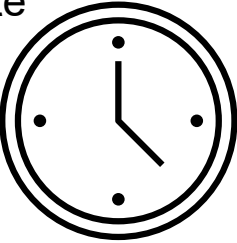


Recommendations for increasing equal opportunities and inclusion in meetings

RECOMMENDATION 1

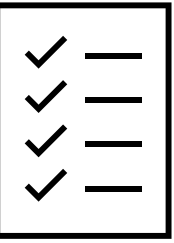
Duration, breaks and time of day can promote equity and inclusion

Many people are drained by long meetings without breaks, such as introverts and some neurodivergent employees. Additionally, long commutes or young children who need to be picked up from childcare can create challenges with early or late meetings.



As a meeting leader, consider:

- **The duration of a meeting.** By habit, we may schedule a meeting for, say, one hour. Try to reflect on how much time is genuinely needed, and perhaps trim 15 minutes off.
- **How to avoid back-to-back meetings.** For meetings with fewer participants, you could avoid this by checking participants' calendars ahead of scheduling or conclude the meeting at a quarter to the hour instead of on the hour.
- **Incorporating breaks.** If a meeting is scheduled to last more than 30 minutes, it's a good idea to start thinking about breaks (experts estimate that we can concentrate for 20–30 minutes at a time).
- **Avoiding early or late times.** Try as much as possible to avoid scheduling meetings before 9:00 AM and after 3:30 PM.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Increase equal opportunities and inclusion through preparation, alignment of expectations, and setting the framework for the meeting.

Since we humans are different, we can have varying needs when it comes to meetings. Sometimes, these needs are not met because they are not voiced, and the opportunity to voice them is perceived as absent. Therefore, it is a good idea to strive to meet different needs when planning the meeting, as well as to create the opportunity for participants to express their needs before the meeting begins.

As a meeting leader, consider:

- **Whether the right participants are present.** In some meetings, such as section meetings, participants are fixed. But for meetings where this is not the case, it might be beneficial to give it an extra thought: Are we getting different perspectives with these participants? Is there anyone who does not need to participate because they do not have a specific role?
- **Sending the purpose and agenda, as well as any relevant documents, ahead of the meeting.** Many employees, including (but not limited to) introverts and some neurodivergent individuals, feel most comfortable when they can prepare in advance for a meeting.

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RECOMMENDATION 2 - continued

- **Clarifying what is expected of participants.** It becomes easier to prepare and provide the right input if participants know what the meeting leader expects (e.g., providing information, input, or making decisions). By setting clear boundaries and considering the agenda's relevance to different employees, the likelihood of unnecessary attendance is reduced. For example, if an employee only has a role at the beginning of the meeting, they could perhaps be given the option to leave afterward.
- **Requesting participants' specific needs in the meeting invitation.** These could range from dietary considerations related to catering (e.g., allergens), knowing the physical setup (e.g., for participants with anxiety or those in a wheelchair), or something else entirely. Explicitly asking if participants have specific needs signals openness and creates a safe space for them to express their requirements, fostering comfort.
- **Clarifying in the meeting invitation whether physical attendance is required or if virtual attendance is possible.** If virtual attendance is an option, ensure the technical setup is functioning properly, allowing participants to see and hear each other, and ensure those attending virtually are included equally.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Make the physical settings of the meeting promote equity and inclusion

Most meetings are held seated around a table, but there can also be standing or walking meetings. Each variant may pose challenges for certain individuals.

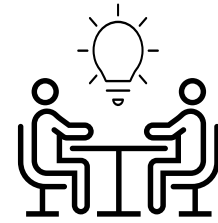
(Longer) seated meetings may challenge participants with, for example, ADHD, anxiety, or even someone who didn't sleep well the night before.

Standing and walking meetings can, for instance, challenge employees with visible or invisible disabilities or back pain.

Having openness to participants' diverse needs and avoiding an either-or approach can make a great difference.

As a meeting leader, consider:

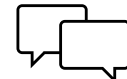
- **For seated meetings.** Begin by inviting participants to feel free to stand up during the meeting. For long meetings where materials need to be read, it might be helpful to be in a space with adjustable desks to accommodate different height needs.
- **For standing meetings.** Start by inviting participants to feel free to sit down if needed.
- **For walking meetings.** In the meeting invitation, inquire whether any participants would not be able to participate in this format.

