

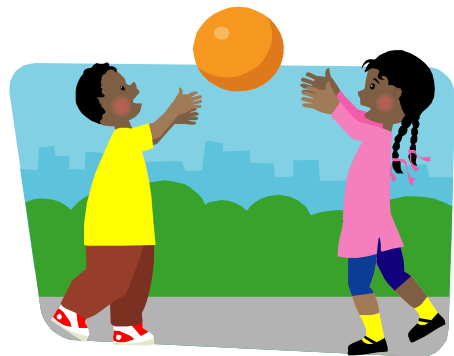
How to Get People to Participate in Your Meetings:

- Try implementing comics, games or toys in your next meeting. Snacks work well too. Basically, the more informal your meetings, the more fun they'll be to attend. Who decided that meetings have to be serious to be successful anyway?

5

- For a small dose of humor, show a comic strip related to each agenda item or topic you introduce. Dilbert is great for poking fun at meetings and other aspects of corporate life. If comic strips aren't an option, share humorous quotes from famous people during your meetings. The internet has a plethora of sites dedicated to famous quotes, so finding something that relates directly to your agenda topic will be quick and easy.

- A simple game involving a soft, small ball will not only help your group generate more ideas, but will also emphasize the importance of engaging in active participation during a discussion? Begin by throwing the ball to a participant, that person must comment on the subject at hand and then throws it to another participant. Each time the ball is thrown around the room, another comment or suggestion is made. This encourages every participant to contribute to the meeting discussion and provides a variety of perspectives on the issue at hand. Notice the spontaneity, smiles and overall involvement generated in the room when the entire group participates. This game is particularly effective for brainstorming sessions, since the excitement generated in the room will encourage individuals to think creatively.



- Contests or quizzes are other methods of getting your group excited about its meetings. If your meeting objective is to introduce new information, let them know there will be a quiz on the content you're going to present. At the end of your presentation, ask the group questions about the content you've just presented. Whoever provides the correct answer first, receives a prize. Not only will this generate some excitement, but you can guarantee that fewer people will be daydreaming during your presentation!



- Food is another useful device for generating excitement in your meetings. Before your meeting, tape, for example, individually-wrapped chocolates under the participants' chairs. After welcoming people to the meeting, tell the group they have "surprises" under their chairs. Everyone enjoys surprises, no matter how small! Not only is this a nice way of saying "welcome" to the meeting, but it's also an inexpensive way to create a fun and exciting tone for the meeting ahead.

How to Maintain Your Audience's Attention?

- Think about the most interesting presentation you've ever witnessed, ask yourself why it was so interesting and then try to implement these elements in your own presentation. An hour presentation is a long time to get and maintain the audience's attention. Try interspersing lecture with Q&A sessions, brainstorming discussions, role-playing, demonstrations, multimedia segments or storytelling. Below, you'll find some other tips for creating an interesting presentation.



- Don't stand behind a podium. This creates a distance between you and the audience and a sense of formality. For a truly interesting presentation, you need to connect with your audience on a personal level. A general rule? The less formal a presentation, the better. Tell related stories. Everyone loves stories, especially when they're related to the discussion topic. Story-telling can also be an effective method of driving your point home. People remember a story and will likely carry it with them once the presentation is over.
- Move. When a speaker doesn't move during his presentation, any well-meaning audience has difficulties paying whole-hearted attention. Simply put, a static speaker produces a listless audience. Having several points from which you present proves you're alive, forces your audience to keep its eyes open and, because you are moving, actually reduces your own stress.
- Enthusiasm is important. Everyone knows it's contagious so communicate your excitement by smiling, making eye contact and using an enthusiastic tone of voice.
- Get the audience involved. Nine times out of ten, audiences remember a session in which they participated. But make the participation voluntary and easy. Involuntary participation can be disastrous – people don't want to feel threatened and you don't want to be viewed as a tyrant.
- Demonstrate your proposition. Don't just say it! Show the audience what you mean. Lectures are verbal and usually dull, but demonstrations are graphic and add interest. Where lectures state the case, demonstrations prove it. Use visuals to get your point across.

