When people meet,
timing is everything.

User Manual

version 1.0

The SU5 Group, Inc.

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Acknowledgments

Contributors to *Meeting Maestro* were:

Original Concept and Design	Michael Suman
Design and Implementation	John Hopkins, Kenneth Clark, Mary Martin
Quality Assurance	Felicity Wasser, Mary Martin, John Hopkins
Documentation	Michael Suman, Mary Martin, John Hopkins
***Meeting Maestro* Logo**	Laura Hunt
Marketing and Motivation	Darlene Hopkins

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John Hopkins, Darlene Hopkins, Kenneth Clark, and Mary Martin contributions provided courtesy of The SU5 Group, Inc.

The SU5 Group, Inc.
6850 Manhattan Blvd. #102
Fort Worth, TX 76120

817-492-0344, voice
817-492-0345, fax
http://www.su5.com

info@su5.com, SU5 questions
support@su5.com, *Meeting Maestro* questions, bug reports
maestro@su5.com, suggestions and stories

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1 Introduction

A typical meeting of eight mid-level managers can cost several thousand dollars. Most executives admit meetings are, by far, the largest single consumer of their time. It is not uncommon for the average chief executive to spend twenty hours a week in meetings.

Meeting Maestro is an easy-to-use system that will expose areas of meetings that need improvement. *Meeting Maestro* provides resources for improving meeting skills by measuring **individual participation**, **group dynamics**, and **meeting efficiency**.

Issues covered:

- Balancing the presence of power in meetings
- Helping people who take too long to make their point
- Assisting people who struggle to get the floor
- Breaking the habit of commenting on every issue
- Starting and stopping meetings on time
- Understanding meeting costs and improving efficiency
- When, during a meeting, is it most beneficial to make your points
- Agenda time management

Very possibly the biggest positive impact *Meeting Maestro* will have on meeting participants is **awareness**. Most people are unaware of how they are perceived by others when it comes to how often and how long they talk. The first time people see the facts regarding how much of a meeting they do or do not dominate (compared to their peers) it is an experience they will think of every time they prepare to speak in a meeting.

This system has not been designed to teach “how to” run effective meetings, but it does provide the user with a tool to determine potential problem areas within meetings and offers solutions to solve those problems. This manual includes a list of key guidelines for managing meetings (see section 9.7, “Ten Keys to Managing a Successful Meeting”), in addition to sections devoted to improving your meetings based on the measurements taken with *Meeting Maestro*. For more detailed information, there are several books listed in the bibliography that can help you “deep dive” into the rules and guidelines of conducting a successful meeting.

2 *Meeting Maestro* - A Four-Step Process

Measure, **Report**, **Analyze** and **Improve** are the four steps at the core of the *Meeting Maestro* system. The user first uses *Meeting Maestro* to measure individual participation and group dynamics in a meeting. Based on the measurements taken, *Meeting Maestro* produces a report. Next the user must analyze the report's findings and determine which areas of meeting efficiency warrant improvement. Based on this analysis, there are several sections in this manual that offer improvement strategies enabling the user to manage a more productive meeting. Once people experience *Meeting Maestro*'s four step system, it will immediately raise their expectations of meeting efficiency and balance.

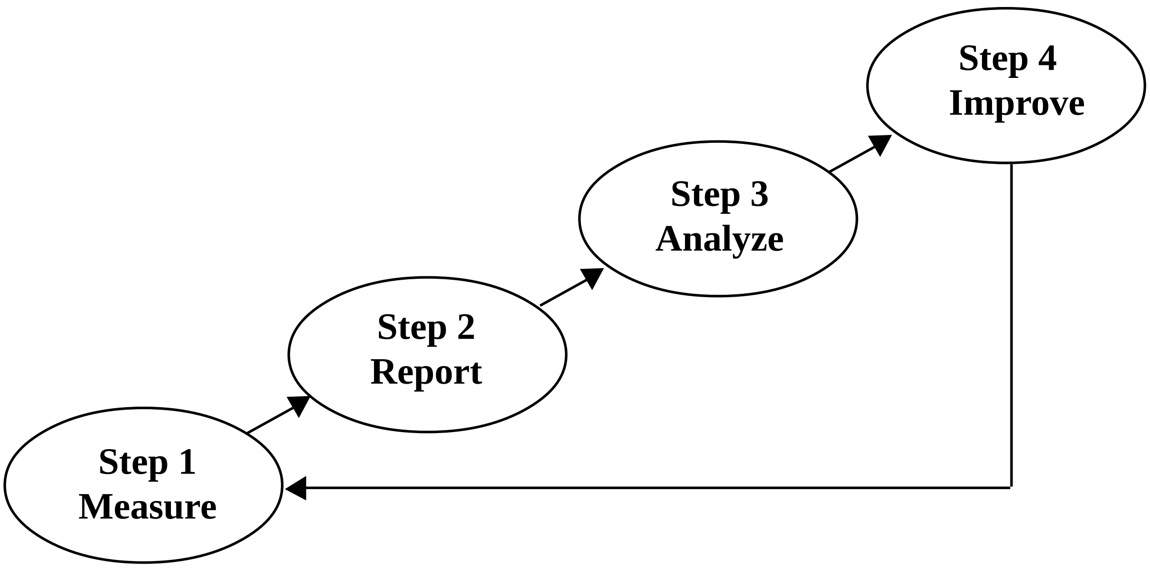


Figure 1: The Four-Step Process.

To establish a continual improvement loop, this process should be a task that is never complete. If measuring something once leads to improvement, why stop? As meetings become more efficient, perhaps the frequency of measurement can be reduced. However, any group that meets once a week should be monitored at least twice a year.

To make this happen two types of communication must take place. First, a letter or announcement should be distributed to your organization informing everyone that this measurement system is available (see example in Appendix A). When the meeting measurement is complete and a report is prepared, it should be distributed with a cover letter (see Appendix A) and and access to this meeting manual. If you would like extra copies of the manual, they are available for order from SU5.

3 Getting Started

Before installing *Meeting Maestro*, you may want to make a backup copy of the *Meeting Maestro* files for use if the original files become damaged.

3.1 What You Need

Meeting Maestro requires a Macintosh or compatible computer running System 7 (U.S. English) or higher and at least 3 MB of RAM available to run Meeting Maestro. To read or print the documentation requires enough RAM to use Adobe's Acrobat™ Reader, which requires up to 3.5 MB of RAM (or 5 MB on Power Macintosh). It is recommended that you use a portable computer when running this program in a meeting environment for convenience.

Meeting Maestro has been tested as far back as Macintosh IIci, 68030, 25Mhz, system 7.1. It may well run on earlier models, but does require Color Quickdraw. It has also been tested on as recent a model as iMac (PowerPC G3, 233Mhz, system 8.5).

Note that there are separate 68K, PowerPC and demo versions. The 68K and demo versions will run fine in emulation on a PowerPC-based Macintosh. But the PowerPC version will not run at all on a 68K based Macintosh.

To use *Meeting Maestro*, you should be familiar with the basic Macintosh operations, such as working with documents, windows, menus, dialogs, and the mouse. If you are not familiar with these operations, please refer to your *Apple Macintosh User's Guide*.

To read on screen or print this documentation you will need to have Adobe's "Acrobat™ Reader" version 3.01 or greater installed on your computer. If you do not already have this installed, you can either download the latest version from Adobe's website at http://www.adobe.com.

To read the ReadMe file, you need the application SimpleText.

