

IDIOM OF THE MONTH:

TO TALK ONE'S HEAD OFF

means to talk non-stop until the other person switches off and no longer listens to what is being said.

e.g. Task-oriented payment specialists can often miss important information if they stop listening to the 'boring bla bla' of other cultures.



MEETING CULTURES

Typically, a German-style meeting is well-prepared with an agenda which has been read by all participants before the meeting starts. There may have been a 'pre-meeting' to decide on the objectives of the meeting. Often there is a Power Point presentation at the start of the session. The presenter will then ask the participants for questions or points of discussion. There is usually a clear conclusion at the end of the meeting. Such a meeting style is typical for a task-oriented environment where 'time is money', the structure is clear and the goals well-defined.

In relationship-oriented cultures, however, the idea of a 'meeting' is to do just that – to meet to discuss an ongoing problem or task. It is important to get everyone to participate and provide input for the topic under discussion. To the outsider, such a meeting can seem very chaotic and unstructured. But if moderated well, the advantage is that everyone is 'in the boat' and knows what is going on and what is to be done next. The problem is that the task-oriented listener feels that the other person is **'talking his head off'** and stops listening.

There is a structure to such meetings, but it is more underlying and hidden. For example, there may not be an

agenda distributed beforehand to the participants. The chairperson will often ask the participants for their contributions (*Beiträge*) at the beginning of the meeting. These will go on a flip-chart or board. There will usually be a second flip-chart for 'asides' – points that cannot be discussed at this meeting but should be carried over to the next session.

Expressions used in meetings

Greeting

Good morning, everyone. Thank you for coming.

OK. Shall we make a start.

This may be about 15 minutes after the planned starting time as this gives participants a chance to have a short chat with each other – and a cup of tea!

Overview

The reason for this meeting is to ...

Are there any further points for discussion?

The meeting is scheduled to finish at ...

Would you take the minutes, John?

To 'take the minutes' (*Protokoll schreiben*) is an important aspect of a well-run meeting as the minutes will record all the contributions of the participants as well as next steps.

The less detailed the summary of the other

Encouraging other people's input

What do you think, Peter?

How do you feel about that, Roger?

A skillful chairperson will ensure that participants have 'had their say' – have said whatever is important to them.

Interrupting someone

If I might interrupt you for a moment.

Sorry to interrupt, but ...

Could I break in here a moment?

Could I come in at this point?

It is not polite just to interrupt a speaker without asking 'permission'.



Keeping the meeting on track

We're running short of time.

If we could just get back on track here.

I'd like to move on to the next point.

Even though such a meeting may seem to be chaotic to the outsider, a good chairperson will watch the time and make sure that the discussion does not get too far away from the main topic

Summarising the meeting

Have we left anything out?

Is there anything more to say?

Good, then I think we've covered everything.

Let me go over the main points.

The next steps are ...

I would like to wrap the meeting up at this point.

That's all for today.

I'm grateful to you all for your time.