

Facilitating from the seat...



Tips for helping to get a meeting back on track when you are not the facilitator, convener or chair.

We have all been to meetings that are a waste of our valuable time, meetings that either go nowhere or go off track quickly. Most of the time we feel we have no power to help the situation, so we tough out the meeting and hope the next one will go better. There is something you can do, and others, including the facilitator, will thank you for it! Following are a few tips that you can use to support the facilitator in getting the meeting back on track in a respectful and productive way.

- Check your own behavior.** Are you being a helpful meeting participant? Are you contributing in an open, fair and respectful way, by *'balancing inquiry and advocacy'*?
 - *Inquiry = asking questions, seeking to understand, withholding judgment.*
 - *Advocacy = advocating a point of view or defending your position.*

- Leverage the power of questions!** Questions, stated in a positive way can help bring the meeting back to the agenda topic(s). For example:
 - *"I'm curious, given the current discussion, in regard to _____, how can we use this information to help us work through our stated objective(s)?"*

- Track and summarize.** When there is a break in the conversation, explain that you would like to recap what you have heard for your understanding.
 - *Summarize what you have heard and promptly link back key points to the purpose/objectives of the meeting. End by THANKING the group and the facilitator for allowing you the time to check and clarify your understanding.*

- Use TIME as your ally.**
 - *"I am noticing the time, and given that we have _____ minutes left in the meeting, I am wondering how we can best focus our discussion in order to meet our objectives?"*

- Offer to record notes using a flip chart** or white board so that the facilitator is free to focus on the conversation and on moving the meeting along.