

How to Manage Meeting Malcontents

When leading your next meeting, here are some methods you can use to handle difficult people who try to seize control of the discussion. Do you recognize some of these meeting malcontents from your group's meetings?

Monopolizers

How to recognize them:

They interrupt often, ramble and repeat because they enjoy hearing themselves speak.

Tips for dealing with Monopolizers:

Don't argue with them, but don't hesitate to confront them. Wait for them to come up for air and interrupt them by name. Note that point and immediately invite someone else to comment on the topic.

Distracters

How to recognize them:

They seek attention. To get it, they'll often bring up irrelevant topics that waste time.

Tips for dealing with Distracters:

Firmly halt Distracters, restate the meeting purpose and ask them to answer a specific question to get them to focus on the main topic.



Snipers

How to recognize them:

They resort to stage-whispered, snide comments to challenge your authority by switching attention from you to them.

Tips for dealing with Snipers:

Shine the spotlight on them and bluntly ask them to share their comments with everyone. Most will be so embarrassed that they'll decline.

Skeptics

How to recognize them:

They criticize everything you or others say.

Tips for dealing with Skeptics:

If they become negative or critical during the meeting, let them know that you're looking for solutions, not criticism. Then ask them to contribute.

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