

## MAKING MEETINGS FUN

“There are three things which are real: God, human folly, and laughter. The first and second are beyond our comprehension, so we must do what we can with the third.” – John F. Kennedy

Do the words “meeting” and “fun” sound wrong to you when used in the same sentence? Many people believe that meetings are inherently boring and come to expect that from them. They walk in, sit in their regular seat and prepare themselves for an hour of “same old, same old.” Others experience fun meetings but spend so much time joking around that they rarely accomplish anything. Although it may not seem possible, you can create meetings that are fun, effective and build group cohesion all at the same time! All it requires is a bit of creativity and a willingness to crack a smile now and then. Brainstorm with other group leaders on ways to improve your meetings and make them more enjoyable. You can also use the following ideas as a guide:

- Open each meeting with a joke, story, inspirational quote or startling statistic.
- Use props, music, skits, stories or tricks to obtain the interest of your members.
- Wear a costume that represents your group’s theme or the meeting’s objective.
- Ask each member to wear a hat, a certain color shirt, or some other item to promote a team atmosphere.
- Have food. Ask a different member at each meeting to bring a snack for the next meeting. Or have a snack potluck.
- Rather than memos or emails to announce an upcoming meeting, make party invitations or tickets for admission.
- Make the meeting room an uplifting place with pictures, balloons or other decorations.
- Do anything that gets your group up and moving around!
- Send a puzzle piece to each member; then have them bring the pieces to the meeting to put together. Have the puzzle relate to the meeting specifically.
- Get people involved by having them tell stories, experiences or make up analogies to clarify points.
- Start the meeting by giving the group 2-3 minutes to ask the person on their right something unusual or exciting that happened to them that week, then let them introduce each other to the rest of the group using that information.
- At the close of the meeting, go around the room and have each person state something they learned in the meeting, give appreciation to another member, commit to a specific task or give a one-word summary of the meeting or group.
- Use pictures, slides or comic strips to illustrate points.
- Take a moment to stand up, stretch, clap or move around during the meeting to keep everyone alert and attentive.
- Use a lot of color whenever possible (in memos, agendas, notes, posters).
- Exaggerate everything. Use big gestures, large print, anything to attract (and keep!) their attention.
- Stressful meeting? Have everyone sing the chorus of their favorite song – all at the same time – for ten seconds.

- Bring a beach ball to the meeting. Rather than just going around in a circle asking people for updates, new business and so forth, toss the ball to someone. Have each person toss it to someone else until everyone has had a chance to express their news.
- Form a circle and have everyone give the person to their right a shoulder rub. Go two minutes, switch people and go another two minutes.
- Write a sentence on a piece of paper to be the first line of your “poem;” something regarding your group, meeting or next event. Fold the paper so the only thing that shows is the last word of your sentence. The next person writes line #2 of the poem, rhyming with the first line. Keep passing the paper and adding to the poem until it’s gone all the way around the room, then read it aloud to the group.
- For some variety, have a different person run the meeting each week. Or designate a different person each week to be the “Fun Master” and bring a fun idea or game to the next meeting.
- Laugh and smile throughout the meeting.
- If everyone is focusing on “downers” – a program where no one showed up or a dance where the band was horrible – have everyone write their “bad news” on a piece of paper. When everyone has completed this, throw them all into a garbage can. Tell everyone their past problems or failures are now gone (trashed, eliminated) – and it’s time to focus on the future.
- Use icebreakers and team-builders. They’re usually met with some resistance but result in high energy and laughter.
- Be energetic. Move around.
- Choose a “word of the meeting” - every time someone says that word in the normal flow of conversation, everyone has to move one seat to the right.
- Start off the meeting with a scene from a movie, a segment from an upbeat song, a funny Top 10 List that you taped from David Letterman the night before. If you do something unusual at each meeting, people will truly look forward to your meetings to see what you’ll do next!
- Create a game show atmosphere. Rather than just stating the items on your agenda, turn them into a round of Jeopardy. Clue: “The upcoming craft fair we are sponsoring.” Answer: “What is ‘new business’?”
- Be creative! There are so many other ways to lighten up a meeting!

## Reference:

Anderson, K. (1993). *The Busy Managers’ Guide to Successful Meetings*. NJ: National Press Publications.

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