and not a lot of people know how to give constructive feedback. In this chapter we’ll explain what the steps are to give feedback and receive feedback, and how to listen in general.

Let’s state that everyone wants to improve his skills. That’s human nature: to always get better at what you do. Besides a self-evaluation, learning what needs improvement requires feedback and that’s where it gets more complicated. Imagine you lose $100, that would suck, right? Now imagine winning $100. What would you get more worked up and make you feel stronger emotions? For many people, it would be losing the money that would enable stronger feelings than winning the money.

Same goes for giving and receiving feedback. Research shows that employees react six times more strongly to a negative interaction with their boss than they reacted to a positive interaction. Negative feedback can have an adverse effect on someone’s productivity and even well-being.

Giving feedback is a delicate situation. There are 3 steps to respectfully do this:

1. Start with an observation of the situation from your personal perspective: “I’m seeing/hearing you do/say this…”
2. What is the effect on your feeling and/or behavior: “This gives me this feeling and that’s why I do this…”
3. Give space for the opinion of that person: “Do you recognize this?” OR “what do you think of this?”

This way you retain respect in the relationship and give space for other opinions. This will not evoke any defensiveness from the other person and sets a constructive tone for the conversation.
Receiving feedback also has its challenges.

It’s not hard to receive any feedback in the way it’s described above. If feedback is presented differently, you might get defensive and be less open to a conversation.

What you can do in that case:
1. Ask for clarification and use follow-up questions
2. Make a summary of what’s being said to avoid misinterpretation
3. Demonstrate appreciation of the situation: “It’s clear to me” OR “your intentions are clear.”
4. Share your own opinion: “I think…”, “I have heard of this before”, “I agree” OR “I disagree, because…”, “what I’ve learned from this…”
5. End with a follow-up: “This is what I’ll do with it…”, “I’ll take it into account the next time”, “I’m sorry there’s nothing I can do.”

This way you can solve a lot of problems that arise in a workplace. With these tips, you can ensure a safe environment where you can help each other thrive and share feedback.

How to listen

During a meeting people are constantly communicating via both words and visual cues. However, sending messages is not the only part of the communication process. Receiving (listening) is just as important. Think about it: when you say something to someone, but that person is not paying attention or doesn’t try to understand you, your message has been sent for nothing. So, listening plays an important role in meetings, but how do you do it? Let’s take a look at an important listening skill: active listening.

Active listening

Listening is not the same as hearing and requires both focus and a concentrated effort. You need focus in order to understand the messages that are being sent to you. Active listening means fully concentrating on what is being said rather than just passively hearing the message of the speaker.

Firstly, show interest using both verbal and non-verbal messages such as maintaining eye contact, nodding your head and smiling, or saying ‘yes’ or ‘mmm-hmm’ to encourage them to continue speaking. This will make the speaker feel more at ease.

Secondly, remain neutral and non-judgmental, especially early in the conversation. Active listening is about patience: pauses and short periods of silence should be accepted. Don’t jump in with questions or comments, give the speaker some time to explore their thoughts and feelings!

Finally, when you feel like the person is finished speaking, ask for clarification if needed, summarize the person’s message in your own words, and give the speaker the chance to correct. This way, you ensure the speaker that you’ve listened to him and that you understand what he said.

These steps will help you be a great listener. And remember, practice makes perfect!
I’ve attended a lot of meetings where everything was written down, which took a lot of time. You don’t have to write everything down. Just the important things, like what was decided and what needs to be done by whom and when.

Hannah Boom | Operations manager at GAIKU

Meeting minutes

Meeting minutes provide a written record of what was discussed and agreed upon at a meeting. With meeting minutes you and your colleagues will have the same recollections from the meeting and the same ideas about what was agreed. Good minutes make sure everyone, including everyone who couldn’t attend, knows what was decided and what needs to be done. In chapter 7 we explained how to prepare the meeting agenda.

In the appendix, you’ll find a full template of a meeting agenda. As you go from agenda item to agenda item, write down the most important phrases and decisions under or next to each agenda item.

Why is having a person responsible for each task and decision so important? Take Steve Jobs for example. He insisted that every agenda point and action point must have a person responsible. He called that person the **Directly Responsible Individual**. This way, everything is organized and clear, and public accountability will ensure that a task gets done.

Here’s what you’ll need to include in your meeting minutes:

- Date, time, and location of the meeting.
- The purpose of the meeting.
- Names of attendees and those who were unable to attend.
- Agenda items.
- Decisions that were made.
- Actions that need to be done. Include the deadline and who it was assigned to.
- Follow up meeting.
Do ✓

- Record the date, time, location, and type of meeting.
- Check off attendees as they enter the room. Or circulate an attendance list they can check off themselves.
- Ask for clarification if necessary. Sometimes, the group will move on without making a decision or a clear conclusion. However, it’s your job to write down decisions that are made so ask for clarification when needed.
- Be selective. Listen for key points of the meeting and capture them. You can’t keep up if you try to capture it all, so be sure to simply (and clearly) write (or type) the decisions, assignments, and action steps.
- Record it. Literally. If you are concerned about not being able to keep up with note taking, consider recording the meeting, but be sure to let participants know they are being recorded. The recordings can come in handy if you need clarification.
- Use the agenda as a guide. The agenda will show you what needs to be discussed and decided.
- Record vote outcomes and the number of votes.
- Stay objective. Record what is discussed and decided without giving a judgment.
- Finish the minutes as soon as possible after a meeting when everything is still fresh in your mind.