3.2 Installation

To install the Meeting Maestro 1.0 from the electronically downloadable archive:

Please follow the instructions provided by the distributor. The installation will take place from an Installer VISE Lite archive. Just double-click on the installer, whose name is one of the following:

"MM_100_68K_Installer," "MM_100_PPC_Installer," or "MM_100_DEMO_Installer."

Double-clicking on one of the above installer file will bring up an installer splash screen, followed by a ReadMe file and an installer dialog that lets you choose where you would like to install the software. All the software installed goes into the folder you specify. There are no control panels, extensions, fonts, etc. The files downloaded include:

“Meeting Maestro 1.0 License”--the End User License Agreement, a SimpleText document;
“Meeting Maestro 1.0 68K” or “Meeting Maestro 1.0 PPC” or “Meeting Maestro 1.0 DEMO”;
“ReadMe”--late breaking news, also a SimpleText document; and
“Meeting Maestro 1.0 Manual.pdf”--this user manual, which requires Adobe Acrobat Reader 3.0.
and the installer will create an “Installer Log File” to tell indicate just what was installed.

3.3 Technical Support

The manual contains lots of useful information and is pretty short. Please read it.

If you are having trouble with getting the installer from the electronic distributor, please contact the distributor for assistance.

If you are having trouble with Adobe Acrobat Reader, please contact Adobe at http://www.adobe.com.

If your problem is running the installer, running Meeting Maestro or understanding the manual:

Try the support web page for frequently asked questions about Meeting Maestro at http://www.su5.com.

If you have a question suitable for e-mail, send it to support@su5.com. Please describe your problem as completely as possible.

Please check the web site for more information on the availability of other technical support options.

If we cannot resolve your problem and you want your money back, please contact the distributor to ask about their refund policy and procedures. It is strongly recommended that you get the demonstration version before buying the real thing.

3.3 Demonstration Version

There is a demonstration version available. You can get to it from http://www.su5.com, It is almost fully functional. The only restrictions are that there is no printing and it expires in 30 days. Even with no printing, the information that would be printed report is still viewable from the screen, formatted for the current printer selection and page setup choices.

The SU5 Group, Inc. retains all rights to the software in the demonstration version. You are granted a non-exclusive right to use the software for 30 days after you first run the application. You may also give a copy of the demonstration version installer to others. You may not sell the demonstration version. The other restrictions not explicitly waived above are the same as with the “End User License Agreement.” on page 2. If you want a license to include the demonstration version in a distribution for which there is a charge, please contact The SU5 Group, Inc. for permission. Send requests to info@su5.com.

4 Measure

Meeting Maestro takes advantage of your computer's timing, counting, and mathematical capabilities to measure meetings. It has been designed to be used by a **meeting monitor**, a person who attends the meeting (with a computer), but does not participate in it. The monitor should sit in a non-obvious location and should not do anything which would draw the attention of the people in the meeting.

4.1 Basic Meeting Data

Prior to the scheduled meeting time, the meeting monitor should enter some basic meeting data:

Show

In the Show area of the *Meeting Maestro* document window (see Figure 2), there are two settings for viewing which the meeting monitor may wish to set prior to the meeting:

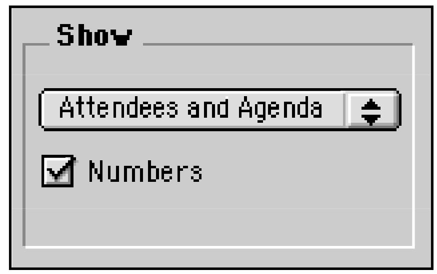


Figure 2: The Show area is located in the top, left corner of the Meeting Maestro window.

Attendees and Agenda

Meeting Maestro is designed to measure individual attendees' participation in meetings, tracking when individuals speak, how long they contribute each time, and their interaction with other meeting attendees. It is also an excellent way to track the flow of the meeting by measuring how much time is spent on each agenda item.

By using the **Show** popup menu on the *Meeting Maestro* document window, the meeting monitor may select to view only an Attendees list, only an Agenda list, or both depending on what the monitor wishes to track during the meeting session.

Numbers

The **Numbers** checkbox under the Show heading on the *Meeting Maestro* document window allows the monitor to view the number fields to the left of the Attendees and Agenda buttons. Initially, the button number fields are empty. These **Button Numbers** may be assigned sequential numbers by the **Auto Number** menu item (For more information about the Auto Number menu item, see section 6.1, "Auto Number"). Also, the user may click in them and fill each one with a 1 or 2 digit number. When the Numbers checkbox is not checked, the Button Numbers will not be shown. If the Numbers checkbox is checked on, the Button Numbers will be displayed, and they may be edited by the meeting monitor. Button Numbers are optional, but if they are assigned, then typing a button number during a meeting has the same result as clicking on the button. (See Sections 5.3, "Measuring as Attendees Speak" and 5.4, "Measuring Agenda Items.")

4.2 Cost & Time

In the Cost & Time area of the *Meeting Maestro* document window (see Figure 3), the meeting monitor may enter data related to the projected costs of the meeting and goals related to time.

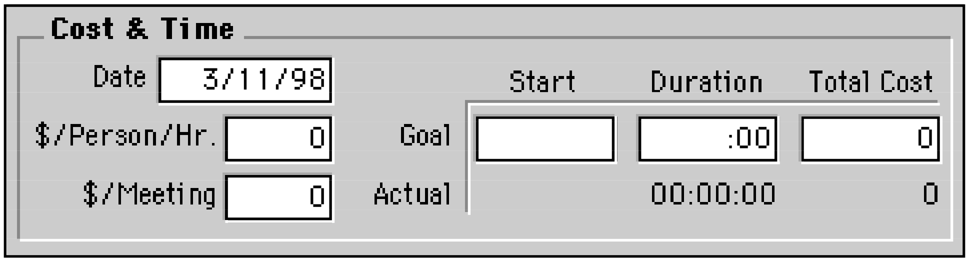


Figure 3: The Cost & Time area is located in the top, right corner of the *Meeting Maestro* window.

Date

The **Date** field is automatically set when a document is created. The meeting monitor may modify the current date by typing in the date field. This field is not editable once the Start button has been clicked and meeting measurement has commenced. But after clicking the Stop button, the date will be editable again if the monitor wishes to make a change.

$/Person/Hr

In the **$/Person/Hr** field, the meeting monitor is to enter an estimate of the average hourly cost for all meeting attendees. To be realistic, try to include all employee related costs, not just salary converted to dollars per hour. Often an accountant can provide an “encumbrance factor” that can be multiplied by salary to get a better estimate of real costs. Later, this figure will be used to calculate the total cost of a meeting. It can be quite a revelation when meeting participants realize how expensive a meeting really is. (see section 9.6, “Understanding Meeting Costs and Improving Efficiency”)

$/Meeting

In the **$/Meeting** field, the meeting monitor is to enter the sum of any one time costs of holding a meeting, such as room rental, speaker stipend, equipment rental, and/or refreshments. This figure will be added to the meeting attendee costs to arrive at the total cost of a meeting.

