

# *Meeting Attendee's Bill of Rights*

Every meeting should have:

- **A defined start and stop time** - Being late to meetings shows disrespect for the rest of the organization. Don't do it. Ok, if your boss or someone else in authority is habitually late to a meeting, there's not a lot you can do about it, but at least you can be on time. And it's ok for you to point out when there are only 10 mins or 5 mins left in the meeting schedule so final decisions and actions can be agreed upon.
- **An agenda** - Good meetings on complex topics will have written agenda. But even in informal meetings, if you don't understand the purpose of the meeting, ask. You will not be alone. If the others seem to be getting right into the heart of the meeting, stop them and ask "I'd like to make sure I understand what we are trying to accomplish here."
- **Handouts distributed ahead of time** - It's nuts to hand out multipage documents during a meeting and expect the attendees to review them. Send materials out before the meeting. And if you get meeting materials ahead of time, you are obligated to review them before the meeting.
- **People with a reason to be there** - Everyone in a meeting should know why there are there and what their role is. If you aren't part of the decision-making process, is your role to provide information? If you aren't there to provide information, are you there observe and report on the results to others? If you aren't there to observe, why are you in the meeting?
- **Someone in charge** - Someone has to be running the meeting and be empowered to manage the discussion and the clock. Sometimes that responsibility can be shared by a couple of people, but at least one person has to be able to fix a meeting that runs off the rails.
- **Balanced input from the attendees** - Another responsibility of the meeting organizer is to make sure that everyone is participating according to their roles, that opinions are expressed fairly and dissent is heard, and that decisions actually reflect the consensus of the group.
- **A summary and (possibly) action items** - So we agreed on a purpose or a goal for the meeting. Was it achieved? Will someone sum up what was agreed to and who is going to do what, and when? These should be explicit and you should write them down.