Don't ✗

- Include every detail in the meeting minutes.
- Include personal opinions, comments, or judgements.
- Include words of praise or criticism from anyone.
- Detail the debate over an issue. You should include facts in your meeting. What is discussed and decided? Do not include everything that is said. The meeting minutes shouldn’t be a transcript.
- Wait to type up the minutes from your notes. The longer you wait, the less accurate they become. Do it the same day or the next day, while you still remember what happened.
- Record content in the minutes that could be embarrassing or inappropriate to an individual, company, or the organization.
- Keep draft or handwritten minutes. Discard the draft after minutes have been approved.
Meeting roles

Clearly defined meeting roles will help you have more productive meetings. Assigning different roles to participants is a good way of keeping attendees involved and engaged. What are important roles to have during your meeting? Let’s discuss the three roles you can assign to make your meeting more efficient.

Role 1. Facilitator
The meeting facilitator is usually the one creating the meeting agenda with or without input from the group. During the meeting, the facilitator guides the group through the agenda and keeps an eye on the time, so he also takes on the role of timekeeper. He focuses on the group’s process and helps make the group’s work go smoothly. The facilitator guides the group through the agenda, leads the discussions and brainstorms, and makes sure decisions are made. He creates balance when it comes to giving everyone equal opportunities to participate in the meeting.

Role 2. Note taker
The note taker or recorder takes notes on a flip chart or a laptop. He or she may also be called the meeting minutes taker. This person documents what is discussed, key decisions that are made, action items, and responsibilities. These meeting minutes should be distributed as soon after the meeting as possible so that everyone knows what to do and by when.

Role 3. Directly responsible individual
This is more of a general role that probably everyone has in a meeting. It means that every participant is responsible for their own agenda item(s). The responsible participant could be the head of the specific department, someone that’s been working on that project, or someone that put the item forward. Anything that makes the most sense in a team or meeting. The role means that you have to introduce the item, provide people with the necessary knowledge, and explain the problem or discussion. Be clear on what kind of input you need from the group and what kind of output you expect. Is it a decision on this specific matter or just some ideas?

CHAPTER 13

I used to be a cook, and every night after work we would have a meeting about the work we needed to do the day after, and what we could do with different products that were still left. Not your average business meeting, but definitely a meeting. There were a lot of cooks that were loud mouthed and wanted to get the chef’s attention. That didn’t create an open environment where everyone got the chance to put in ideas. People would really try to push their own ideas, which made it difficult for shyer people to speak up. I think the meeting facilitator, the chef in this case, should really be considerate of that.

Arne Oldenhave | Backend developer at GAIKU
Meeting personalities

We’ve discussed different meeting roles that could benefit your meeting efficiency. But what about different personalities? People are inherently and genetically different. Keeping a meeting on track can be a challenge because of (different) personalities. When different personalities come together to discuss or decide, they will disagree occasionally.

Not only in meetings, but in business in general, it’s useful to know what kind of personalities there are. When we truly try to understand the people around us, we will become successful entrepreneurs, dedicated employees and friendlier colleagues. So the next time you get annoyed with your colleague for being too loud or when you get impatient with your employee for not getting to the point quick enough, try to think about different personalities and how this might cause this situation. Below we will discuss different personality types that you might encounter.

5 personality traits

Research published by Robert R. McCrae and Paul T. Costa, Jr., states that five personality traits, known to psychologists as the “Big Five”, can give a scientifically accurate assessment of your personality. You can easily remember these personality traits using the acronym OCEAN:

- **Openness to experience**
  Openness reflects people’s willingness to consider new ideas. Someone who is open to experience usually enjoys trying new things. These kinds of people are original, imaginative, daring, have broad interests and generally prefer variety over fixed routines.

- **Conscientiousness**
  Conscientious people are careful or vigilant. They have the desire to do tasks well and take obligations to others seriously. This makes them hardworking, ambitious, and energetic people who like planning things in advance.

- **Agreeableness**
  Agreeableness reflects how much people want other people to like them. Agreeable people value getting along with others which usually makes them sympathetic, kind, affectionate and they are likely to engage in prosocial behavior and volunteerism.

- **Neuroticism**
  Neurotic people worry a lot, are insecure, self-conscious, and temperamental. They are the kind of people that call and text immediately after sending an email to make sure you got it. This instability can cause difficulties in the workplace when people get angry or upset at others.

- **Extroversion**
  People fall somewhere on a scale from extroversion to introversion. Everyone has a certain percentage of extroversion and expresses it in different ways. So, if you have 20% extroversion, it means you are quite introverted. Extroversion can be described as social, fun-loving, talkative and deriving energy from social activity.Introverts on the other hand, rather seek for internal stimulation and derive energy from solitary and often creative pursuits.