Goals

Goals are the projected objectives in time and cost for any scheduled meeting. *Meeting Maestro* measures three of these time and cost goals:

Start - The meeting monitor enters the time at which the meeting was scheduled to begin in the Goal’s **Start** field. (The format is HH:MMam or HH:MMpm.) The **Actual Start** time, displayed directly below the Goal’s Start, will be automatically entered when the monitor hits the Start button to begin meeting measurement. It is important that your computer’s clock-time is set correctly. The Actual Start gets the time from the computer internally, and if the computer’s clock-time is wrong, the Actual Start will be incorrect as well. Later in the Report phase, the Goal’s Start time will be compared to the Actual Start time to determine the success of starting the meeting as scheduled. (see section 9.4, "Starting and Stopping Meetings on Time")

Duration - The meeting monitor enters the expected meeting duration.into the Goal's **Duration** field. (acceptable formats are hh:mm:ss, mm:ss, mm, :ss, where hh are in hours, mm minutes, and ss seconds) The **Actual Duration**, displayed directly below the Goal's Duration field, is a real-time display of the hours, minutes and seconds elapsed during a meeting. This Actual Duration timer begins to increment when the meeting measurement is started with the press of the Start button and continues to display the time for as long as the meeting is recorded until the Stop button is pushed. If the meeting monitor resumes measuring again by hitting the Start button again, the Actual Duration will begin incrementing again. On the report, the Duration goal may be compared to the Actual Duration of the meeting to determine the success of stopping the meeting on time. (see section 9.4, "Starting and Stopping Meetings on Time")

Total Cost - The meeting monitor enters the expected cost of the entire meeting into the Goal's **Total Cost** field. This takes into account not only the hourly cost of the meeting attendees but also the one time costs entered into the $/Meeting field, such as room rental and meal costs. The **Actual Total Cost**, displayed directly below the Goal's Total Cost, is a real-time display of the cost of the meeting as the meeting progresses. When the meeting measurement is started with the press of the Start button, the Actual Total Cost begins to increment based on the estimated costs entered in the $/Person/Hr. and $/Meeting fields. It will continue to increment the cost of the meeting until the Stop button is pushed indicating a break in the meeting or the meeting's conclusion. If the meeting monitor resumes measuring by hitting the Start button again, the Actual Total Cost will begin incrementing again. On the report, the Goal Total Cost figure may be compared to the Actual Total Cost displayed to determine if the meeting costs were in keeping with expectations.

4.3 Button Cluster Selection

A **button cluster** refers to the single unit grouping of a Button Number (if showing), an In checkbox and an Attendee or Agenda Button. (For information on In checkboxes, see section 5.2, "Entrances and Exits") The meeting monitor must be able to select a button cluster to resize Buttons, add more button clusters at a specified place in the Attendee or Agenda lists, or delete button clusters.

To select a button cluster, click on the area immediately around and between the Button Number (if showing), the In checkbox and the accompanying Attendee or Agenda Button. A frame with four selection handles will appear around the button cluster indicating that it is selected (see Figure 8).

To select multiple button clusters, hold down the Command key while clicking on the other button clusters to be selected. To remove a button cluster from a multiple selection, hold down the Command key and click on the button cluster to be unselected.

Button cluster selection differs from the selection of a Attendee or Agenda Button for editing purposes or to indicate that a person is speaking or an agenda item is being covered. Selecting a single Attendee or Agenda Button and not a button cluster will not enable the user to resize buttons, add new Attendees or Agenda Items in specified places, or delete button clusters.

4.4 Meeting Attendees

Now, the meeting monitor may begin entering the names of the meeting participants. If the monitor receives a list of expected attendees prior to the meeting, this may be done ahead of time. If that is not possible, the meeting monitor may enter the names of the meeting participants as they enter the room. To enter each participant, click on a rectangular button in the **Attendees** section of the *Meeting Maestro* window (see Figure 4), and begin typing in each individual's name. You may tab from one button to the next.

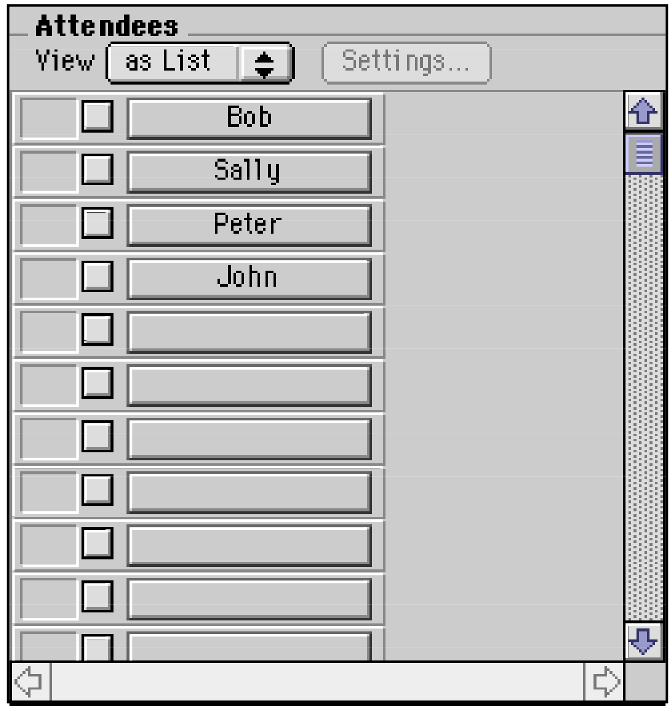


Figure 4: The Attendees area of the *Meeting Maestro* window with attendee names entered on four of the Attendee buttons.

After the Start control has been pushed and meeting measurement has commenced, the process of entering a meeting attendee's name is slightly different. The meeting monitor must click and hold an Attendee button and wait briefly for the button to become editable. This time delay is a necessary feature, during the meeting recording time, to allow *Meeting Maestro* to distinguish between a click to indicate that a person has begun speaking from a click to add another meeting attendee's name to the list. After the button has been edited, press the Enter key on the keyboard to exit from the editing mode. Once the Stop control has been pressed and the meeting is no longer being recorded, clicking on a button will once again cause it to immediately become editable.

Add One Attendee

In *Meeting Maestro* by default, there are 32 Attendee buttons which appear in the Attendee list of a new file. If another button is needed, the meeting monitor may add a single button using the menu item **Add One Attendee**, found in the Edit pull-down menu. After choosing Add One Attendee, a new button cluster is added to the end of the Attendee list if no button clusters are selected. If any button clusters are selected, then the new button will be inserted before the first one selected.

Add Attendees

If multiple extra buttons for Attendees are needed, the meeting monitor may add several buttons at one time using the menu item **Add Attendees**, found in the Edit pull-down menu. After choosing the Add Attendees menu item, the Add Attendees dialog (see Figure 5) will be displayed. In this dialog, the monitor should type in the number of buttons to be added into the editable field. After typing in the number, the monitor may press OK and exit the dialog. This will add the specified number of buttons to the end of the Attendee list if no button clusters are selected. If any button clusters are selected, then the new buttons will be inserted before the first selected button cluster.

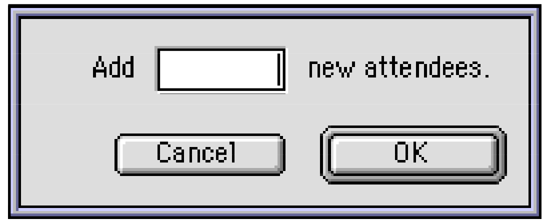


Figure 5: The Add Attendees dialog allows the user to enter multiple new attendees buttons.

Remove Attendees

To remove one or more Attendee buttons from the list, the meeting monitor must first select the button clusters to be deleted (see section 4.3, "Button Cluster Selection"). After the button clusters that are to be deleted are selected, the monitor should choose **Remove Attendees** in the Edit pull-down menu. This will delete all selected button clusters.

