

Ranking the Factors Contributing to Effective Meetings in Isfahan Gas Company

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Abstract The present study was aimed to identify and rank the factors contributing to the effective meeting in Isfahan Gas Company. Based on Streibel (2007), the factors contributing to the effective meeting include three groups of factors before, during, and after meeting. The statistical population of this study includes chairpersons, secretaries, and members that are present in the meetings. A self-administrated questionnaire has been used to collect the data. The face validity has been employed to examine validity of the questionnaire. Also reliability of the questionnaire has been examined through Cronbachs' Alpha Coefficient. The coefficient 0.90 confirms reliability of the questionnaire. In order to analyze the data, one-sample t test, Freedman test, and analysis of variance has been employed in the SPSS20. The results of one-sample t test reveal that the level of factors contributing to the effective meeting is less than average level. On the other hand, the results of Freedman test indicate that planning is the most important and following is the least important factor among factors contributing to the effective meeting. Finally, the results of analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicate that there are significant relationships between members' position in meeting and their viewpoint about factors contributing to the effective meeting.

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Key words Meeting, Effective Meeting, Agenda, Meeting Components, Isfahan Gas Company

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1. Introduction

In today's world, the complexity in organizational structures and activities leads to implementation of several meetings for consultation and interaction with other members in order to exchange their information and adopt an effective decision. The effective meeting is an integrative part of organizational life. The managers implement several meetings to exchange information and solve organizational problems through consultation and interaction (Kendall, 2007: 54). When these meetings are managed result in the organization's improvement and efficiency. The meetings not only results in information exchange and desirable decision-making, but also it results in the communications improvement and departments understanding from each other. These meetings should be managed properly similar to other organizational activities, unless not only they cannot be helpful in improving organization's efficiency and effectiveness, but also they result in inter-organizational conflicts (Ventus, 2012: 45). An effective meeting helps managers and solves their problems. On the other hand, it can waste their time. It is obvious that meeting is an inevitable phenomenon in the organizations. It is necessary to pay attention to the effective factors on the effective meetings in order to achieve organization's successfulness. Therefore, the present study was aimed to examine and rank the factors contributing to the effective meetings in Isfahan Gas Company.

2. Literature review

Meeting

In the third millennium, cooperation and reciprocal communication are the most important needs of modern organizations. Meeting is the singular method of creating cooperation and team-working spirit. Different definitions have been presented for meeting. Some of these definitions have been indicated in this section. Meeting refers to a group of individuals for discussing about a subject or related subjects in order to acquire a goal or different goals in a specific place and time (Brandenburg, 2008: 12). Also meeting refers to a group of two or more peoples who have common goals and use communications as an instrument for acquiring these goals (Mosavi and Karamlo, 2007). On the other hand, a meeting refers to the group of two or more individuals that have common functions and missions in a specific place or time in order to discuss about subject (solving an organizational problem or decision making) and acquire the appropriate solutions (Rooney, 2007: 43).

Effective meetings: the process of effective meetings is a complex process that needs a special knowledge and skill that can be educated and practiced. Unfortunately, many of the managers are not educated formally in terms of meeting preparation, direction, and participation. They also do not know how to direct and coordinate a meeting. Meeting is a very cost-spending activity. Many of managers have not any knowledge about meetings costs and do not pay any attention to the costs of meetings such as monetary, time, and poor decision making (Hans Comb, 2012: 18). Effective meeting requires having knowledge about different techniques of meeting implementation. Meeting can be effective instrument in any workplace. This can motivates the employees, reinforces cooperation and team working spirit, develops the plan and design, predicts the futures trend, and finally improves productivity (Streinbel, 2007: 46). It is important to do necessary activities for effectiveness of meetings after deciding about its implementation. Which activities can be done for decreasing additional costs? It is necessary to implement the planning process in order to make meetings effectiveness (Streinbel, 2007: 46).

Many authors have presented different viewpoints about the factors contributing to the effective meetings. Some of these have been indicated in table 1.