CHAPTER 14
For more information about personalities, take a look at Business Insider’s article about the Big Five personality traits. Are you interested in your team’s scores on these personality traits? Take the test! The International Personality Item Pool is available online in both long and short versions. Then, watch the behavior of your colleagues, and get to know how they act and react. Use that understanding to predict how they will react differently to situations than you would have.

One final thing you should note about general personalities is that most people fall in between extremes. That is, there are for example not many pure introverts or extroverts. Instead, people have a combination of both dimensions. Also, the results of these tests are not written in stone. They give you an indication of someone’s personality at a certain time. Keep in mind that people change and are also not the same in different situations. This information is just to help you consider personality types and to help you create a better understanding of yourself and someone else.

Meeting personalities

Now, let’s take a closer look at a few specific meeting personalities and how you can handle them to have a successful meeting.

The rambler
Some people talk more than others. However, totally irrelevant rambling from a participant can have a negative impact on your meeting. It can cause your meeting to take much longer and lose focus. Make sure there’s a clear agenda for the meeting with the topics being covered clearly displayed on a screen. When someone goes on and on about something and loses focus, you can call the attention back to the topic at hand.

The quiet one
On the other hand, some people have great ideas but never voice them. This is not desirable if you want to make sure all attendees are equally engaged. So, how can you help these participants with speaking up?

Here are some ideas:

• Give people five minutes to write down their ideas or thoughts in a silent brainstorm before opening the general discussion.
• Shyer people may not feel comfortable speaking up in larger groups, so you can create smaller groups to let people discuss.
• Another approach may be to talk to a quiet individual in private and discuss the importance of everyone’s ideas. Tell them you’d like to hear what they think and encourage that person to explain their (interesting) idea at the next meeting.
The multitasker
Did you know that 73% of the average meeting-goer has brought other work to a meeting at least once? These people may be called attendees, but they are not participants. They are not engaged in the meeting. How can you solve this? First, tell attendees to leave all possible distractions at their desk and tell them to only bring things that they really need. Second, limit the meeting to a reasonable length so people don’t feel like they’re losing time they want to be spending on something else. A good rule of thumb is that an hour is a maximum that people can really stay focused and listen clearly. Have a break after an hour and continue or make sure your meetings never exceed an hour. Third, make sure the group is no bigger than 10 people. This way participants will less likely be distracted and stay engaged during a discussion.

The dominator
Also known as the Know-it-all. This person may think he’s in a meeting of one, and everyone else is his audience. When you feel like someone is taking over the meeting by talking all the time, make sure you start asking questions to other people in particular. Start asking questions like “How do the rest of you feel about that idea?” or “Okay, that’s a good point, may we move on to someone else?” The point is to help other people participate.

The negative one
When you keep hearing “this will never work” from the same person, you know you’ve got a Negative Nancy in your meeting. What to do? Sometimes it’s enough to make people aware of their behavior. The best way to handle this is by asking yourself if this person has a valid point. If not, confront them by giving positive feedback. You can talk to this person in private and ask them to think about their answer first. Maybe they’ve never realized that they’re being negative most of the time.

It can be difficult keeping a meeting on track with different personalities. Start with structuring your meeting with an agenda and a time limit. This will give people little room for dueling personalities. When you’re facilitating a meeting it’s important to pay attention to who’s talking and that you can recognize things that are going wrong.

Having a good leader during your meeting is key! A leader should make sure everyone is engaged and that both extroverted and introverted feel comfortable saying the things they want, and need, to say.

Arvind Yadav | Backend developer at GAIKU
Meetings are often held to come to a decision. However, group decision-making is not very easy. Things like incomplete information and narrow perspectives can make your decision-making a challenge. Also, groups often make ineffective decisions because they either fail to list alternative solutions or do a poor job of evaluating and selecting solutions.

Before we discuss a few group decision-making strategies, let’s make clear that a good leader is key. Make sure you know who is leading a specific project or task and has the final responsibility.

There are several things the leader can do to help a group make decisions more efficiently:

- Clarify the goal of the meeting. Create expectations with actionable agenda points that clearly explain what is expected.
- When people seem totally blocked and unable to come to a decision, go back to the initial question or purpose and phrase it in other words.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a group decision-making technique designed to increase the range of ideas and solutions available for the group to explore. Brainstorming groups meet specifically to generate as many ideas as possible. This technique doesn’t provide a solution or decision itself. Instead, it produces a list of ideas that will later be considered, discussed, and evaluated when it is time to reach a final decision.

The ground rules of brainstorming

Don’t judge
Whether an idea is good or bad doesn’t matter. Judging and criticizing isn’t good for the mood and creative flow. People shouldn’t feel afraid to speak up. Empower your co-workers.

Assign a moderator
Although the entire point of a brainstorm involves a free flow of ideas, you can quickly get off track. Choose a moderator who knows the project and can drive conversations toward original thought and successful teamwork.

Change physical environment
Switching environments can influence the way your brain works and what kind of ideas come to mind. Stimulate your brain by brainstorming outside in another room.

