



## Having Effective Meetings #21: Template for a Project Meeting Agenda

by

**Ivan M. Rosenberg**  
Managing Partner  
InVista Associates, Inc.

### Introduction

Previous articles in the *Effective Meetings* series described an overall approach to the management of meetings<sup>1</sup> and distinguished three types of meetings<sup>2</sup>. This article provides an effective format for a Project Meeting Agenda.

The format contains components for almost every potentially important aspect of a project meeting. For a particular meeting, use only those elements that are useful.

An *Example Project Meeting Agenda* and a *Project Meeting Agenda Template* may be downloaded from the InVista Associates Library of Articles on Having Effective Meetings<sup>3</sup>. The examples below come from the Example Project Meeting Agenda.

### Agenda Structure

An agenda is divided into the following four components:

- *Agenda Header*: The portion that covers overall aspects of the meeting, such as Meeting Purpose and logistics.
- *Opening Agenda Items*: Three special agenda items that typically begin each project meeting: Open Meeting, Review of Due Promises, and Consent Calendar.
- *Remaining Agenda Item*: The format for each agenda item.
- *Agenda Trailer*: The portion that covers related material, such as the list of items that are still open but will not be considered at this meeting.

---

<sup>1</sup> See *Effective Meetings #16: A Structure for Effectively Managing Meetings*.

<sup>2</sup> See *Effective Meetings #17: Three Types of Meetings*.

<sup>3</sup> <https://invistaassociates.com/library-of-articles/>



## Agenda Header

The Agenda Header covers overall aspects of the meeting, such as Meeting Purpose and logistics. Here are possible components of the Agenda Header:

- *Meeting Title*: Name of the meeting, e.g., “Customer Service Team Meeting.”
- *Meeting Logistics*: Information as to the time and place of the meeting:
  - *Meeting Date*: It is often helpful to include the day of the week and the year.
  - *Meeting Start and End Time*: The end time is important for participants to know.
  - *Meeting Location*: Make sure the location is specified unambiguously, even for those familiar with the location.
  - *Other pertinent details*: Include any details that will help participants arrive on time, prepared, and comfortable. Examples: parking, meals, attire.
- *Agenda Revision Identifier*: Agendas often go through multiple revisions. Identify each version by date or number.
- *Organizational Context*:<sup>4</sup> This links the meeting to the ultimate purpose of the organization, particularly the Vision, which is its source of passion and energy.
  - *Organization Vision*
  - *Organization Mission*
- *Project Context*:<sup>5</sup> The commitment, intended results, and measurable results of the project with which this meeting is associated.
  - *Project Commitment*
  - *Project Intended Results* (Goals)
  - *Project Measurable Results* (Metrics)
- *Meeting Purpose*:<sup>6</sup> The purpose that is forwarded by the agenda.
  - *Meeting Commitment*
  - *Meeting Intended Results*
  - *Meeting Measurable Results*
- *Meeting Leader*:<sup>7</sup> The person or organization who called the meeting, who is associated with or represents the purpose of the meeting. This is typically the person who designed the agenda, and to whom content questions should be directed.

---

<sup>4</sup> See *Strategic Planning #3: The Role of Vision, Mission and Values*.

<sup>5</sup> See *Producing Results #2: Promises, Goals and Commitments* and *Producing Results #3: The Power of Commitment*.

<sup>6</sup> See *Effective Meetings #9: Creating the Meeting Purpose*.

<sup>7</sup> See *Effective Meetings #25: Meeting Roles* and *Effective Meetings #26: Meeting Leader Guidelines*.



- *Meeting Manager:*<sup>8</sup> The person accountable for fulfilling the meeting agenda. The person who manages the process of the meeting.
- *Meeting Recorder:*<sup>9</sup> The person accountable for capturing the results of the thinking and any decisions, actions, promises made during the meeting.
- *Participants*<sup>10</sup>
- *Logistics Contact:* Name, phone number, and email address for RSVPs and logistics questions concerning the meeting.

## Opening Agenda Items

Included in this portion are three special agenda items that typically begin every project meeting:

- *Open Meeting:*<sup>11</sup> Actions that bring participants present mentally and ready to begin the work of the meeting.
- *Review of Due Promises:*<sup>12</sup> Review of all promises due between the prior meeting and this one. The format of this agenda item is often a table with the following information for each due promise:
  - *The Promise Deliverable*
  - *The Promise Due Date*
  - *Who promised*
  - *Whether or not promise was kept*
- *Consent Calendar:*<sup>13</sup> Disposition of all Low Importance items to be handled at this meeting. The format is usually a table with the following information for each consent calendar item:
  - Title or content of agenda item.
  - Recommended decision/disposition.
  - Urgency: High or Low, sometimes including the required completion date.

---

<sup>8</sup> See *Effective Meetings #27: Meeting Manager Guidelines*.

<sup>9</sup> See *Effective Meetings #28: Meeting Recording Guidelines*.

<sup>10</sup> See *Effective Meetings #32: Meeting Participant Guidelines*

<sup>11</sup> See *Effective Meetings #22: Ways of Opening a Meeting*.

<sup>12</sup> See *Effective Meetings #23: Managing the Reporting of Due Promises*.

<sup>13</sup> See *Effective Meetings #20: Sequencing Agenda Items*.



## Remaining Agenda Items

The following components constitute a complete format for each agenda item.

