

**Planning for Informational Meetings**  
**Tool 17**  
**Managing Difficult People and Situations**

## Key Concepts

- Remind parties of interests and ground rules
- Use “affinity” group, peers or recognized leaders
- Reframe statements for clarification or to incorporate others’ interests
- Expand information base, resources or parties involved
- Don’t make it personal

## Dealing with Difficult People in the Moment

- Acknowledge: “I hear you saying you are concerned about X.”
- Legitimate: “Thank you for bringing that up. That’s an important concern.”
- Deal, Defer or Delegate
  - » **Deal** with it on the spot
    - “Let me tell you right now what we are going to do about that.”
    - “Let’s discuss that right now.”
  - » **Defer** to another time or venue
    - “I don’t have the answer right now but if you give me your phone number (or e-mail or address), I will get back to you by next week.”
    - “That concern will be addressed in just a few minutes in the next section.”
    - “Let’s talk after the meeting about how you can link up with them.”
  - » **Delegate**
    - “I cannot answer that question for but let me put you in touch with Mr. Lee who can provide you with that information.”
    - “That question would best be answered by our engineer, Sam Abu-Shaban. Sam, would you please address this question.”

**Advanced Facilitation Tools for Use  
During Public Meetings - Interventions**

**Interventions**

- Remember to start with least intrusive intervention.
- Match intervention with the dynamic.
- Remember that people often need to save face.
- Look for the reasons for the difficult behavior.

*People Challenges:*

<b>Dynamic</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>
Conflict and Arguments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remember that disagreement can be constructive.</li> <li>• Ask why the person has that perspective.</li> <li>• Summarize the information (factual and emotional) in the remarks.</li> <li>• Request that the recorder capture that information.</li> <li>• Call a break if necessary.</li> </ul>
Rambling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be patient. Allow the person a moment to tie back in the comment.</li> <li>• Ask the speaker to relate the information to the topic, question, or agenda item.</li> </ul>
Repetition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge the speaker. Refer them to where the information was or will be discussed.</li> <li>• Ask what else the group needs to understand about that issue.</li> <li>• Move on politely if necessary.</li> </ul>
Silence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remember that silence can be a sign that people are thinking about information; silence is not necessarily a sign of boredom or confusion.</li> <li>• Ask an open-ended question.</li> </ul>
Verbal attack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand between the people.</li> <li>• Remind of the ground rules.</li> <li>• Take a break.</li> <li>• Consult at a break to learn more about the reasons and remind of parameters.</li> </ul>

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Physical attack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stop the meeting immediately.</li> <li>• Let participants know they will be notified of the next meeting if their contact information is on the sign-in sheet.</li> <li>• Meet with team to determine next steps.</li> </ul>
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*Content Challenges:*

<b>Dynamic</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>
Claim of biased information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide facts.</li> <li>• Describe process and assure participants that their comments will be considered.</li> <li>• A technical resource on the team or a Technical Advisory Committee assesses the information for reliability.</li> </ul>

*Logistical Challenges:*

<b>Dynamic</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>
Unexpected elected officials attend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce yourself in advance. Let the officials know that you will look for their participation as with any participant.</li> </ul>
Expected presenters do not attend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a Plan B in advance to cover that material another way or proceed without it.</li> </ul>

Other:

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