Independently prepare
Give everyone about ten minutes to come up with their own ideas before you discuss them together. This way you’ll make sure you won’t get stuck with common suggestions but you’ll probably have more diverse ideas to begin with.

Identify goals
You don’t want to waste time endlessly writing down ideas. Clearly state the goal of the brainstorming session so that everyone knows what is expected and will stay focused. For example: “Identify ten possible ways to get more employee happiness.”

Set a time limit
By setting a time limit, you know that the agreed upon goals must be met by a certain time. This will encourage you to stay on track and come up with as many ideas as possible within the timeframe.

Avoid groupthink
Groupthink occurs when people in groups seek to eliminate conflict entirely. Positive reinforcement and agreements are great, but shouldn’t stand in the way of critical thinking, creativity, and quality.

Write everything down
Every idea, good or bad, should be briefly put down on paper or a whiteboard because you won’t remember everything. You don’t want to end up scratching your head because you forgot all those great ideas.

Work together
Don’t get attached to your own ideas. Everyone will have good and bad ideas but in the end it’s all about the best ideas that solve the problem. So, help develop other people’s ideas too.

The ground rules of brainstorming

Identify goals
You don’t want to waste time endlessly writing down ideas. Clearly state the goal of the brainstorming session so that everyone knows what is expected and will stay focused. For example: “Identify ten possible ways to get more employee happiness.”

Set a time limit
By setting a time limit, you know that the agreed upon goals must be met by a certain time. This will encourage you to stay on track and come up with as many ideas as possible within the timeframe.

Avoid groupthink
Groupthink occurs when people in groups seek to eliminate conflict entirely. Positive reinforcement and agreements are great, but shouldn’t stand in the way of critical thinking, creativity, and quality.

Write everything down
Every idea, good or bad, should be briefly put down on paper or a whiteboard because you won’t remember everything. You don’t want to end up scratching your head because you forgot all those great ideas.

Work together
Don’t get attached to your own ideas. Everyone will have good and bad ideas but in the end it’s all about the best ideas that solve the problem. So, help develop other people’s ideas too.
Polling can help determine how people are feeling about a certain issue without requiring anyone to commit him or herself to anything. Managers or leaders who are going to make the decision might do this by asking a question like, "If we were to decide now, how many of you would favor option one?" You can simply raise your hands, or not. It gives an idea of what people think about a certain topic and this information allows for a better decision to be made.

Nominal Group Technique

This technique is similar to brainstorming except that it’s more structured.

The nominal group technique involves the following steps:

- Write down ideas in private. After the problem at hand is defined and understood, members silently generate their ideas in writing without discussion with each other.
- Share ideas. Take turns reporting your ideas to the group, one at a time, while a facilitator writes them on a flipchart or whiteboard. Again, no group discussion occurs. This listing continues until each member has no more ideas to share.
- Discuss ideas. The next step is discussing all ideas. The purpose of this discussion is to clarify, criticize, or defend the stated ideas.
- Vote on ideas. Each person privately and anonymously prioritizes the ideas according to a rank-ordering system.
- Calculate the group decision. The final decision is calculated mathematically, based on the votes of the previous step.

Example outcome of nominal group technique.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Option A</th>
<th>Option B</th>
<th>Option C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercedes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I've had a lot of good experiences with brainstorming sessions, but only because a clear goal was stated before the session. Also, one person should be in charge of leading the brainstorm session to make sure everyone stays focused. Otherwise you can’t make any sense of the chaos.

Jorick Serto | Creative strategy manager at GAiKU

Dialectical inquiry

If it’s a yes/no decision, you could use this technique. It works as follows. There are two groups, one favoring yes, and one favoring no. The first group will list all the pros, and the second group will list all the cons. Then everyone will discuss their findings and reasons. This technique ensures that decision-makers consider all alternatives and opposing views in decision-making and it helps managers to make an informed decision. Make sure that at the end there is one person making the decision and that everyone will have to abide by that. This way you avoid tension and encourage acceptance at the end.

In meetings, making decisions is an everyday occurrence, and it can be a challenge when you’re dealing with different people and opinions. There are a lot of ways that will make it easier to make group decisions. We’ve discussed brainstorming, polling, nominal group technique, and dialectical inquiry. Each of them could be useful in different situations. Try them, and find out which one works best for you.
How to engage and keep energy high?

One big problem in meetings is that attendees are not engaged and don’t deliver any useful input. Meetings can be strenuous at times and it’s hard to keep your team engaged. Every business has a certain meeting culture and that’s often hard to change. But there are different methods that can be used to make sure you get more input or discussion in your meeting.

We’ve listed some easy suggestions to help you keep everyone (including yourself) energized and engaged while leading a meeting.

### CHAPTER 16

#### Get greater involvement
To get greater involvement in decisions, consider listing all ideas and giving participants several votes to cast. In the end, the group’s preferred priorities are clear.

#### Make sure you encourage discussion items.
People tend to avoid tension or disagreements in a meeting. But some healthy discussions between colleagues can create engagement and get the issue out completely. Have others contribute to the meeting with their own agenda points. Meetings can quickly turn into a lecture instead of a discussion. Give attendees the opportunity to contribute to the meeting agenda and meeting goals, so those who contribute ideas or agenda points are more likely to participate.