- *Agenda Item Title*: A descriptive title for the agenda item.
- *Allotted Time*
  - *Elapsed Time*: The total time allocated for this item. This is useful when the agenda needs to be revised during the meeting. If the Elapsed Time is more than 30 minutes it may be useful to specify times for sub-items or the various process steps of the agenda item.
  - *Start and Stop Times*: These are useful for quickly seeing whether the agenda is on schedule and the time remaining for the current item. It also tells people who are needed only for particular agenda items when they should show up and when they can leave.
- *Agenda Item Intended Result(s)*: The measurable objective result(s) to be produced by the end of the allotted time of this agenda item. Defines what constitutes success for the item.
- *Associated Group Commitment*: The commitment that this agenda item forwards. Some of our clients' senior management groups with many requests for placement on their agendas use this as a criteria for suitability for their meeting agendas. An item must forward one or more of the established Group Commitments to be a legitimate meeting agenda item for the group.
- *Support for Position in the Agenda*:<sup>14</sup> This is usually based on the sequencing method chosen. For example, the Importance and Urgency of each item would be listed for sequencing based on this characteristic. Typically all agenda items outside the Consent Calendar would have a High Importance.
- *Process*: A description of the process<sup>15</sup>, including the decision-making method<sup>16</sup>, to be used in addressing this agenda item. For example, an agenda item intended to produce a decision might have the following process description:
  - *Presentation of Background Information*
  - *Create Success Criteria*
  - *Brainstorm*
  - *Analysis*
  - *Decision: using majority vote method*
  - *Determine Next Steps*

---

<sup>14</sup> See *Effective Meetings #20: Sequencing Agenda Items*.

<sup>15</sup> For groups using Frontier Associates' proprietary Conversation Management® techniques, this section lists the conversations to be employed, e.g., Conversation for Possibility.

<sup>16</sup> See *Effective Meetings #6: Selecting a Group Decision-Making Process*.



- *Agenda Item Presenter(s):*<sup>17</sup> Manages the content of the agenda item. Accountable (along with the Conversation Manager) for producing the agenda item intended results in the allotted time.
- *Agenda Item Conversation Manager:*<sup>18</sup> Manages the process of the agenda item. Accountable for producing the agenda item intended results in the allotted time.
- *Preparation:* A list of actions or results required to prepare for this agenda item.
- *Supporting Documentation:* A list of documents used in preparation and during the meeting, including, if applicable, where the material can be accessed, for example its URL.

## Agenda Trailer

Included in this portion is supporting and informational material, such as the list of items that are still open but will not be considered at this meeting.

The following items are typically filled in during the meeting and are reviewed during the “Close Meeting” agenda item.

- *Actions Taken at This Meeting:* This table, in which actions and promises made at this meeting are recorded, enables a quick review of promises and accomplishments at the end of the meeting.
- *Parking Lot:* This table, used to record ideas and topics that came up but were not addressed during the meeting, serves as a convenient format to review these items and decide on their disposition.
- *Agenda Items for Next Meeting:* The group lists in this table the agenda items they desire for the next meeting

The following items are typically filled in before the meeting and are used to determine agenda items for and schedule future meetings. They are also useful in helping individual participants prepare for meetings and as a record of their responsibilities.

- *Active Items List:* These are items that have been promised at prior meetings but whose due date has not yet occurred. The following are typically listed:
  - *The Promise Deliverable*
  - *The Promise Due Date*
  - *Who promised*

---

<sup>17</sup> See *Effective Meetings #29: Agenda Item Presenter Guidelines*.

<sup>18</sup> See *Effective Meetings #31: Agenda Item Conversation Manager Guidelines*.



- *Unassigned Items List:* These are items that have been raised in the past but for which there has been no disposition. This list is a major source of future agenda items.
- *Schedule of Future Meetings:* Dates and times of future meetings, including continuations of this meeting and other meetings that may be of interest to the participants.

### **Putting This Article into Action**

For a particular meeting, decide which of the template elements will be useful and which should be discarded. Modify the Project Meeting Agenda Template accordingly. If this approach is completely new you might start with only a few agenda elements and gradually add others.

Some observers have commented that this agenda template seems formal and therefore constraining. Our experience is the opposite. The clear format enables participants to focus on thinking and not on the meeting process.

Others comment that creating such an agenda involves considerable time and effort, and wonder if the benefits are worth it. While initial use of this agenda template may take more time than normal, subsequent meetings reuse a great deal of what was previously created. More importantly, the thinking that goes into preparing the agenda results in far more efficient meetings that produce far higher quality results. Using this project meeting agenda template can yield enormous ROI.

### **Summary**

This article describes a comprehensive template for a Project Meeting Agenda, with an accompanying Example and Template. For a particular meeting, use those elements that you think will be useful. A few minutes of such preparation can lead to better meetings with better results.



Dr. Ivan M. Rosenberg is the Managing Partner of InVista Associates. He has over 35 years' experience as a management consultant and change agent, supporting organizations in which the leadership is committed to achieving *breakthroughs* in organizational performance. Ivan has graduate degrees in Electrical Engineering, Computer Science, and Management. He has been a university professor, founder of a national software company that is over 35 years old, and Vice-President of a global franchisor. With his long love of aerospace, Ivan particularly enjoyed consulting with NASA HQ, NASA Centers, 19 robotic space missions, astronomical observatories in Hawaii, and many commercial aerospace and defense companies. He is the Co-Founder and Executive Director of the 2300+ member Aerospace & Defense Forum, and Founder and President of the Uniquely Abled Project.

Ivan may be contacted at [IRosenberg@InVistaAssociates.com](mailto:IRosenberg@InVistaAssociates.com).

Permission is granted to reprint and distribute this article provided that the copyright and source information are included.