Table 1. The factors contributing to the effective meeting from different authors' viewpoint

Authors	Year	The effective factor on the effective meeting
Mahmodi et al.	2011	An effective meeting is one that its goals are perceived by members and there is compatibility between meeting entity and its members.
Hanscomb	2012	There are three factors that should be attended in order to make a meeting effective. These include determining the expected outcomes of meeting, defining the agenda, and having preparation before meeting.
Greta	2009	He believes that 90% of a meeting success depends on the members' preparation. He also indicates that the goals should be defined before begging of the meeting. He also believes that place, time, and members should are determined before begging of the meeting.
Brandenburg	2008	He indicates five effective factors on the effective meeting. these include readiness prior to the meeting, the beginning of meeting, direction of meeting process, the end of meeting, goal, expected results, time limitation, members, facilitators, evaluation of the meeting effectiveness
Rooney	2007	He recognizes six effective factors on effective meeting (such as concentration on the agenda, facilitators, conclusion, following).
Streibel	2007	He believes that the factors contributing to effective meeting can be categorized to three activities including before, during, and after the meeting activities. The before meeting activities include planning for better implementation. During meeting activities include the beginning of meeting, directing the meeting (meeting concentration and facilitation), and the result of meeting. After meeting activities refer to bill following.

As indicated in the past sections, there are several viewpoints about the factors contributing to effective meeting. In the present study, the effective factors have been considered from Streibel (2007) viewpoint. As Streibel (2007) indicated, these factors can be categorized in three sets including before, during, and after the meeting activities. Before meeting activities include planning for better implementation. During

meeting activities include the beginning of meeting, directing the meeting (meeting concentration and facilitation), and the result of meeting. After meeting activities refer to bill following. These factors have been presented in figure 1.

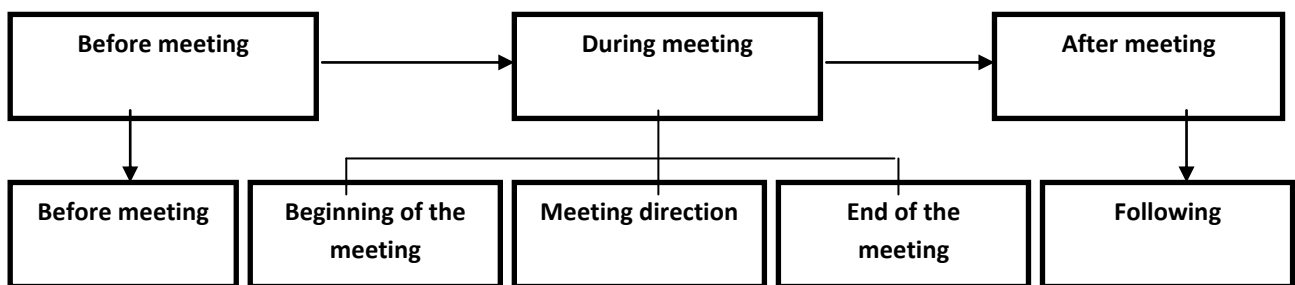


Figure 1. The effective factors on the effective meeting from Streibel (2007) viewpoint

Hypotheses development

The following hypotheses have been developed according to Streibel (2007) model.

H1: level of the factors contributing to effective meeting is average.

H2: average of factors contributing to effective meeting is similar to each other.

H3: there are significant differences between chairpersons, secretaries, and members’ viewpoints about factors contributing to effective meeting.

3. Research methodology

As indicated in the previous sections, the purpose of this study is to rank the factors contributing to the effective meeting in Isfahan Gas Company. This study is a practical research from purpose perspective. The statistical population of this study includes all of 100 chairpersons, secretaries, and members of Isfahan Gas Company that were participated in 20 meeting in this company. In order to collect the data, a self-administrated questionnaire with 56 items has been employed. The questionnaire has been provided for professors of management department of university of Isfahan and they were asked to indicate their corrections and modifications. The final version of the questionnaire has been developed after correcting and modifying it. Therefore, validity of the questionnaire has been examined and confirmed through face validity. Also Cronbachs’ Alpha has been employed to examine reliability of the questionnaire. The results of Cronbachs’ Alpha have been presented for every components of effective meeting autonomously.

Table 2. The results of Cronbachs’ Alpha Coefficient

Effective factors on effective meeting	Cronbachs’ Alpha	Effective factors on effective meeting	Cronbachs’ Alpha
Planning	0.85	End of the meeting	0.87
Beginning of the meeting	0.89	Following	0.88
Direction	0.79		

In order to analyze the data and test the hypotheses, one-sample t test, Freedman test, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) have been employed in SPSS20.

3.1. Findings

The findings of demographic characteristics of the sample members indicate that only 08% of the respondents were female and 92% of them were male. From educational levels perspective, 55% of the respondents had B.A. and 45% higher educational levels. Also the findings indicate that the average of job experience is 10 years. Finally, 20% of the respondents were participated in more than one meeting.

The average of effective factors on the effective meeting has been presented in table 3.