Note: The Remove Attendees feature is meant to permanently remove meeting participants names from the list. It is not to be used for when a person exits the meeting early. Most likely, a person which had some input in the meeting should still remain part of the meeting data even if that person left the meeting early. An Attendee's entrance or exit during a meeting should be noted by using the In checkbox, which appears just to the left of the Attendee's name. (For further explanation about the In checkboxes, see section 5.2, "Entrances and Exits")

4.5 Meeting Agenda

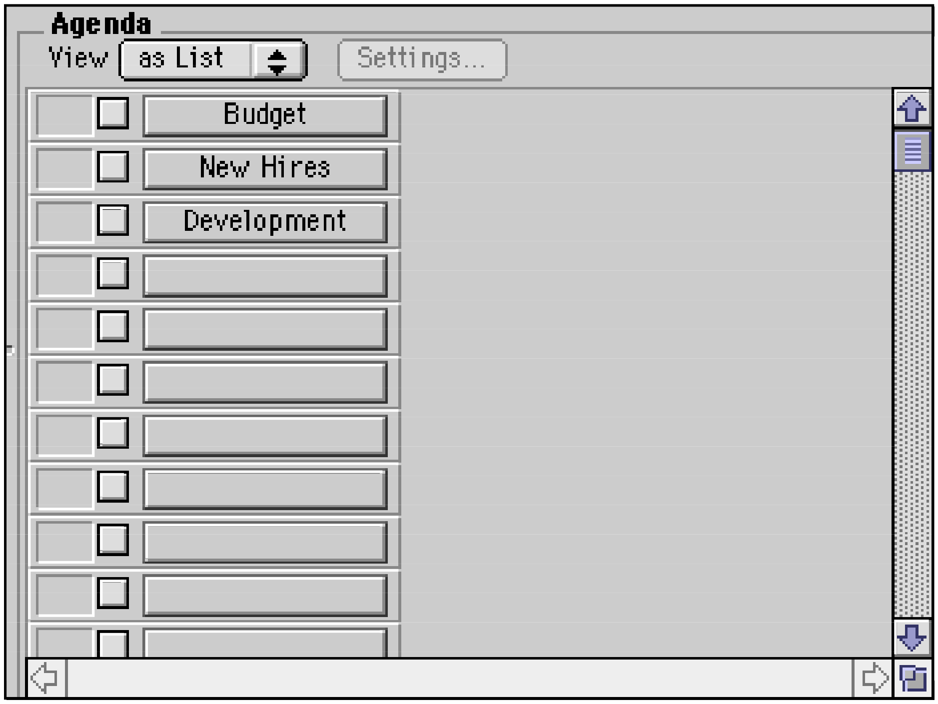


Figure 6: The Agenda area of the *Meeting Maestro* window with agenda items entered on three of the Agenda buttons.

The meeting monitor may begin entering items of the meeting's agenda on the rectangular buttons in the **Agenda** display area (see Figure 6). If the monitor receives a list of expected agenda items prior to the meeting, this may be done ahead of time. If that is not possible, the meeting monitor may enter the agenda items as the meeting progresses. To enter each agenda item, click on a rectangular button in the Agenda area of the *Meeting Maestro* window, and begin typing in each item. You may tab from one button to the next.

Once the Start control has been pushed and meeting measurement has commenced, the meeting monitor must click and hold the Agenda button and wait briefly for the button to become editable. This time delay is a necessary feature, during the meeting recording time, to allow *Meeting Maestro* to distinguish between clicking on a button to indicate that an agenda item is being covered from clicking on the button to add another agenda item to the list. After the button has been edited, press the Enter key on the keyboard to exit from the editing mode. Once the Stop control has been pressed and the meeting is no longer being recorded, clicking on a button will once again cause it to immediately become editable.

Agenda buttons may be titled with more descriptions other than a specific agenda item. There may be other periods of time in a meeting the user would like to measure, such as:

- Off agenda items
- Coffee time
- Lunch break
- Video viewing time
- Supplier presentation
- General chat (documenting excessive "chat time" can be especially revealing.)

Section 9.9, "Agenda Time Management", describes in greater detail the usefulness of measuring periods of time during a meeting.

Add One Agenda Item

In *Meeting Maestro* by default, there are 16 Agenda buttons which appear in the Agenda list of a new file. If another button is needed, the meeting monitor may add a single button with the menu item **Add One Agenda Item**, found in the Edit pull-down menu. After choosing Add One Agenda Item, a new button is added to the end of the Agenda list if no button clusters are selected. If any button clusters are selected, then the new button will be inserted before the first selected button cluster.

Add Agenda Items

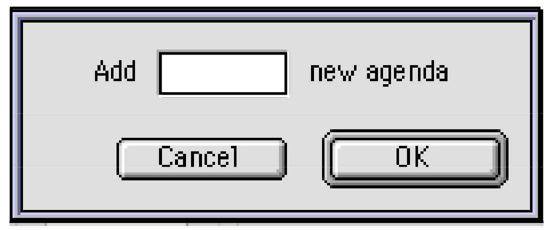


Figure 7: The Add Agenda Items dialog allows the user to enter multiple new agenda item buttons.

If multiple extra buttons for Agenda Items are needed, the meeting monitor may add several buttons at one time using the menu item **Add Agenda Items**, found in the Edit pull-down menu. After choosing Add Agenda Items, the Add Agenda Items dialog (see Figure 7) will be displayed. In this dialog, the monitor should type in the number of buttons to be added in the editable field. After typing in the number, the monitor may press OK and exit the dialog. This will add the specified number of buttons to the end of the Agenda list if no button clusters are selected. If any button clusters are selected, then the new buttons will be inserted before the first selected button cluster.

Remove Agenda Items

To remove one or more Agenda Item buttons from the list, the meeting monitor must first select the button clusters to be deleted (see section 4.3, “Button Cluster Selection”). After the button clusters that are to be deleted are selected, the monitor should choose **Remove Agenda Items** in the Edit pull-down menu. This will delete all selected button clusters.

4.6 Attendees and Agenda Viewing Options

The default viewing option for the Attendees and Agenda displays is a **List**. The meeting monitor may also view the names and agenda items in a table display (see Figure 8) by choosing **Table** in the **View** popup. The Attendees display area and the Agenda display area viewing options are independent of each other. For example, the monitor may view Attendees in a table, while the Agenda may To resize the buttons in either the Attendees or Agenda lists, the meeting monitor must first select a button cluster (see section 4.3, “Button Cluster Selection”). After selection, a frame with four selection handles will appear around the button cluster.

