Good Meeting Management: 
*Tips for Getting Along and Communicating Well at Farm Family Meetings*

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- OAMP
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- Ag Mediation

- Mediation & Facilitation

- Education & Training
Objectives:

1. Consider what meeting management is and why it is important
2. Learn about and practice good meeting management skills
3. Learn about and practice positive communication skills
Objective 1: What is meeting management and why is it important?

1. What happens when there is good meeting management?
   1. Someone directs the meeting
   2. The necessary people are there
   3. The important topics get covered
   4. Everyone has his/her say
   5. Personal conflicts are set aside
   6. Progress is made
   7. Agreements may be reached
Objective 1: What is meeting management and why is it important?

1. What happens when there is not good meeting management?
   1. The right people may not be at the meeting
      1. I’m too busy.
      2. We can do that after the corn is planted.
      3. We tried them before, and they didn’t work.
      4. Meetings are a waste of time.
   2. There may be no direction so important topics may not get covered
      1. People may not speak or feel heard
      2. Personal conflicts may interfere
      3. Nothing may get done
Objective 2: What are good meeting management strategies?

1. **Set the stage**
   1. Be prepared
   2. Select a coordinator/facilitator
   3. Have the necessary people there
   4. Have an agenda

2. **At the meeting**
   1. Use the facilitator to
      1. Follow the agenda
      2. Engage everyone
      3. Manage conflict
      4. Summarize

3. **After the meeting**
   1. Send out notes and reminder of next meeting
Good meeting management strategies – Setting the stage

- Have someone coordinate the preparation
- Have all the right people at the table—and say who’s coming
- Select a convenient and comfortable location
- Be sure that everyone knows the purpose of each family meeting
- Prepare family members ahead of time
  - Propose an agenda and a facilitator
  - Have each person bring a list of personal concerns and any important documents
- Schedule sufficient time
Select a coordinator/facilitator

Who can be the facilitator?
- Family member
- Respected outsider

Who can be the facilitator?
- Professional neutral
Have the right people there…

Who are the *right* people?

- Father
- Mother
- Daughter-in-law who works on the farm
- Son
  - Child of son and former Daughter-in-law
Who are the right people?

- Daughter who just graduated from college
- Partner of daughter who just graduated from college
- Child of daughter and partner
- Former daughter-in-law
- Nephew who works on the farm
- Hired help
Are *all* the important people necessarily the *right* people?

1. Owners
2. Spouses/significant others
3. Children
   1. Young
   2. Old
   3. On the farm
   4. Off the farm
4. Others
Choose a setting that is right for you
Good meeting management strategies – the Meeting

- Have someone act as facilitator

- The facilitator should
  - Remind folks about the purpose of the meeting - this should not be news!
  - Ask someone to take notes
  - Use an agenda
  - Review agenda with everyone
    - Ask for input at the beginning of the meeting
    - Make additions or changes before starting the meeting
  - Refer back to the agenda to keep participants on track
  - Encourage participants to
    - Take turns speaking
    - Be open to other points of view
  - Summarize what each person adds to the discussion

- Summarize at the end of the meeting and plan for the next one
Who manages the meeting?

- The facilitator manages the meeting
How does the facilitator manage the meeting?

1. Pre-meeting
2. At the meeting
   1. Ground rules
   2. Go through the agenda
   3. Take notes
   4. Keep the process moving and on track
   5. Help resolve conflicts constructively
3. At the end of the meeting
   1. Verbally summarize
   2. Follow up with written summary
   3. Thank everyone for coming
How does the facilitator manage the meeting? (cont.)

1. Pre-meeting
2. At the meeting
   1. Get assent to ground rules
      1. Take turns
      2. Speak for yourself
      3. Really listen
      4. Be respectful
   2. Go through the agenda
   3. Take notes
   4. Keep the process moving
   5. Help resolve conflicts constructively
What is the role of the agenda?

- It provides a map, a trail guide
- Following it allows the family can see that the meeting has been productive
- People are more willing to come to meetings that are
  - Productive
  - Civil
  - Short
  - Business-like
Important agenda items are based on the needs to be addressed by the farm family.

Often, information must be brought to the meeting for a productive discussion to happen.