#### Remove the chairs and stand up.
Let people stand up once in a while. OK, so don’t throw away your chairs, but also don’t let people come in and sit down until the bitter end of the meeting. Attendees who stand up have higher levels of engagement and even become more creative in brainstorming.

#### Make the meeting content visual.
Use visual elements in your meetings, like sticky notes, graphics, and idea mapping. Visual tools will be more interesting to the attendees and this will help them to be more energized and engaged.

#### Create smaller groups for discussion.
The more people get the chance to talk, the more engaged they become. So, design activities in the meeting that invite people to form smaller groups for discussion. Smaller groups also allow shyer team members to feel more comfortable contributing.

#### Give team members a responsible role.
Give attendees a responsible part in the meeting. For example, one person can be responsible for leading a discussion and another can be responsible for taking notes. This will definitely increase participation and ensures that every team member has an interest in the work. Also, it gives attendees an opportunity to grow their courage and confidence.

#### Throw in some games.
Energize your meetings by throwing in some games. This will make the meeting more fun and lighten the mood. For example, setting people at ease by using an ice-breaker at the start of the meeting is a great way to get everyone relaxed. Participants will feel more comfortable with speaking up. Take a look at the appendix for a few examples of energizers that you could do with your team.
Once the meeting is over, there are two things to do: write clear and concise meeting minutes and follow up on the commitments made. Why? Because a meeting is not done when everyone walks out of the room. So many ideas get lost because people walk away and leave it at that. Meeting minutes are essential to ensure that work gets done.

**Meeting minutes**

Pull together all your notes and recordings. Make sure your meeting minutes are complete by adding additional notes to the minutes as soon after the meeting as possible, while everything is fresh in your mind. The meeting minutes must be easy to understand but still be as short as possible with only useful information included (one of the biggest pitfalls in writing meeting minutes). You're in a meeting to make decisions and discuss action points, so those have to be clear for everyone.

*Like you read in chapter 12, meeting minutes include the following:*
- Date, time and location of the meeting
- The purpose of the meeting
- Names of attendees and those who were unable to attend
- Agenda items
- Decisions that were made
- Actions points
- Next meeting
Follow up
So, the agenda items, announcements and decisions are all stated in the meeting minutes. One of the most important things in your meeting minutes are the action points. These follow-up items make a meeting successful.

What do clear action points look like?
• What needs to be done? Be as clear as possible. Instead of saying “powerpoint presentation”, include a verb “create powerpoint presentation about new Facebook campaign”. Now that person knows exactly what to do.
• Who needs to do it? Always put a name next to an action point. Someone must be responsible or else no one is going to do it.
• What’s the deadline? Deadlines motivate people to get things done!

If everything is clear, it’s time to distribute or share the meeting minutes through an online tool. Also, file all meeting minutes for future reference. Some organizations may store them online and also back up on an external hard drive. And for other companies, you may need to print and store hard copies as well. Whatever works best for your company, it’s important to store them well for future reference.

Check in on follow-ups
Often managers think that people are self-starters and will do what they say they will do. But let’s be honest: even talented and committed people don’t always do what they say they will do. So, after the meeting, check in at appropriate intervals to ensure the commitments will be kept as promised or else re-evaluated. If you don’t, the whole meeting could have been a waste of time and you end up discussing the same things over and over again.
When's your meeting been successful?

Meetings are a necessary part of working in any group - they give us the chance to share information, to reach decisions, and to get things done. But meetings have another important function, which is often forgotten about - group maintenance. A good meeting not only gets work done but also involves, supports, and empowers the participants, creating a high level of energy and enthusiasm. A sense of community and connection to fellow group members is the basis for successful group work and social change.

So, when is a meeting successful?

It all depends on the objective and type of meeting. We can call a meeting successful when you stick to the meeting agenda points and don’t get stuck on things too long. When goals are achieved, participants were involved, supported and empowered, and also a high level of energy, enthusiasm, and engagement was created. A successful meeting will make you feel like you’ve accomplished something.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Productivity</th>
<th>Efficiency</th>
<th>Energy / engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documents are sent on time to all participants to prepare well before the meeting.</td>
<td>The right people are invited to the meeting.</td>
<td>Everyone has a chance to talk in the meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions in the meeting are finalized with a decision and do not get passed on to the next meeting.</td>
<td>The meeting starts on time and doesn’t exceed the designated time.</td>
<td>You look forward to the meeting and you feel energetic afterwards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The goal of the agenda items are crystal clear: either for information purposes, as discussion input, or for decision making</td>
<td>The meeting is not disturbed by background noises.</td>
<td>The chairperson makes sure everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the discussion and feels comfortable doing it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The decisions and follow-ups are in the minutes and logged.</td>
<td>Multitasking is not done during the meeting.</td>
<td>The discussions are short, to the point and concise, so everyone stays focused.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If there’s nothing to discuss, the meeting doesn’t take place.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

That's all folks!

