

Disruptive Behaviors Video Transcript

- The next problem in meetings is something I've called disruptive behavior by attendees, and this covers a lot of different things. I plan to mention **nine behaviors** very briefly, so I hope that I will have covered the main ones that you suffer from with people in your meetings. And then I'll give you **three increasing levels of response**, which you could apply to any of them. So, your job is to decide which behaviors you're going to do something about, and then which of my three responses you're going to use.

The first three undesirable behaviors are the people who talk too much, as in too frequently, taking more than their share of the time.

Number two, the ones who go on for too long once they get started.

Number three, it can be either the leader or a participant who dominates the meeting, controlling what gets discussed, and not letting people who disagree get their say.

Number four, there are the ones who behave negatively, who think that the problem isn't worth trying to fix, or who reject everyone else's suggestions while not making any of their own.

Number five, the people who actively attack other people's ideas, or even attack them as people, verbally, of course.

Number six, there are the people who love using jargon in order to look clever, or maybe just because they are clever and don't realize that ordinary people don't understand them.

My last three are people who turn up not being prepared, people who say they'll be at the meeting and then fail to turn up at all, and, finally, the rather odd one of when the leader's boss attends the meeting as well. So, the leader is completely undermined and some of the other participants are sometimes too scared to say what they really think during the meeting.

It's quite a wide-ranging bunch of problems, isn't it? But with all of the above, there are just **three techniques that are the answers**.

The first response to any bad behavior is to make a gentle and constructive statement to the person. For example, "Thanks for that input, Bob. "Can we now

see what the others think?" Or, "Bob, "Can you just remind me what ROAPT means again?" Or, "Bob, is there a positive way "to solve the problem, do you think?" Even if you just use this method and keep calmly repeating that you don't understand the jargon or whatever, the message can be quite powerful. But, if necessary, you can escalate your response a little.

So, my second method is to point out that they have a habit, using a neat little sequence called I notice, I interpret, am I right? So, you would say, "Bob, I notice you're using" a lot of jargon and I interpret that to mean "that you don't realize that people like me "don't understand it. "Am I right?" Or, "Bob, I notice that you're sitting "with your arms folded and staring at the table," and I interpret that to mean "that you think the discussion's not worth having" and the problem is impossible for us to solve. "Am I right about that?" This forces them to either come out and agree that there's a problem or to deny that there's a problem, and then to behave better. One more example, so you can see how strong this technique can be, is to call them directly on their habit. And whether you can use this kind of statement depends a lot on your organizational culture, because it is pretty strong. So, imagine if you were the leader of the meeting and you said, "Tony, I notice you didn't prepare "for this meeting, and I interpret that to mean "that you think the meeting isn't important. "Is that the case?" He's been caught out and he's not going to let that happen again.

Finally, my third level of response, the strongest of all, is to say how you feel about their bad behavior. You can do this during or after the meeting, depending on whether you think it's more effective to corner them privately or to say it in front of the group. I think if you're pointing out lateness, then you're speaking on behalf of the whole group, so it certainly is an option to say it in front of everyone at the meeting. And the best format is to use I understand, I feel, I want, is that okay? So, you start softly with I understand. Something like, "I know you've got a lot" of other stuff on at the moment." Then, how you feel. "But it's very frustrating for me running this meeting "when everyone's here on time except for you." And then, what you want. "It would be great if you could be on time "for the next one." And then, to get commitment with, "Is that okay? "Can you commit to doing that?" Taking my example of your boss wanting to come to your meeting, this third way would be the one to choose. You could say something like, "Boss, I know it's an important meeting" and you care about it, but I find it a bit undermining "of my authority if you come as well, "and I think it looks to the others "as if you don't trust me. "So, could I suggest that the two of us "plan the approach together before the meeting "and then just I run it, "and then, afterward, I'll give you a full

report "of what happened. "Would that be okay? "You can see that it's both diplomatic and strong.

So, for your meetings, you're not going to let people get away with bad behaviors like talking too much, failing to prepare, or criticizing the ideas of the others. But what are the main bad behaviors that you get and which of my three techniques will you use? Will it be to gently ask them something positive? To point out their habit with I notice, I interpret, am I right? Or to say how you feel using I understand, I feel, I want, is that okay? Use the notetaking tool to answer these questions.