

## Making the agenda

All well-structured meetings should have an agenda, which is usually prepared by the chairperson. Depending on the type of meeting, agendas can be formal or informal, but all should start by stating the date, time and location of the meeting.

It is useful to include the name of the person who will be presenting a specific agenda item. You may also find it helpful to include a note of the time allocated to each point. Some more detailed agendas also state objectives for individual agenda items, for example: "Agree on product design".

Formal agendas differ from informal agendas in that they start with routine items, which always appear in a specific order. In addition, each point on the agenda is clearly numbered. Nowadays, agendas for all but the most important company meetings (board meetings, annual general meetings) tend to use an informal style.

### **Catchwords and abbreviations**

Note how both informal and formal agendas have a concise style and tend to be written in note-like form, often omitting articles before nouns and using abbreviations. For example, AOB stands for "any other business", which refers to topics that are not covered by other agenda items or which have arisen after the agenda was distributed.

## Examples



### **Example 1: informal agenda (eg customer or team meetings)**

Agenda for end-of-year sales meeting

5 January, 9.00–10.30 a.m., Meeting room 2A

- Presentation of last year's sales figures (Andreas) – 15 mins
- Forecasts and targets for the coming year (Sally) – 15 mins
- Analysis of last year's sales promotions (Peter) – 15 mins
- Proposals for and scheduling of promotions for the current year (all) – 45 mins

### **Example 2: formal agenda (eg board meetings)**

Agenda: Quarterly board meeting

10 April, 10.00–11.30 a.m., Board room suite

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the last meeting
3. Matters arising from the minutes
4. Presentation of first quarter results (CEO)
5. Departmental presentations (heads)
6. Motions
7. AOB

## Compiling the agenda

Besides giving the meeting structure, the purpose of the agenda is to ensure that the time available is only used for discussing the items listed. Some people hold that topics that are important enough to be discussed should be included as items on the agenda, keeping AOB to a minimum. This can be done by asking participants to submit items for inclusion on the agenda. Email is a practical means of doing this, especially when a large group of people is involved. If the agenda is long, or in the case of a formal meeting, you may wish to

circulate the draft agenda to participants as an email attachment, rather than including it in the body of an email.

## Examples



### **Example 1: asking for contributions to the agenda**

**Subject: agenda for end-of-year sales meeting, 5 January**

Dear all,

Thank you all for agreeing to attend the end-of-year sales meeting on 5 January, from 9.00–10.30 a.m. in meeting room 2A.

As usual, the items below will be included on the agenda. Please could you let me know by 20 December if you would like any further items to be added to the agenda. I will then circulate the finalised agenda before the Christmas break.

- Presentation of last year's sales figures (Andreas)
- Forecasts and targets for the coming year (Sally)
- Analysis of last year's sales promotions (Peter)
- Proposals for/scheduling of promotions for the current year (all)

Regards,

Simon

### **Example 2: circulating a draft agenda and asking for input**

**Subject: draft agenda for quarterly board meeting, 1 April**

Dear all,

Thank you for making time for the quarterly board meeting on 1 April, from 10.00–11.30 a.m. in the boardroom suite.

Please find attached a draft agenda for the meeting.

I would be grateful to receive any further submissions for the agenda by 25 March at the latest. Many thanks in advance.

Kind regards,

Simon Webber

## Submitting items for the agenda

If you wish to add an item to the agenda, make sure you submit it to the chair before the deadline for contributions. If this isn't possible – eg if an urgent issue has arisen after the deadline for submissions – let the chair know that you would like to include the item under "Any other business". Start your proposal by thanking the chair for the draft agenda and say why you think the item is relevant and should be included.

### Useful phrases

- I would like to propose the item "Potential overseas office" to follow item three, as this was discussed at the last managers' meeting and I think it is also relevant to the European sales team.
- I would like to insert the item "Introduction of monthly sales targets" after item two, as this may be the last opportunity to discuss this issue prior to the sales conference next month.
- I recently received important new information from the customer regarding product specifications. If it is not possible to add the item to the agenda at this late stage, I would like to propose including it under AOB.
- I recently came across some software that could be of interest to the team. Since the deadline for submissions to the agenda has passed, I would like to put this item forward for inclusion under AOB.

## Circulating the agenda

After you have asked the participants for their contributions to the agenda, it is important to circulate the finalised agenda to them in good time. Email is an expedient way of doing this, but for important external meetings you may choose to send the agenda out by post instead, particularly if you have to enclose other important background documents with the original. This is also a good opportunity to ask participants what technical equipment they require for the meeting and if they have any special dietary requirements.

### Example: circulating the agenda



ABC GmbH  
Altstr. 26  
56710 Altstadt  
Germany

Mr P Smith  
Development Manager  
EFG Co. Ltd  
123 New Road  
Newtown NEW 11T  
Great Britain

24 July 2010

#### **Agenda for project meeting of 25 August**

Dear Mr Smith

Thank you for your contribution to the agenda for the forthcoming project meeting. Please find enclosed a copy of the finalised agenda.

I also enclose a copy of the service agreement, signed by us, to be discussed under item four on the agenda.

I would be grateful if you would let me know by 10 August what technical facilities you will require for your presentation,

and also whether you have any special dietary requirements we should note when arranging refreshments and lunch.

We look forward to seeing you on 25 August. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require any further information.

Yours sincerely

Simone Roth

Project Manager

## Travel and weather tips

If you didn't send out travel directions and/or a map for reaching the meeting destination when you confirmed the meeting ("Confirming a meeting", p. 13), you have another opportunity to do so when circulating the agenda. If your visitors are travelling from countries with different climates, they may also appreciate some tips on the weather and appropriate clothing for the time of year. For example: "Please note that we are approaching the coldest time of year here in Scotland with frequent rainstorms and low temperatures. We recommend bringing warm and waterproof clothing for your visit."

## Useful vocabulary

chair (= chairperson): Vorsitzender, Leiter des Meetings

to allocate: zuweisen

motion: Antrag

to compile: zusammenstellen

to circulate: an alle Teilnehmer versenden

item: (Tagesordnungs-)Punkt

prior to: vor

extension of lease: Verlängerung des Pacht-/Mietvertrags