We have spoken about many things in this book and we hope that they'll be of use for you. Meetings are a very important part of our (business) lives and hopefully this book has helped make that clear. The book has given you an introduction to meetings and how you can improve the steps you take before, during and after a meeting. Please use it as a guide for different steps that you need to consider during the process or when you’re facing certain meeting problems.

About GAIKU

How can GAIKU help? GAIKU is a powerful meeting web app. A lot of things that we discussed in this book are things that are implemented in GAIKU, like meeting minutes, action points, recurring meetings and creating a meeting rhythm, meeting templates for Scrum, time tracking, and much more.

GAIKU was founded in October 2016 after years of meeting experience and understanding the pain that comes with meetings. At GAIKU we believe that the meeting process can be so much more efficient and we want to help other companies achieve that as well.

Mission:

To make one million meetings a day more engaging and effective by 2020

Get GAIKU and start improving your meetings! Go to www.gaiku.io to sign up.
Appendix
Agenda template

What to prepare beforehand:

- Date, time, and location of the meeting
- The purpose and expected outcome of the meeting
- Attendees
- Agenda items. Create an outline (or template) based on the agenda. This will make it easy for you to simply write down notes and decisions under each agenda point as you go along
- An estimated time frame for each agenda item
- The person responsible for each agenda item. This could be the one that proposed the item or the one with the most information on the subject
- As you go along the agenda during the meeting, write down all the important decisions that were made and who it is assigned to
- Actions that need to be done, the deadline of this action item and who it is assigned to
- The date of a follow-up meeting and the goal of that meeting

Overview meeting types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Keys to Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>Share daily schedules and activities.</td>
<td>- Don’t sit down&lt;br&gt;- Keep it administrative&lt;br&gt;- Never cancel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>45-90 minutes</td>
<td>Tactical meeting every week or every two weeks. Review weekly activities and metrics, and resolve tactical obstacles and issues.</td>
<td>- Keep the agenda general so there’s room for discussion and additional items&lt;br&gt;- Postpone strategic discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>2-4 hours</td>
<td>Strategic meeting each month. Discuss, analyze, brainstorm, and decide upon critical issues affecting long-term success.</td>
<td>- Limit to one or two topics&lt;br&gt;- Prepare and do research&lt;br&gt;- Engage in good conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarterly</td>
<td>1-2 days</td>
<td>Review strategy, industry trends, competitive landscape, key personnel, team development.</td>
<td>- Get out of office&lt;br&gt;- Focus on work&lt;br&gt;- Limit social activities&lt;br&gt;- Don’t over structure or over burden the schedule</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to start the sprint planning? At GAIKU we make sure we have a clear method with clear roles during the sprint. The planning starts with an estimation where the developers put in all the raw information related to the sprint items. They define the scope based on the amount of items for that sprint. The real planning is done by defining the priorities for that sprint which is a product owner’s task.

At the end of this process you’ll have a clearly defined sprint goal that not only includes items from the backlog but also a set of features. This way you’ll get organic growth and an engaged team that works towards the same goal.

At the end of every sprint, there will be a sprint review, which the development team, the scrum master, the product owner, and the stakeholders will attend. The team gives a demo of the product and will determine what is finished and what not. This feedback is used to update the product backlog and results in an updated backlog that helps to define the next sprint.

The sprint retrospective is the last part and aims to improve processes and collaboration. The scrum master and development team will inspect the last sprint and discuss possible improvements during this retrospective.

Image 1.0 will give you an overview of the scrum framework.

### Scrum

If you work in technology, or spend time with software developers, you’ve probably heard of Scrum. Scrum got defined in 1986 by Hirota Takeuchi and Ikujiro Nonaka when they published an article in the *Harvard Business Review*. They studied manufacturers that were releasing much faster than their competitors and they found out that they used overlapping development phases with a unique rhythm that tackles problems that arise earlier throughout the process than other project management styles. This aligns the expectations of the client / manager and the team as well so less problems come up because of this.

Scrum does exactly this. Manage expectations and workflow by evaluating the work that’s been done in short periods of time. It makes you work more efficient as a team and communicate more accurate towards other parties.

### Scrum workflow

The scrum team has a certain amount of time, a sprint, to complete the work that’s planned. Sprint length is fixed throughout a project, common are durations between 1 and 4 weeks.

A scrum team usually works with a scrum master, product owner and a development team:

1. **The product owner** is responsible for maximizing the value of the product and the work of the development team. The product owner creates a prioritized wish list for the product called a product backlog and is the sole person responsible for managing the product backlog.
2. **The scrum master** is responsible for making sure that Scrum is understood and helps the product owner managing the product backlog. He is the one taking away any impediments and the one who coaches the development team to be as much self steering as possible.
3. **The development team** includes the people who do the work of delivering a potentially releasable product at the end of each sprint. The team usually consists of three to nine developers and organizes and manages its own work.

During sprint planning, the team pulls a small chunk from the top of the product backlog or a sprint backlog and decides how to implement those pieces.

### Meeting rhythms

**APPENDIX 3**
Image 1.0: The scrum framework
Meeting rhythms

Kanban

Just like Scrum, Kanban is a popular framework used by software teams. Scrum and Kanban have some similar concepts but are still very different because of the meeting rhythm and flow. Kanban applies a constant delivery flow and doesn’t work with sprints. This way you give and receive constant feedback and updates about the work.

