

## Avoid Interruptions

Are some of your less-polite colleagues making discussions difficult with their constant interruptions? Have you ever tried to offer your opinion or idea only to have your words plowed over by a boisterous associate who thinks the only voice worth listening to is his own?



Dealing with people who interrupt is a common obstacle in business meetings, but it's one that can be easily overcome with a little planning and confidence. Here are a few tips to help you get a word in edgewise.

### Tell It Like It Is

There's no need to get angry when someone butts in, but let the person know that you won't be interrupted. Don't be afraid to cut back in. You don't have to be rude about it but try saying something like, "Excuse me Bob, but you didn't let me finish. I'd like to add that..." This way you'll get your point across and the person will have a chance to realize he's cut you off.

Many people interrupt without meaning to, so try not to take it personally. But if the problem persists, let them know. Talking to someone about it in private is far more professional than letting your frustrations build and risking a scene during a meeting.

### Establish Rules

Have interruptions become an accepted part of your office culture? Chances are that you aren't the only one who gets a little hot under the collar when you can't get a word in edgewise. Why not talk it over with a manager or even with a group of colleagues and try to work out a system for taking turns speaking? You don't have to hold a conch, but allot a time limit or give mini penalties for interruptions. Assigning a facilitator to keep meetings on track can also be helpful. When people know they'll have an opportunity to speak they're often less likely to interrupt.

### Speak Up

Don't be shy, even if your boss is staring down his nose at you over a thick pair of glasses. Be confident in what you say, speak loudly and clearly and look around the room instead of down at your sweaty palms. There's no need to yell, but when you're firm and speak with conviction, people will listen to what you're saying instead of cutting you off at your first "um" or "ah."

If you find it difficult to express your ideas in front of a group or even in a one-on-one setting, try preparing yourself before the discussion. Jot down some ideas on a notepad and think of issues you'd like to raise in the meeting. Having something written in front of you can refresh your memory if you forget what you want to say when you're nervous. If your

ideas are well thought out, you'll feel more confident speaking up. Preparation will also give you a chance to think over arguments to back your ideas should you be cut off or interrupted by coworkers.

### **Don't Invite Interruptions**

Remember that other people want to be heard just as much as you do, so don't hog the floor. People will interrupt if they think you've gone on long enough and made your point. And watch yourself to make sure you aren't interrupting others.