How to Prepare a Modern Agenda

1. Agendas need to be sent out in advance, not given out at the meeting.

2. Have a "cut-off" time for people to submit agenda items. Make sure everyone knows the cut-off time and also "publish" the distribution time for the agenda.

   For instance, let everyone know the cut-off time for agenda items is, say, noon on the third Thursday. The agenda will be emailed by close of business that same day, for the meeting on the following Monday.

3. Once you have (2) in place, then eliminate General Business. Adopt the practice – "*if it isn't on the agenda then it isn't discussed*". The only people who don't like this are disorganised people or manipulative people who don't want people to know what they intend to raise. Everyone has the same opportunity to put anything they want to on the agenda.

4. Insert an agenda item immediately after Confirmation of the minutes **– *"Action Status Report"***. In this report (which is written, not verbal) you list all of the items from the last minutes (and previous minutes if there are items still outstanding) which required action and give a status report for each one. Look for the document - Action Status Report in this module.

   Suggested status statements are: Completed, Not yet started, 70% completed, Completion expected in 3 days, Stalled – require resources, Stalled - Awaiting information or responses.

5. Once you have the Action Status Report in place, then you can eliminate **Business Arising from the Minutes**. Everything which would normally appear here would either be in the Action Status report or will be worthy of an agenda item in its own right.

6. Sort all **correspondence** into 3 categories – 1 – junk, 2 – For information only, 3 – Decision required. Eliminate correspondence as an item on the agenda.

   Correspondence in category 1, (junk) should be disposed of. Correspondence in category 2 (For Information) should be placed in a folder and passed around the meeting. There is no need to list it in the minutes. Correspondence in category 3 (Decision required) should each be listed on the agenda as a separate item so they can be dealt with at an appropriate time and in an appropriate way.

   Outward correspondence has been sent – there is little to be gained by discussing letters which have been sent. Outward correspondence can be listed in the Action Status Report as its own item.

7. Place a D or an I next to every agenda item indicating whether it is a **decision required item** of an **information item**.

8. Finally, and most important, ensure that *every* agenda item shows clearly what is required – not just a vague topic. Eg: *Decision to be made on which software the organisation will buy*; or*, Decision required on whether or not to employ an extra admin person*; or, *Decision required on whether to extend the funding for the Acme Project and if so, by how much*.

9. Prioritise the agenda – most important decision items first, then less important decision items, then information items.

> ## *If you get the agenda right, the meeting is a breeze!*