

Prevent Conflict Before the Meeting

With Preparation, Clear Goals, Roles, and Rules

Written by Myriam Laberge, January 2011

Here's some really good news: *"Almost every meeting conflict can be prevented by good meeting preparation, clarity about roles, responsibilities, ground rules, expected outcomes, and decision-making methods." -- Facilitator's Fieldbook.*

Everyone hates wasting time in meetings. Whether you are facilitating the meeting, attending as a participant, or making arrangements for a client, ensure you are clear about and agree to the OARRS. Doing so will go a long way toward creating Great Meetings!

- **Outcomes:** Why are we meeting? What is our purpose as a group? What meeting goals and objectives are we targeting? In your meeting invitation, provide a clear statement of the desired outcomes to be achieved, both task and experiential.
- **Agenda:** What topics will we address? Where, when and how? The agenda acts as the common roadmap for how to get to the desired outcomes. Ensure your meeting invitation describes the agreed upon topics, activities, logistics, and timeframes.
- **Roles:** What will be expected of me during the meeting? Several roles greatly help to make the meeting run smoothly and effectively, starting with that of the neutral facilitator and supported by those of timekeeper, scribe, and reporter.
- **Rules:** How will we work together? The ground rules/session norms are agreements for working together during the meeting. Articulating and posting the meeting agreements will go a long way to ensure respectful and positive interactions.
- **Scope:** What are empowered to do – provide input, generate solutions, and decide? What will happen with our contributions? Are we authorized to make decisions? What is within or outside of our decision-making authority?