Whether you are expecting 10, 50 or 100’s of people, a community meeting can be a time consuming and nerve-wracking affair. Will people be angry? Have tough questions? What if they have a question and you don’t know the answer yet?

If you’re organising a community meeting for a project or issue here’s a checklist to help you set it up for a successful outcome.

**\_\_Have a plan**

A community meeting without a plan is a recipe for disaster. Your plan will detail:

* the outcomes you want to achieve
* the process (facilitation plan) to achieve the outcomes
* resources required
* staff roles
* escalation plan

A person is less likely to be angry if the event is well planned, genuine and welcomes participation.

**\_\_Hire an independent facilitator**

If you’re expecting a lot of people, have a contentious issue or an angry community you should hire an independent facilitator. A facilitator will help plan the session and will write up a report of the meeting for both you and the community.

**\_\_Pick the right venue**

A venue is an important consideration. It should be accessible for all, easy to find, comfortable and have amenities (make sure the amenities are accessible and easy to find).

Make sure there is someone present who knows how to operate the lights, heat and/or cooling!

**\_\_Organise catering**

It doesn’t need to be fancy but make sure you reserve some of your budget to have tea, coffee, water and something to eat available.

Alcohol should **never** be available.

**\_\_Provide ~~good~~ great customer service!**

This checklist isn’t in order of importance but if it was Customer service would be number 1. Have your best people available to greet people, sign them in, make conversation and ensure everyone knows what’s going on.

The venue, catering and the customer service you provide all help set the scene and the mood of your meeting. A person is less likely to be angry if they are comfortable and have been welcomed and treated well.

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**\_\_All staff have a role and know what it is**

All staff at the meeting should have a role and should know what it is. Staff who do not have a role should not attend.

**\_\_Hold a compulsory staff briefing**

A briefing should be held for staff before meeting participants arrive. A briefing is your opportunity to make sure everyone knows how the meeting will run, what is expected of them, what everyone’s role is and who is in charge.

All staff should know where the amenities, access points are so they can help people.

**\_\_Hold a compulsory practice session**

Anyone who is presenting or is likely to be asked questions should have a practice run. It can really help to prepare staff. So grab a bunch of colleagues together and fire questions off – these questions will possibly be asked at the event.

**\_\_Uniforms and name badges for everyone**

All staff should be easily identifiable in uniforms and have an easy to read name badge. This will present a professional brand and help your staff be easily identifiable.

**\_\_Ask for feedback (from staff and participants)**

Evaluation exercises will help you report on the event and improve processes for the next time.

Make your notes on actions you need to take to plan a successful community meeting here.

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