

## **TEN COMMANDMENTS OF A MEETING**

### **1. Thou shalt arrive on time**

Being late is a terrible offence. The chair of the meeting may have to adjust the agenda and you give other attendees the impression that you feel your time is more valuable than theirs. It's a dreadful way to get things started.

### **2. Thou shalt not move the meeting away from the agenda**

It's easy to get carried away with a train of thought, or a particular topic you feel passionately about, but avoid the temptation to take the meeting away from the agenda.

If there are other ideas that you feel are important, ask the chairperson to add them to AOB (Any Other Business) or to set up another meeting to cover those specific issues.

### **3. Thou shalt prepare**

A good chairperson will have sent out a brief for the meeting. Ensure you read all necessary material and prepare your thoughts on the topics you're going to cover.

Also prepare your ideas and comments beforehand. This is the best way to help meet the objectives of the meeting.

### **4. Thou shalt not criticize individuals**

While you may not agree with someone else's point of view, avoid personal comments or criticisms.

Keep your points focused on the ideas, not the personalities behind them. It's counter-productive to the meeting – and may even be considered as bullying!

### **5. Thou shalt ask for more information (if needed)**

If you feel that the briefing materials you are provided with are not comprehensive enough or effective, ask for more information about what you're going to cover and what decisions need to be made.

### **6. Thou shalt listen**

Having prepared extensively, you may be keen to share your wisdom with the rest of the team. However, it's better to listen carefully to everyone else's contributions and review your original thoughts in the light of their perspectives.

There's nothing wrong in changing your position if you feel that another view is better. In such instances, be gracious in offering your support to this alternative view.

You'll find, over time, that others will follow your example so that the best ideas are championed, not simply those that are extolled by the louder members of the group.

### **7. Thou shalt not be too quick to dismiss ideas**

Sometimes, if you give an idea a chance to be explored fully, it will lead to something special.

Give each idea time to develop, as long as it's part of the meeting agenda.

### **8. Thou shalt be clear and concise**

Once you've heard the other views in a meeting, assess whether your ideas are better. If you believe so, then it's time to speak up.

Let everyone know your idea clearly and concisely. Express why you feel it's as valid (or better) than an alternative idea. Present any evidence to support your position, and also encourage others to review and challenge your idea.

### **9. Thou shalt not drown small voices**

You may be highly charismatic and articulate. However, be mindful of those who are not. Quiet people have as many great ideas as extroverts and you'll be suppressing them if you don't give everyone a chance to express views.

### **10. Thou shalt be positive**

How many times have you seen a meeting end unsuccessfully because the energy has left the room or because problems seem too difficult to resolve?

To be an effective meeting attendee, you share the responsibility of keeping everyone positive. Encourage constructive criticism and push for more ideas or potential solutions when things seem difficult.

*With thanks to Heather Foley – a consultant at **ETS**, HR technology specialist.*