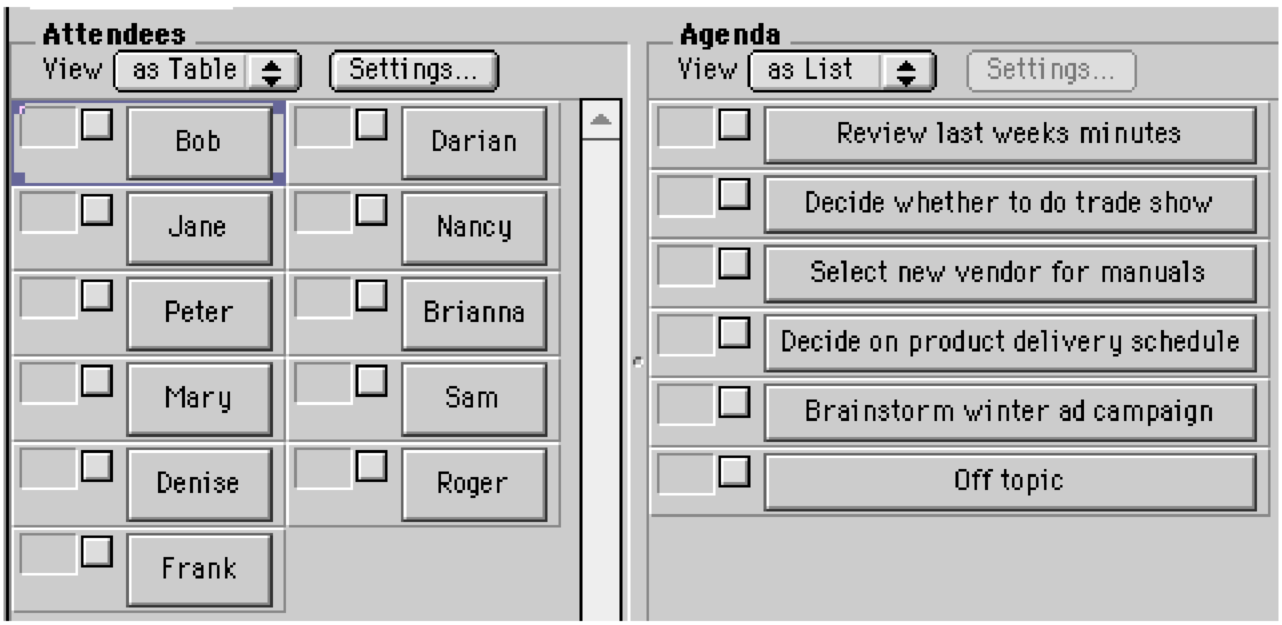


Figure 8: Attendee and agenda items have had their button clusters resized. The button cluster with the name button “Bob” is selected. The attendees are viewed as a table, while the agenda items are viewed as a list.

While multiple selection of buttons is possible by holding the down the Command key while clicking on other button clusters, it is not needed to resize multiple buttons. All button clusters within a view will be resized together. Although the size of an attendee button cluster may differ from the size of an agenda button cluster,, two attendee button clusters will always have the same size.

After selecting a button cluster, the monitor may click and drag on the selection handles to enlarge or reduce the size of the buttons in the list. Enlarging buttons is very helpful when the name on a button becomes so long that some characters are hidden. It can also be used to reduce button size, allowing the monitor to see more attendees or agenda items without scrolling.

Resizing List Areas

Depending on the data being measured at a meeting, the meeting monitor may wish to see more of one list view than the other during the measuring of a meeting. For example, if a monitor was tracking 32 meeting attendees, but had only 4 items on the agenda, the monitor would probably want more space available to display attendees than agenda items.

In order to provide more viewing area to one list versus the other, the document window has a vertical rectangle with an indentation in the center, called a **splitter** (see Figure 10). By clicking on the splitter and dragging horizontally to the left or right, the monitor may increase or diminish the size of the Attendees list or the Agenda list viewing area.

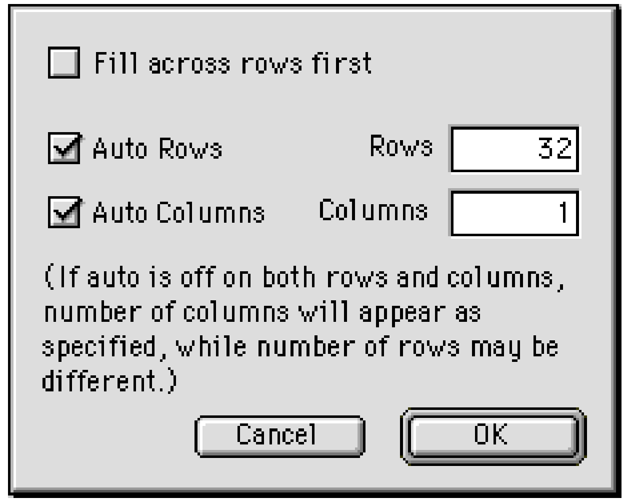


Figure 9: When View as Table is selected, clicking on the Settings… button will display this table settings dialog.

The splitter is available only if “Attendees and Agenda Items” is chosen in the **Show** popup menu. If it indicates Attendees only or Agenda Items only, then the splitter is not visible. The entire bottom portion of the document window will then be available to display the selected view.

The entire *Meeting Maestro* document window may be resized too, by clicking in the resize box on the bottom right corner of the window and dragging to the desired size. Any extra horizontal space is given to the agenda items. If the window is size is too small vertically to see all the buttons in a view, then the buttons can be scrolled. If too small horizontally, you may not see some of the buttons and other input and display fields at the top of the window.

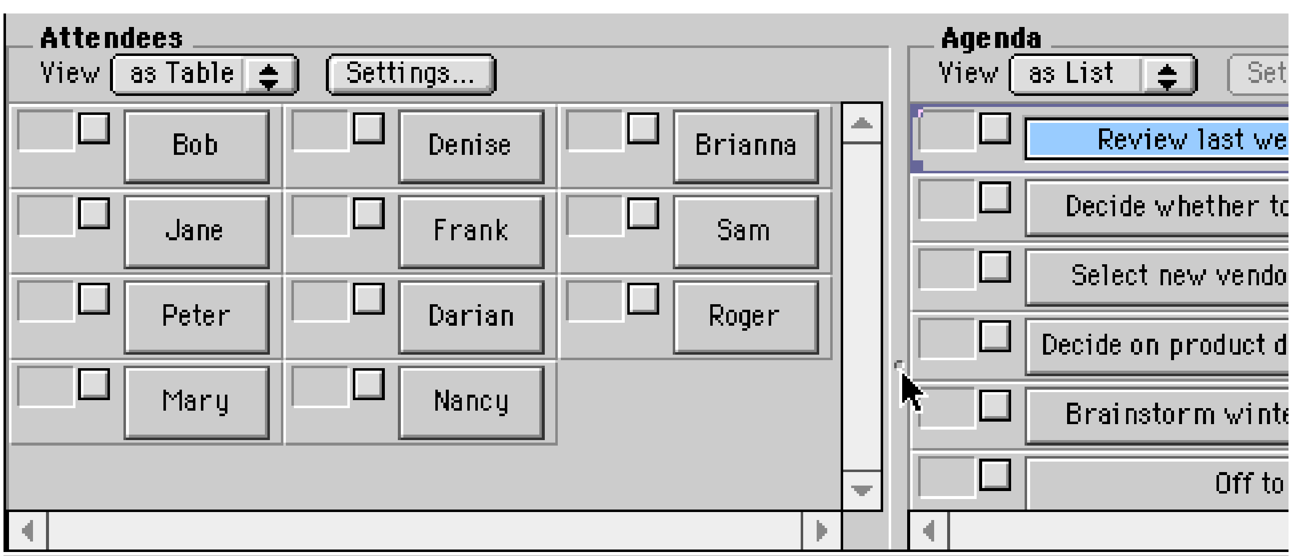


Figure 10: Starting as in Figure 8, the meeting monitor clicked on the splitter and dragged to the right one inch. Since the attendees Auto Columns was checked on, three columns appear to fill the space.

5 Measuring a Meeting

After all basic meeting data, including costs, times, attendee names, and/or events have been entered, the meeting monitor is ready to measure.

5.1 Starting and Stopping Meeting Measurement

When the meeting is called to order, the meeting monitor should click the **Start** control, found in the upper left corner of the *Meeting Maestro* document window. The monitor may also choose the Start menu item found in the Document pull-down menu to start measuring, or by typing Command-T. Starting begins the measurement of the meeting. The monitor may notice that the Actual Duration timer and the Actual Cost counter begin incrementing at this point.

The Start control is to remain pressed until there is a break in the meeting or the meeting concludes. It is while the Start control is active that the clicking of the other buttons become meaningful in terms of recording data.