Toyota started working like this in the late 1940s to optimize their engineering process which was based on the same model supermarkets were using to stock their shelves. They wanted to optimize the flow between the factory and the consumer, and to stock just enough products to meet the market’s demand.

At Toyota they started to communicate the capacity levels in real-time on the factory floor. They would do this by passing a card (named Kanban) between departments and teams. When a case of materials was emptied, a card was passed to the warehouse describing what they needed exactly to refill it. The warehouse would send a new case of this material and in turn send their own Kanban to the supplier. This process, Just In Time (JIT), is still a popular system with the same foundation.

Today agile software teams also reach these JIT principles by matching the amount of work in progress to the team’s capacity. By working with a Kanban board like the one above, the team has a more flexible planning, a faster output, clearer focus, and transparency throughout the entire cycle.

The Kanban board is the most important tool within Kanban. It visualizes work and optimizes the flow of the work amongst the team. This could either be digital or on paper in the office. A basic Kanban board has a three-step workflow: To do, in progress, and done. This can completely be altered around the team and their way of working. Below these three steps (or more) you find the Kanban cards. On each card there’s a description of the job being done of the item, the estimated time it’ll take, and the one who is responsible. It could even contain screenshots and other technical details relevant to the item. The advantage of having cards for each task/step is to visualize the workflow and make it comprehensible for all team members. This allows every team member to see the state of every work item and the project overall.

Kanban has seven official cyclical meetings. Some don’t have to be separate and can be combined into one meeting. Whatever works best in your team and your rhythm. Startups like Optimize-ly and bigger companies like Siemens have exchanged their scrum for Kanban in order to be more on top of their workflow. Check Kanban’s website for more information on these specific meetings or this case study on how to implement Kanban and how they improved their way of working.

1. Standup. A daily meeting with the whole team where everyone shares his tasks for the next 24 hours.
2. Replenishment meeting. In this meeting you decide which tasks need to be done and prioritize incoming work.
3. Operations review. This is a collaboration review of the various teams and divisions by high-level employees.
4. Delivery planning meeting. This aims to plan the delivery of certain items and during this meeting the team determines which items to deliver.
5. Service delivery review. In this review you check if you are delivering according to customer expectations.
6. Risk review. This review looks at problems that put the delivery capability at risk.
7. Strategy review. During this review you complete a high-level review of the market you’re in. Is this the business you want to be in? Do you have the right capacities?

Image 2.0 will give you an overview of the meeting flow of kanban.

Image 3.0 gives you an overview of the differences between Scrum and Kanban.
Scrum Kanban

Cadence
- Regular fixed length sprints (i.e., 2 weeks)

Continuous flow

Release methodology
- At the end of each sprint if approved by the product owner

Continuous delivery or at team’s discretion

Roles
- Product owner, scrum master, development team

No existing roles. Some teams enlist the help of an agile coach.

Key metrics
- Velocity

Cycle time

Change philosophy
- Teams should strive to not make changes to the sprint forecast during the sprint. Doing so compromises learnings around estimation.

Change can happen at any time

Image 2.0: The meeting flow of kanban

Image 3.0: https://www.atlassian.com/agile/kanban
Meeting rhythms

Rockefeller Habits
The Rockefeller Habits, a book written by Verne Harnish (aka the Growth Guy), gives guidelines on how to manage growth in your company. He based these guidelines on the principles of John D. Rockefeller and rapid-growing startups. The Rockefeller Habits also follows the meeting types we discussed in chapter 5 but slightly different.

The advantages of implementing Rockefeller Habits is firstly the fixed nature of the rhythm. This leads to predictability and never time-exceeding meetings. Secondly, the frequency of all meetings is fixed. With this, people always know what they can expect and that ensures a certain peace of mind and focus.

There are two different meetings: to reflect, learn, and set goals (yearly and quarterly meetings), and to synchronize (monthly, weekly and daily meetings). Facilitators must distinguish clearly the differences between these two and be strict regarding the content of each meeting.

When it comes to a daily huddle according to the Rockefeller Habits, there is a difference compared to scrum. You don’t look back to what you’ve done, but focus only on what you are going to do that day. Tips for a functioning daily huddle: do it standing for more energy, stick to a fixed order of persons in the team, never cancel the huddle, and plan it at an interesting time e.g., 8:48 a.m. or 9:09 a.m.

The Rockefeller Habits is like looking at a glass jar where you first put in the bigger stones. Then you fill it with marbles, which fit right between all the empty spaces of the bigger stones and the marbles stand for the monthly meetings. Lastly you put in sand, which fits smoothly between all the other empty gaps that the marbles weren’t able to fill. Were you to do the other way around, you’d get stuck after you pour in the sand first. A company that follows the Rockefeller Habits looks at the most complicated things first (i.e. yearly and quarterly goals). When you have defined that part first it’s easier to give guidance on a day-to-day level (i.e. monthly and weekly goals) and there is accountability with clear goals during the whole process.

