

8 IDEAS TO ADD VARIETY TO MEETINGS

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<http://www.elimina.com/insights/8-variety.htm>

Meetings often sound, look and feel the same. Everyone sits in the same chair, drinks the same coffee, and says the same thing every time. Predictability and monotony are the enemies of creativity. Adding variety to meetings can make them more interesting and enticing to attend. It can also make it natural to explore new ideas "outside the box". Here are eight ideas to add variety to your meetings:

1. Have different people plan and chair different meetings. This is good not only for variety, but it also forces more members to develop leadership skills. It's great for succession planning.
2. Hold meetings at different locations each time. For a multi-facility organization, hold some meetings away from head office and try field locations. You'll get to know the "grassroots" better. You can even hold some meetings out in the sun (or rain), standing up...
3. Change room setup and get people to sit in different places every time. This will break down barriers and give members chances to get to know people they haven't met or worked with.
4. Change the normal agenda sequence and see if it works. One organization even tried a "backwards" meeting, starting with the adjournment, and ending with the approval of minutes.
5. When it comes to complex or controversial issues, try unusual discussion activities, to get people thinking "outside the box". For example, get people to articulate the merits of views they oppose. Their opponents will then give them feedback on how well they listened.
6. Take time to celebrate successes and recognize special efforts. Consider symbolic rewards for productive participation, like "the velvet glove award" for diplomacy skills, or the "speedy Gonzales award" for giving the most substantial content in the least amount of time.
7. Have a few light-hearted stories (short and appropriate), and tell one of them when the group has reached a major milestone. This will break the continuity and add levity to the meeting.
8. Have unexpected refreshments and meals, to surprise everyone and keep them interested. How about potluck, or taking turns providing desserts, or trying unusual international cuisine? (but be mindful of your members' culinary pet peeves)