The **Stop** button does just that. Clicking this button stops all timers and counters. The monitor may also choose the Stop menu item found in the Document pull-down menu to stop measuring, or type Command-period . When Stop is chosen, it enables the selection of the **Show Report** menu item, located under the Document pull-down menu. Show Report allows the monitor to view the recorded meeting data on a report page (For more information on the report, see Chapter 7, “Report”).

The measurement of a meeting may be resumed by clicking the Start control again. The Actual Duration timer and the Actual Cost counter will begin incrementing again at the point in which they were last stopped.

5.2 Entrances and Exits

The **In** checkbox is displayed just to the left of each Attendee or Agenda Item Button. In the case of the Attendee Button, the In checkbox indicates whether the person has entered the meeting or not. When a person enters a meeting, the checkbox should be checked on. This box is automatically turned on when a speaker’s button is pressed. (If a person is speaking, they are considered to be at the meeting.) However, it is best to turn on all of the checkboxes at the beginning of a meeting as the Attendees arrive. This is important for the reporting phase, when Attendees entrances and exits from the meeting will be noted.

When a person leaves before the meeting is over, his or her attendees In checkbox should be turned off. The program will also automatically unselect a speaker's button if the In checkbox is turned off. (If a person leaves a meeting, then the person can no longer be speaking).

5.2 Unannounced or Undecided Agenda Items

The In checkbox when interpreted as entrances and exits does not make much sense for agenda items. So, here are some suggestions for using the agenda items In checkbox.

If the meeting attendees were given an agenda for the meeting (a useful tool for increasing meeting productivity), then enter the agenda items from the list into the agenda view before the meeting starts. Click the In checkbox for each "announced" agenda item. After the meeting starts, and someone wants to add an unannounced agenda item to the meeting (often times a counterproductive behavior that should be discouraged), go ahead and add it. The report will clearly indicate which agenda items have been added "unannounced." An horizontal line will extend from the far left side of the Time Line Bar Graph for all announced items, but unannounced items will show a partial horizontal line and an upward pointing triangle symbol at the time of entry of the new agenda item.

There is another use to which you can put the In checkbox that would be analagous to the attendee "leaving early." The reason for discussing an agenda item at a meeting is often to make a decision concerning that agenda item. However, sometimes discussions ensue that lead to no decisions, which is probably not a good thing. If there is such an agenda item requires a decision, and that decision is successfully made, mark the end of that discussion by turning off the In checkbox. If agenda items were discussed but no decision was made, then leave the In checkbox turned on. In the report, it will be clear which discussions led to a decision and which did not. Those that did not lead to a decision will have an horizontal line extending to the far right of the bar chart field, indicating that discussion was not properly terminated with a decision. Those that did lead to a decision will have an horizontal line that terminates short of the far right with a downward pointing triangle symbol at the time of the end of the discussion.

In the report, comparing the agenda item and attendees bar chart displays with the above interpretations, answers are available for new questions. Who left the meeting before decisions were made or unannounced agenda items were discussed? Who was there when decisions were made? Were the people who needed to make decisions present at the meeting or even invited to it? Could decisions be made on agenda items that were added at the last minute?

5.3 Measuring as Attendees Speak

A click of a button in the Attendee list (or typing the button's corresponding Button Number on the keypad) assigns time to the person who is speaking (see Figure 11). When the first person starts to speak, click the button on which the speaking person's name is displayed. This will cause the button to become pressed, displaying a darker shade of gray on the button.

When someone else speaks, push the button corresponding to that person. Continue in this manner until the end of the meeting. Both agenda items and attendee discussions may be tracked simultaneously. If the current speaker stops speaking, and no one else starts speaking, you may click that speakers button again to

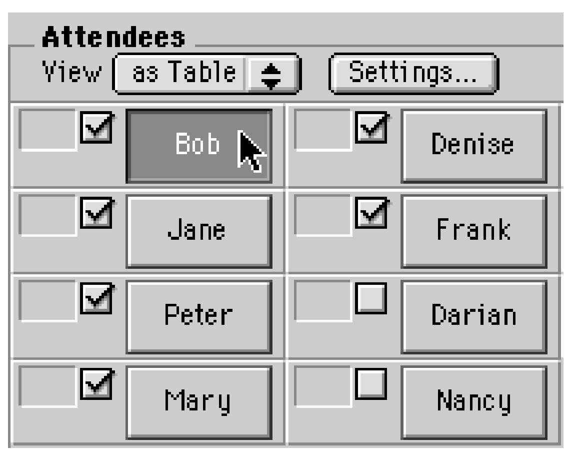


Figure 11: The monitor clicks on a button to indicate that person has started speaking.

indicate silence. This will cause the button to become unpressed, displaying a lighter shade of gray.

If a new attendee starts speaking before another attendee finishes (probably an argument, which is not good), hold the Command key down while clicking on the new attendees's button. Now more than one attendee button will be pressed. To remove an attendee from an argument, hold down the Command key while clicking on an already pressed button. That button should return to the unpressed state.

If someone else speaks to end an argument, just click on the new speaker's button (without the Command key). The new speaker's button will be pressed and the others will be unpressed.

5.4 Measuring Agenda Items

A click of the button in the Agenda Items list (or typing the button's corresponding Button Number on the keypad) assigns time to that Agenda Item. Once the meeting commences, click on the button corresponding to the Agenda Item being discussed.

If a period of time begins for which another Agenda Item button has been titled, then push that button. Continue in this manner until the end of the meeting. Both agenda items and attendee discussions may be tracked simultaneously.

It is possible to use the same technique as mentioned in section 5.4, "Measure As Attendees Speak" to keep track of multiple agenda items being disucssed at the same time. If this actually happens, it probably indicates a level of chaos that should be avoided in your meetings. It will appear on the report as bars on different vertical positions in the agenda bar char field which occupy the same horizontal spans.

5.5 Saving a File

Save the file by selecting **Save** under the File pull down menu. It is important to remember to choose a file name that will make it easy to identify the meeting you are about to measure. You might want to consider encoding the date of a meeting in its title. See Chapter 8, "Printing a Report", for an example of how the Print Multiple Option allows you to select several files and print them as a group.

6 Measuring Tips

6.1 Auto Number

Located under the Document pull-down menu, there is a menu choice called **Auto Number**. By choosing the Auto Number menu item (or using Command - B), sequential Button Numbers will be assigned to all buttons (See Figure 8). “1” is assigned to the top button in the Attendees list and the highest button number is assigned to the bottom button in the Agenda Items list. The Button Numbers will appear in the meeting Report to the left of the corresponding name button

The Button Numbers may be used to operate the pushing of buttons from the keyboard without clicking the mouse. The meeting monitor may type the corresponding Button Number to indicate that a meeting participant is speaking or an agenda item is being covered.

The monitor also may assign specific numbers to each button individually. If the Numbers checkbox is on, the Button Number fields to the left of each attendee and agenda button may edited. Click in the field and type a 1 or 2 digit number. Like the automatic numbers, these numbers typed in by the meeting monitor will appear in the Report. They also can be used to operate the pushing of buttons from the keyboard without clicking the mouse.

There is no checking to see that duplicate numbers are not assigned to the Button Number fields. If two buttons have the same number, then the first duplicate in the list will be the button that is automatically pressed when the duplicate button number is typed.