Holacracy
Imagine a company without job titles, not even the CEO. Quite confusing, don't you think? Implementing holacracy in your company means no managers and no hierarchy. There is a horizontal workflow with no authority for anyone to tell others what to do.

Brian Robertson is the one that came up with its framework. He struggled with the way people were working in his company. So many intelligent, bright people working there and only so few had the authority to make decisions. Robertson believed this was a waste of good ideas. So, he set up Holacracy in 2004 to enable these talented people and get rid of the management levels as a new social technology.

Holacracy is basically focused on organizing the work and not the people. Not reporting to anyone is very strange for human beings and it’s something to get used to. Where they do this very well, is at Springest, an online platform for different courses and training institutes. They have incorporated Holacracy completely in their organization over the last six years.

Jonathan Davies from Springest, explained us how important it is to alter Holacracy to your company. They’ve integrated a project management tool to keep track of all their projects and follow-ups.

Holacracy does give you certain guidelines but it’s mostly an open book that is all about trust and transparency. This transparency in numbers and guidelines gives you the right insights to make decisions based on that. This was very clear during a meeting we attended, how fast they are with making decisions, and how straight-to-the-point discussions are.

On the next page you can find the basic principles of holacracy.

The overview gives you insight into the differences. One of the most important advantages of Holacracy is an agile way of working, more than a traditional process, that will help to iterate quickly. That also means that roles that are assigned to specific people can change any time. Roles are part of a circle, synonym for department / team in holacracy.

Holacracy has only two kinds of meetings in their handbook:
- Tactical meetings which are held every week. These are operational meetings between circle members. It is held to take away obstacles, to share, and to discuss issues. The formal output of a tactical meeting should be actions and to sync up on all the work of the circle.
- Governance meetings which are held every month. The focus of these meetings is to modify the team and the roles within the circle.
### In Traditional companies

- **Job descriptions**
  - Each person has exactly one job. Job descriptions are imprecise, rarely updated, and often irrelevant.
- **Delegated Authority**
  - Managers loosely delegate authority. Ultimately, their decision always trumps others.
- **Big Re-Orgs**
  - The org structure is rarely revisited, mandated from the top.
- **Office Politics**
  - Implicit rules slow down change and favor people “in the know”.

### With Holacracy

- **Roles**
  - Roles are defined around the work, not people, and are updated regularly. People fill several roles.
- **Distributed Authority**
  - Authority is truly distributed to teams and roles. Decisions are made locally.
- **Rapid Iterations**
  - The org structure is regularly updated via small iterations. Every team self-organizes.
- **Transparent Rules**
  - Everyone is bound by the same rules, CEO included. Rules are visible to all.

[Image](https://www.holacracy.org/how-it-works/)
Energizers

There are a lot of different energizers or games you can do to keep energy high. Below are 3 examples of energizers. Maybe it’s something getting used to but we recommend you give it a try!

The Shouting Game
This simple energizer is played in a circle. Participants repeatedly choose one other person to look at, hoping that person won’t be looking back at them. Whenever eye contact is made between two participants, both must shout wildly and lunge backward. They are then eliminated. The game generates laughter and boosts energy in a group.

Step 1:
The group stands shoulder to shoulder in a circle. Everyone must be able to see the eyes of everyone else. You will give two sets of instructions: “heads down” and “heads up.” When you say “heads down,” everyone looks at their feet.

Step 2:
When you say “heads up,” everyone looks up and instantly looks straight at the eyes of one other person in the circle.

There are two possible consequences: a person looks up at someone who is looking at someone else, in this case nothing happens. However, when a person looks up at someone who is looking right back at them, they must both point in a very exaggerated manner at each other and let out a loud SCREAM OR YELL. Those now have to stand outside of the circle to observe. Once the “screamers” have left the circle, the circle closes in and you repeat the process until there are only two people left. The final two have to do it one more time, even though the outcome is a foregone conclusion.

Find your pair
"Find your pair" is about animal pairs and a great energizer to get everyone moving and laughing. We recommend being cautious about culture differences and making sure the participants are already used to energizers.

Step 1.
Count the number of participants. An even number is required, so decide to include yourself or not. Divide the number for participants by two to decide how many animals will exist (say 16 participants, so there will exist 8 different animals). For each animal, write its name on two post its. Distribute the post it to the participants. They can’t show it to anyone.

Step 2.
Ask everyone to move around the room while they cover their eyes with their hands. Now asks them to make their animal noise and try to find their pair. When everyone has found their pair, the game is over and hopefully everyone has had a good laugh and feels energized.

Collaborative face drawing
The collaborative face drawing is a fun interactive activity that energizes and also helps with name memorization.

1. Give each participant a A4 paper and a pen and ask them to write their name on the bottom of the paper.
2. Now instruct everyone to walk around the room until you say the word stop.
3. Each person should pair up with someone near by and exchange papers.
4. Ask everyone to start drawing the person until you say the word stop (10 - 15 seconds).
5. Now they exchange papers again, so everyone has the paper with their own name on it, and start walking again.
6. Repeat these steps until you believe everyone’s portrait is finished.