Table 3. The average of effective factors on the effective meeting

Effective factors on the effective meeting	Average	Standard deviation
Planning	2.58	0.431
Beginning of the meeting	2.81	0.358
Direction	2.73	0.498
End of the meeting	2.35	0.413
Following	2.60	0.368

As the results of this of table 6 indicate, the beginning of meeting has the most average and the end of meeting has the least average. In order to examine level of factors contributing to on the effective meeting, one-sample t test has been employed. The results of one-sample t test have been presented in table 4.

Table 4. The results of one-sample t test

Factors	Average	Confidence distance		Hypothesis status
		Down level	Upper level	
Planning	2.58	-0.503	-0.139	Confirmed
Beginning of the meeting	2.81	-0.842	-0.445	Confirmed
Meeting direction	2.73	-0.497	-0.497	Confirmed
End of the meeting	2.35	-0.391	-0.075	Confirmed
Following	2.60	-0.605	-0.244	Confirmed

3.2. Prioritization of factors contributing to the effective meeting

In order to rank factors contributing to the effective meeting, Freedman test has been employed. The results of this test have been presented in table 5.

Table 5. The results of Freedman test

Test	X2	Sig	Status
Freedman	30.63	0.007	Confirmed

The results of table 5 indicate that the Freedman test can be used to rank the factors contributing to the effective meeting. The ranks of factors contributing to effective meeting have been presented in table 6.

Table 6. Ranks of the effective factors on the effective meeting

Ranks	Factors	Average
1	Planning	3.30
2	Meeting direction	3.22
3	Following	3.10
4	Beginning of the meeting	3.02
5	End of the meeting	2.66

In order to compare the viewpoints of chairpersons, secretaries, and members about the factors contributing to effective meeting, analysis of variance (ANOVA) has been employed. The results of this test indicate that there are significant differences between chairpersons, secretaries, and members' viewpoint about the factors contributing to effective meeting ($p < 0.05$). These results have been presented in table 7.

Table 7. The results of analysis of variance (ANOVA)

Position in the meeting	Average	Standard deviation	F	P
Chairperson	67.00	2.82	0.879	0.320
Secretary	62.95	9.60		
Other member	64.09	10.40		

4. Conclusions

The present study was aimed to identify and rank the factors contributing to effective meeting in Isfahan Gas Company. Based on Streibel (2007), the factors contributing to effective meeting include three groups of factors. These include before, during, and after meeting activities. The statistical population of this study includes chairpersons, secretaries, and members that are present in the meetings. A self-administrated questionnaire has been employed to collect data. The face validity has been employed to examine validity of the questionnaire. Also reliability of the questionnaire has been examined through Cronbachs' Alpha. The coefficient 0.90 confirmed reliability of the questionnaire. In order to analyze the data, one-sample t test, Freedman test, and analysis of variance has been employed in the SPSS20. The first hypothesis of this study indicates that level of the factors contributing to effective meeting is average. In order to test this hypothesis, one-sample t test has been employed. The results of this test indicate that the meetings are not implemented on a regular basis in Isfahan Gas Company. These results also reveal that the factors contributing to effective meeting are not attended in this company. The second hypothesis of this study indicates that average of the factors contributing to effective meeting is similar to each other. Also Freedman test has been employed to rank the factors contributing to effective meeting from chairpersons, secretaries, and members' viewpoint. The results of Freedman test indicate that the planning before meeting has the most important and the following has the least important in this company. As the results show the planning before meeting is most important effective factor on the effective meeting from chairpersons, secretaries, and members' viewpoint. It seems that the planning before meeting is not attended by managers significantly. Therefore, it can be considered as one of the factors contributing to effective meeting. The third hypothesis of this study indicates that there are significant differences between chairpersons, secretaries, and members' viewpoints about the effective factors on the effective meeting. In order to test this hypothesis, analysis of variance (ANOVA) has been employed in SPSS20. The results of analysis of variance (ANOVA) reveal that chairpersons, secretaries, and members have different viewpoint about the factors contributing to effective meeting. With regard to the results of this study, it is suggested that the managers pay attention to the following statements for improving effective meeting in their organization.

- The meeting members must be determined before beginning of the meeting and the meeting time must be specialized.
- Meeting must be predetermined and it must have specific agendas.
- Meeting members must be informed before meeting.
- Meeting is begun and finished in a specific time.
- The agendas and goals of the meeting must be attended.
- The necessary followings must be done about bill after meeting.
- Meetings must be implemented for chairpersons, secretaries, and other members.

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