6.2 Consistency

Meeting monitors will find that after the first few meetings their consistency will improve and it will be easy to assign time correctly. Consistency is key. For instance, you could consistently wait two seconds after someone starts speaking or stops speaking before the corresponding speaker button is pressed. That may give you enough time to not press a speaker’s button when she is clearing her throat but not really going to say anything. Particularly with agenda items, the speaker may change gradually from one agenda item to another or from one agenda item to off topic. Do your best. Also, noting this type of wandering in speaking and presenting it to the speaker can help improve that speaker’s future meeting skills.

6.3 Notes

Under the Document pull-down menu you will find a menu item labelled **Show Notes**. Selecting this will produce a note pad for recording information about the meeting you are measuring. The monitor may type around 32,000 characters in the note pad.

If you do enter some information on this note pad, it will print anytime you print a report. When this note pad prints, it titles itself with name of the saved meeting file and the date of the measurement. If you do not enter data on the note pad it will not print.

Notes should be used to record observations that the monitor feels may help improve the quality of a meeting. Some might be typed in during the meeting, others may be more appropriate to add a few minutes after a meeting has stopped, so time can be taken to gather thoughts. Include things like, physical distractions that occurred during a meeting, missing equipment or materials, particular communication difficulties, unacceptable behaviors—anything that might help efforts to improve meeting efficiency.

A practical word of caution is in order. If the meeting monitor is trying to keep up with speakers with the attendee buttons, and is in parallel trying to keep up with agenda item changes with the agenda buttons, recording when people arrive late, leave early, add new agenda items, etc., it is probably asking too much to also have that person taking minutes of the meeting with the notes window. It is better to reserve the Notes pad for information that may help improve meeting performance, and let someone else take the minutes.

6.4 Balloon Help

Meeting Maestro takes full advantage of the MacOS system feature called “Balloon Help,” by providing note balloons for all major features contained in the program. To turn on this feature, select **Show Balloons** from the Help menu (note Help menu location is accessible from the menu bar, usually on the right side, but differs slightly depending on the version of the Macintosh operating system.) Note Balloons with helpful comments explaining features and functions will pop up as you move your mouse across the screen and point at various items. To turn off Balloon Help, return to the Help menu and choose **Hide Balloons**.

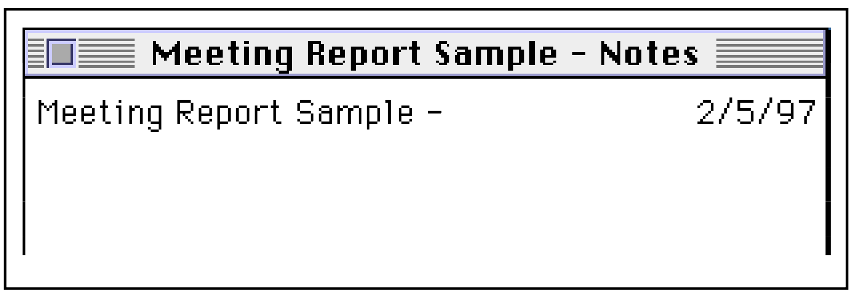
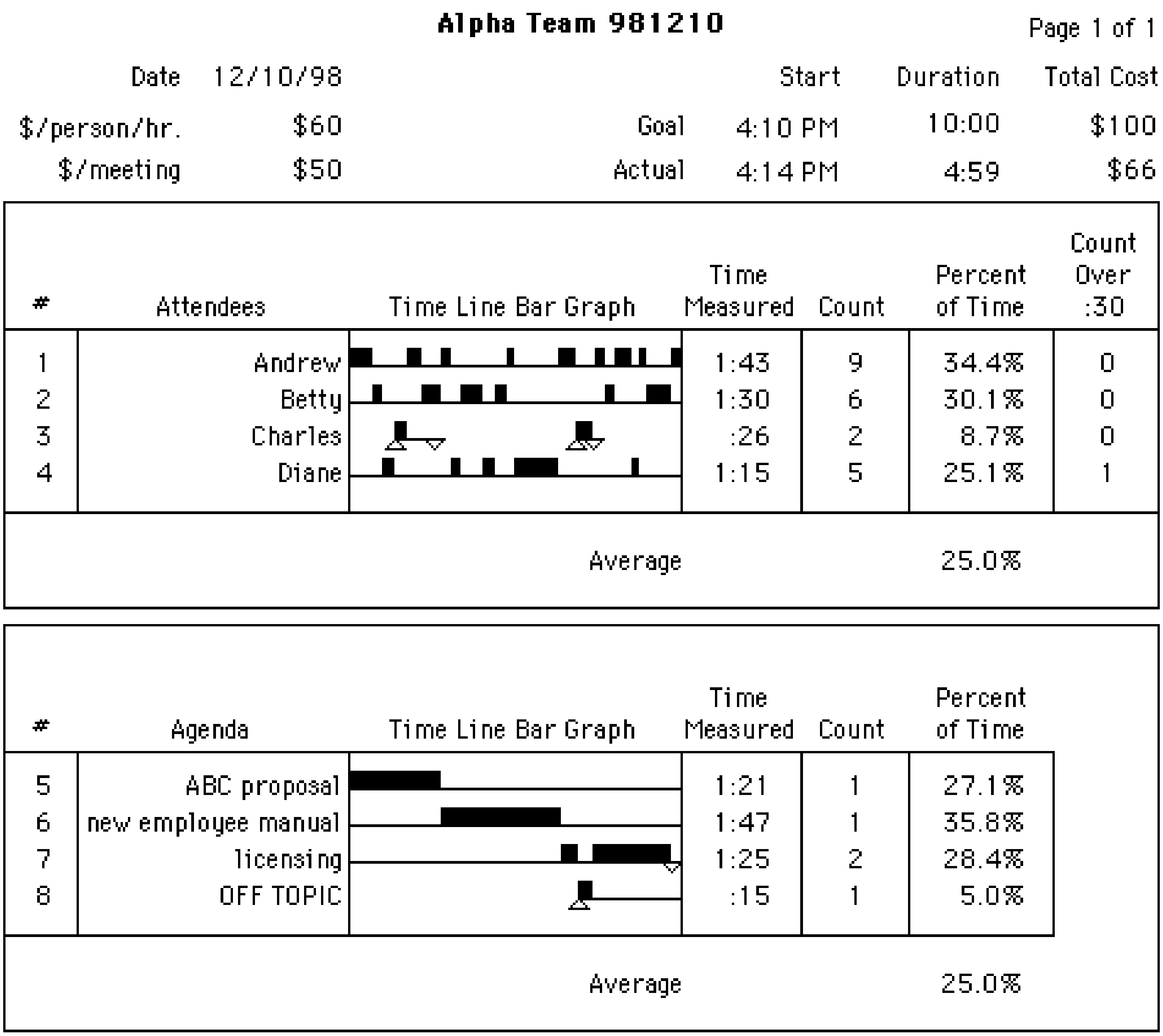


Figure 12: Example of the note pad.

7 Report

In *Meeting Maestro*'s **Report**, data resulting from measuring a meeting is combined in a single form, allowing the user to quickly analyze meeting problem areas and improve meeting management and efficiency. As you can see from the meeting report sample shown above, there are several ways to get information regarding what went on in this meeting.

Some of the fields on the Report, such as Date and Start Goal, you may recognize from their descriptions in Chapter 4, "Measure." Others appear exclusively on the Report. These new items will be covered in this section.