RECOMMENDATION 4**Increase equity and inclusion by leveraging diversity**

Since we are all different (factors such as professional background, gender, nationality, age, etc., can play a role), our perspectives and ways of expressing ourselves also vary. Often, meetings are held without bringing diverse perspectives to the table and into play. For instance, research shows that we tend to lean towards the perspective with (informal or formal) power in the room or the majority's voice. In other words, an inclusive practice is required to truly engage diversity. When successful, research shows that better outcomes and improved well-being are achieved.

As a meeting leader, consider:

- **The possibility of inclusion outside the meeting.** Some employees may feel most comfortable not sharing their perspectives in plenary sessions. One way to include their perspectives is to allow them to contribute directly to the meeting leader before the meeting or in writing. Another is to indicate in the meeting invitation what input you are seeking during the meeting and ask them to send their contributions in advance.



- **Your own role.** As a meeting leader, your role differs from the others and may influence the input. Therefore, it can be advantageous to consider where you position yourself in the room (e.g., avoid sitting at the head of the table), whether you speak first (it may foster more dialogue if you give your input last—or even refrain from giving any). If you are traditionally the meeting leader, consider whether the role could rotate.

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RECOMMENDATION 4 - continued

- **Using speaking rounds.** Unlike raising hands or meetings where individuals simply take the floor, speaking rounds can provide more equal speaking time and create space for genuinely listening to different perspectives. For example, you can have three rounds: Round 1 for clarifying questions, Round 2 for comments and suggestions, and Round 3 for decision-making/can the proposal be approved, or does the proposer want time to adjust the proposal based on the input?
- **Allowing time for reflection.** By giving a moment for reflection after something has been presented, equal opportunities to contribute are enhanced.
- **Varying the speaking order in meetings.** Ensuring that it isn't always those with the most (informal) power who start the discussion creates greater psychological safety to bring forward minority perspectives.
- **Having a process for systematically and fairly collecting and addressing ideas.** For example, meeting participants can write their input on post-its, which the meeting leader then reviews, possibly anonymously.



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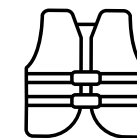
RECOMMENDATION 4 - continued

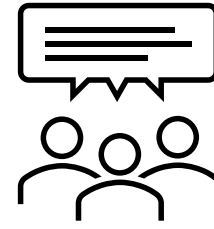
- **Using reverse brainstorming.** [This method](#) is designed to encourage participants to come up with ideas they wouldn't normally pursue and test them out.
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- **Using "How might we".** [This method](#) assists participants in broadening the field of solutions, bringing different perspectives into play.

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RECOMMENDATION 4 - continued

- **How you can show curiosity about other perspectives.** For example, by explicitly stating that it is a goal to create space for curious questions. This can be done by using exploratory questions. There are several methods to facilitate this, such as drawing inspiration from [Karl Tomm's questioning techniques](#) or employing the “[Reflecting Teams](#)” method.
- **How you can contribute to a meeting culture with psychological safety.** Psychological safety during a meeting involves knowing that there is room for different perspectives and needs, as well as addressing instances where someone is repeatedly spoken over, ignored, or interrupted. This can be mitigated by working with active bystandership, where individuals can politely intervene (on behalf of others as well), or by addressing it if discussions escalate. We understand that it can be difficult to speak up when experiencing microaggressions or direct aggression. You can find inspiration in the tool “[Dare to Care](#)”. Additionally, consider creating principles for your meetings, such as “We treat each other with respect, even when we disagree” and “Everyone should be asked and listened to.”



RECOMMENDATION 5

Promote equity and inclusion through language

DTU is a Danish university, but with a large number of international students and staff. Many have lived here for a short time and therefore do not speak Danish or are not fluent enough to navigate in Danish on equal terms. It is therefore important not to make assumptions but to be inquisitive about linguistic needs when planning and conducting a meeting.

As a meeting leader, consider:

- **Whether everyone has equal access to understanding the meeting invitation and materials.** Consider whether the meeting invitation and materials should, by default, be in both Danish and English.
- **Whether everyone has equal access to participating in the meeting.** For example, when you are unsure of all participants' level of Danish, you could start the meeting by asking in English if anyone needs the meeting to be conducted in English.
- **Being open to bilingual meetings.** Many feel they do not have the linguistic proficiency to speak (whether in Danish or English) but can understand most of it. Therefore, there may be contexts where it is beneficial to hold the meeting in, for example, Danish, with participants contributing in English (or vice versa).