

Business communication | Decision-making

Context

The Scandinavian company KYM has a budget deficit. Each region has been asked to cut costs. Three regional customer service managers (Jens from Denmark, Matt from Finland, Anna from Sweden) are meeting to discuss where savings can be made. The meeting is led by Sinead, a consultant brought in to oversee the measures.



- 1 Why is it sometimes difficult to reach decisions in a meeting? To make the meeting effective, what does the leader of the meeting need to do?
- 2 ▶ 6.2 Read the *Context*. Listen to the meeting and tick (✓) the points discussed.

1 Freeze recruitment	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Cut back on overtime	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Reduce office resources	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Change phone provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Reduce client expense accounts	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Cut back on business trips	<input type="checkbox"/>
- 3 ▶ 6.2 Listen again and complete the phrases in 1–8.
 - 1 Yes, well, _____ our costs for personnel are very high.
 - 2 ... number of employees. _____ the overtime figures. They're _____, and they're costing us ...
 - 3 The _____, we need to look at why we have so much overtime.
 - 4 ... a lot of waste. _____ printing emails out on expensive copy paper.
 - 5 So _____ is monitoring the office supplies ...
 - 6 I'm _____.
 - 7 As far as _____, we'd make hardly any savings ...
 - 8 Matt _____. But _____ cut expense accounts ...
- 4 Sinead is leading the discussion. Turn to audio script 6.2 and underline the phrases she uses to:
 - 1 set the agenda for the discussion
 - 2 manage turn-taking
 - 3 invite people to express their opinions
 - 4 move on to a different topic
 - 5 manage the timing
 - 6 monitor action points

Tip | *getting at*

Use *getting at* to talk about what someone means.

What are you **getting at**?

So what you're **getting at** is ...

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 6** on page 116.

Key expressions

Presenting an argument

If we look at the facts, we'll see ...

Look at ... They're here in black and white ...

The fact is ... / The thing is ...

The advantage/drawback is ...

If we ..., it'll mean ...

A classic example is...

Giving an opinion

I (don't) think (we should) ...

If you ask me, we should ...

..., that's my view

In my opinion ...

As far as I'm concerned ...

I think it would be crazy to ...

Responding to opinions

Exactly/Absolutely.

You're / X is right.

What X says is right.

Yes, but ...

I'm not convinced.

Clarifying

Could you give us some detail, please?

What I mean is ...

So what you're getting at is ...

In other words ...

Leading the discussion

Today, I'd like to establish ...

I'd like to discuss the pros and cons first.

(Jens), could you start us off, please?

What's your position on this?

Hang on. Let's hear what

(Jens) has to say ...

I don't want to spend too long on this point.

Can we move on to ...?

Let's turn to the next item ...

Let's look into it ... and discuss it again at our next meeting.

Let's draw up some action points on ...

5 Work in small groups. You are going to continue the meeting from 2.

- 1 Look at this agenda item and decide on your opinion of each suggestion. Add two extra suggestions to the list.

Reduce staff benefits / activities

- reduce subsidies in staff cafeteria
- cancel annual staff away day
- restrict Christmas event to staff only
- introduce a PIN number for photocopying and limit number of copies per person
- _____
- _____

- 2 Choose eight phrases from *Key expressions* that you have never used or are not very familiar with. Write these on separate cards. (Don't include expressions from *Leading the discussion*.)
 - 3 Continue the meeting from 2. As you participate, 'play' your phrase cards by placing them in front of you when you use the phrase correctly. Your colleagues will return the card to you if the phrase is not used correctly.
 - 4 The winner is the first person to play all their cards correctly.
- 6** Work in groups of four. You are at a departmental meeting. You have €50,000 left in your annual budget. As a group, try to decide how to spend the money.
- 1 Before the meeting do the following:
 - Decide on what type of department you are.
 - Make a list of five suggestions for spending the money (the money can be divided between more than one idea).
 - 2 Prepare for the meeting with a partner. Decide which suggestions on the list you agree/disagree with and think of arguments to support your opinions.
 - 3 Hold the meeting, taking turns to lead the discussion.
 - 4 Report back to the class on any decisions you made.

Practically speaking | Talking about social plans

- 1 During the break in a long meeting, there's often time for small talk. What kinds of topics might you discuss with your colleagues? Think of three questions you might ask.
- 2 ▶ 6.3 Listen to five short conversations during the break in a meeting. The first speaker asks about the other person's plans. In which conversation is the second speaker ...?
 - a certain about plans ____
 - b certain about plans but unhappy with them ____
 - c certain about having no plans ____
 - d fairly certain about plans ____
 - e uncertain about plans ____
- 3 ▶ 6.3 Listen again. For each conversation, make a note of the phrases used to:
 - 1 ask about plans
 - 2 respond to a question about plans
 - 3 react to someone's plans
- 4 Take a short break and talk to as many people as possible in the class. Ask and answer questions about your evening / weekend / holiday plans.