This information may need to be culled so what is really important at the time can be discussed.
Important agenda items will vary from meeting to meeting

- Often, there are decisions to be made with many possible choices
- Specific information provided allows these difficult decisions to be made
Be sure that everyone gets to both have his/her say and to be heard

1. What is the difference?
   1. Have your say
   2. Be heard
2. Listening techniques
Summarize and plan for future meetings

1. At the end of the meeting
   1. Summarize verbally
   2. Ask about possible future meeting times

2. After the meeting
   1. Send out
      1. Written summary
      2. Confirmation of time and place of next meeting
      3. Tentative agenda
      4. Request for agenda items
Objective 3: Use communication skills that will help facilitate a positive meeting

1. Speaking and feeling heard
2. Taking turns
3. Using “I” statements
4. R.E.S.P.E.C.T.
5. Active listening
   1. Content
   2. Emotion
6. Positive participation
Potential Sources of Conflict in a Family Farm Meeting...

- Generational differences
- Value differences
- Hidden agendas
- Power differences
- Shortage of $$$
- Lack of leadership or commitment
Recognize Conflict when… Communication Is Fractured

- Family members won’t speak to each other
- Family members won’t come to a family farm meeting
  - FM deny there’s a need (or time) to meet
- FM come to the meeting but won’t speak in the meeting but talk about others afterwards
  - FM get angry and seethe or yell or cry
  - FM are demeaning/disrespectful
  - FM don’t listen to the other family members
  - FM avoid the issues
  - FM inappropriately raise new issues or old issues again…again
  - FM bring 2 boxes of old disorganized papers to a meeting about finances
Conflict can result in communication breakdown. What’s Going On?

- Feeling “Un-heard” & unimportant
- Experiencing a lack of respect
- Feeling at a disadvantage
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Feeling powerless
- Questioning ability or professionalism
- Questioning one’s commitment
- Questioning integrity
- Fear, grief and loss
Speaking…
and Feeling Heard

- Practice time!
  - Pet peeves…
Pick a partner from your family or not, as you choose.

Each of you will have one minute to talk while the other listens intently.

Then, switch sides. The second person will have one minute to talk while the other listens intently.
Who felt listened to?

- How could you tell you were being listened to?
  - Presence
  - Body Language
    - Eye contact
    - Leaning forward
  - Summarizing
    - Words and emotion
  - Language
    - Uh huh
    - Go on

- How can you demonstrate this type of listening in a meeting?
Using “I” statements?

1. I statements are those that begin with “I” and tell how “I” feel and think.
   1. Father is getting older and his adult son is upset because Father will not try some new farming technique.
      1. You always want to do the same old things!
      2. John doesn’t think that we should try no-till farming.
   2. Mother goes to all the community meetings and helps the other women with the cooking and cleaning. Father always arrives just in time to eat and never in time to help cut the wood for the wood stove in the community room.
      1. You are always late for meetings!
      2. Why do you think cleaning the community room is women’s work!
“I” statements…

- Practice time!
Using Active Listening

- Active listening helps people to feel understood and is a useful way of identifying potential misunderstanding before they have the chance to mushroom into bigger conflicts.
- Proactive way to manage emotional situations.
- Facilitates discussion by conveying respect.
- The listener reflects the content and the emotion.
Active Listening . . .

- Practice time!

![Ear Icon](image1.png)

![Child Ear](image2.png)

![Courtroom Scene](image3.png)
Using positive participation?

- What is positive participation?
- Feeling heard = Positive Participation
What is negative participation?

- Won’t come
- Won’t speak in the meeting but talk about others afterwards
- Gets angry and is demeaning/disrespectful
- Doesn’t listen to the other family members
- Avoids the issues
- Denies there’s a need (or time) to meet
- Inappropriately raises new issues or old issues again...and again
- Brings 2 boxes of old disorganized papers to a meeting about finances
Now…
What is positive participation?

- Always comes and is prepared
- Speaks and listens at appropriate times
- Does not talk about others afterwards
- Is polite and respectful
- May be emotional
- Is willing to address even difficult issues
- Raises appropriate issues
- Brings necessary information
Remember the Little Things...

- If things get hot…or cold…
  - Take a break
  - If you need more info. and more time, say so
  - Share a snack or meal
  - Don’t ignore it!
- Consider bringing in a neutral facilitator to guide the next meeting
- Remember, this is a joint problem solving opportunity
Your turn to practice having a family meeting…

- **Pre-meeting – 5 minutes**
  - Pick a facilitator
  - Pick a role play or a real (small) current family farm issue
  - Decide on an agenda

- **Meeting – 15 minutes**
  - Facilitator manages the meeting
  - Go through the agenda
  - Take turns
  - Summarize what happened

- **We will all debrief – 10 minutes**
Thanks very much for your participation. Let us know if we can be of any assistance through the Institute.