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			Start	Duration	Total Cost
Date	12/10/98				
$/person/hr.	$60	Goal	4:10 PM	10:00	$100
$/meeting	$50	Actual	4:14 PM	4:59	$66

#	Attendees	Time Line Bar Graph	Time Measured	Count	Percent of Time	Count Over :30
1	Andrew		1:43	9	34.4%	0
2	Betty		1:30	6	30.1%	0
3	Charles		:26	2	8.7%	0
4	Diane		1:15	5	25.1%	1
		Average			25.0%	

#	Agenda	Time Line Bar Graph	Time Measured	Count	Percent of Time
5	ABC proposal		1:21	1	27.1%
6	new employee manual		1:47	1	35.8%
7	licensing		1:25	2	28.4%
8	OFF TOPIC		:15	1	5.0%
		Average			25.0%

Figure 13: Sample of a *Meeting Maestro* Report.

7.1 Time Line Bar Graph

The **Time Line Bar Graph** gives a visual representation of what occurred during the meeting. Several things can be learned from analyzing its output, some of which will be discussed in greater detail in following chapters.

Examples of Time Line Observations:

Indicates the level of participation for each person in the meeting.

Indicates if problems exist between two people. For example, if one person comments immediately after another all the time, this could indicate a need to credit or discredit certain people.

Indicates balance of power in meeting. If one person speaks excessively throughout the entire meeting, this could be a problem.

Indicates the number of times a person speaks more than 30 seconds, the recommended amount of time it should take to make a point.

Note: The Report's Time Line indicates the time which elapsed during break times when the Stop control had been pressed. Although the Actual Length on the Report indicates only the time that elapsed while the Start control was depressed, the Time Line shows the span of time for the entire meeting day from the opening address to the adjournment of the meeting members.

Report Field Size

To allow as much space as possible for the Time Line Bar Graph, the Report's **Attendees** column is only as wide as the longest name that has been entered on a button. To view the Time Line with the optimum amount of space, it is suggested that button titles be short. Another suggestion to assist in viewing the Time Line is to display the Report in Landscape mode rather than Portrait mode, by changing the orientation in the Page Setup dialog from the File menu. Or, in Page Setup, make the scale factor smaller.

7.4 Attendees' Entrances and Exits

On the Report's Time Line, a line segment is drawn for each speaker or agenda item from the time the In checkbox is turned on to the time it is turned off. If this does not happen on or before the start of the meeting, then a **triangle** is drawn at the end of the line segment. A triangle pointing up at the left end indicates entering after the start of the meeting (i.e., a late arrival). A triangle pointing down at the right end indicates exiting a meeting before the end (i.e., an early departure) (see Figure 13). Notice in Figure 13, that the attendee named Kathy, entered the meeting late, shown by the up triangle. She also had to leave the meeting in progress, noted by the down triangle and the break in the line segment. Notice that Kathy did return to the meeting before it concluded, again, shown by the up triangle.

Sometimes meeting measurement is stopped because of a break in the measuring time like a lunch break. If the meeting resumes by the pressing of the Start control, all Attendees present at that time with In boxes checked will have a triangle pointing up at the left end of this new segment of the meeting.

7.5 Time Measured

The **Time Measured** is the total length of time that each individual spoke during a meeting for the attendees section. It is the total length of time that each topic was covered in the agenda items section. By comparing each individual's time with the others, it is easy to see those that dominate the meeting and those that may shrink from communicating. It is also easy to see how much time was spent covering each topic. Comparing each timemeasured value to the average at the bottom helps show whether participation in the meeting was balanced and whether topics covered received their fare share of attention.

7.6 Count Over :30

To run an efficient meeting and hold people's attention, points need to be made succinctly. Two reasons Milo O. Frank, author of *How to Run a Successful Meeting in Half the Time*, states for making 30 seconds or less your goal to make a point are "time constraints" and "attention spans."

Making a point can be successfully accomplished in following three steps, according to Frank. First the speaker must get the attention of the others in the meeting. The speaker must then share his/her point. After making the point, the speaker should support the point with a brief example supporting his position. These three steps should take 30 seconds or less, according to Frank, which is the peak of audience attention and interest.

If the speaker continues speaking beyond 30 seconds of time, the speaker risks repeating the obvious and also risks losing the attention of the other meeting attendees. If he/she continues with the point, the audience could lose the point.

The number in the **Count Over :30** column, which indicates the number of times each attendee has talked for more than 30 seconds, can also be compared with the figure in the Count colunn of the Report. If the Count Over :30 is greater than half the number of times the speaker took the floor, it seems this person has a continual problem of making a direct point. (See section 9.2, "Taking too Long To Make a Point").

Note that the agenda items section of the report does not show a "Count Over :30" field.

7.7 Percent of Time

The **Percent of Time** displays each individual's amount of participation in the meeting as compared to the actual meeting length. At the bottom of the Report, there is an **Average**. If an individual's Percent of Time far exceeds the meeting average, there could be a balance of power problem. (See section 9.1, "Balancing the Presence of Power in Meetings"). If some topics are covered far more than the average amount of time, then other topics will have had below average discussion time. Perhaps more effort needs to be made to wrap up the disucssion on some items so that everything that needs to be discussed gets sufficient time.

7.8 Count

The **Count** is a count of the number of times each meeting participant spoke. If the number is low, it could indicate someone who is having trouble speaking up at meetings. (See section 9.3, "Assisting Those That Struggle to Get to the Floor")

8 Printing a Report

8.1 Printing Single Reports

Printing a single report is done just like printing any other document on your computer. Select **Print** from the File menu.

8.2 Private Printing

Under the File menu there is a printing option called “Private Printing.” If this is checked, then each report is printed in multiple copies, one for each attendee, when thePrint command is selected. In the name field of each copy of the report, only one attendee’s name is displayed—this copy should be given to that attendee. This allows the attendee to concentrate on his or her performance, rather than on the performances of other specific attendees. In Appendix A, the example “Follow-up Letter” describes the attendee’s copy of the report assuming that Private Printing was used..

Of course, if the meeting monitor wants to find and mark specific problem areas that have to do with interactions between specific employees, the monitor should print a copy with Private Printing turned off. Then the private copies can be marked to indicate problems and/or an attachment with more detailed comments can be added.

8.3 Printing Multiple Reports

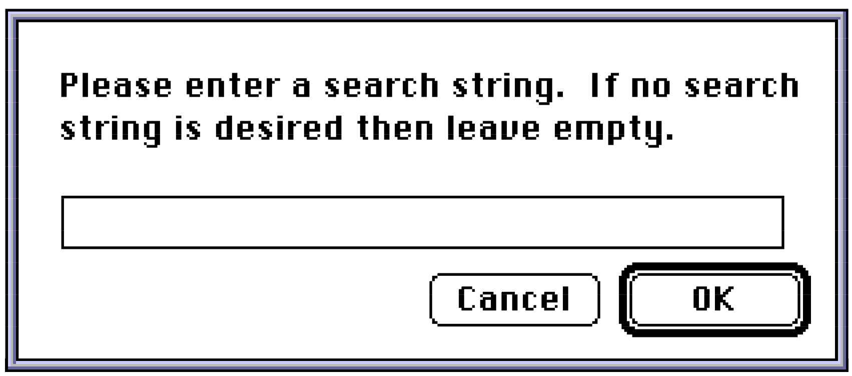

Figure 14: String Search dialog

Instead of printing the document that is open,, several previously saved documents can be printed with this menu item. In addition, documents that actually print may be limited to those that contain a particular attendee name, agenda item, title or note content. This feature might be used to track the progress of a particular meeting group over time, if the file name (report title) contains a common string of characters. Or, you may track the history of one participant who participates in one or more meetings with different groups. Or, you may want to compare how different groups function when discussing a common agenda item.

First enter the search string, if desired. Then construct the selected file list. Both steps are described below.

1. Select **Print Multiple** from the File menu.

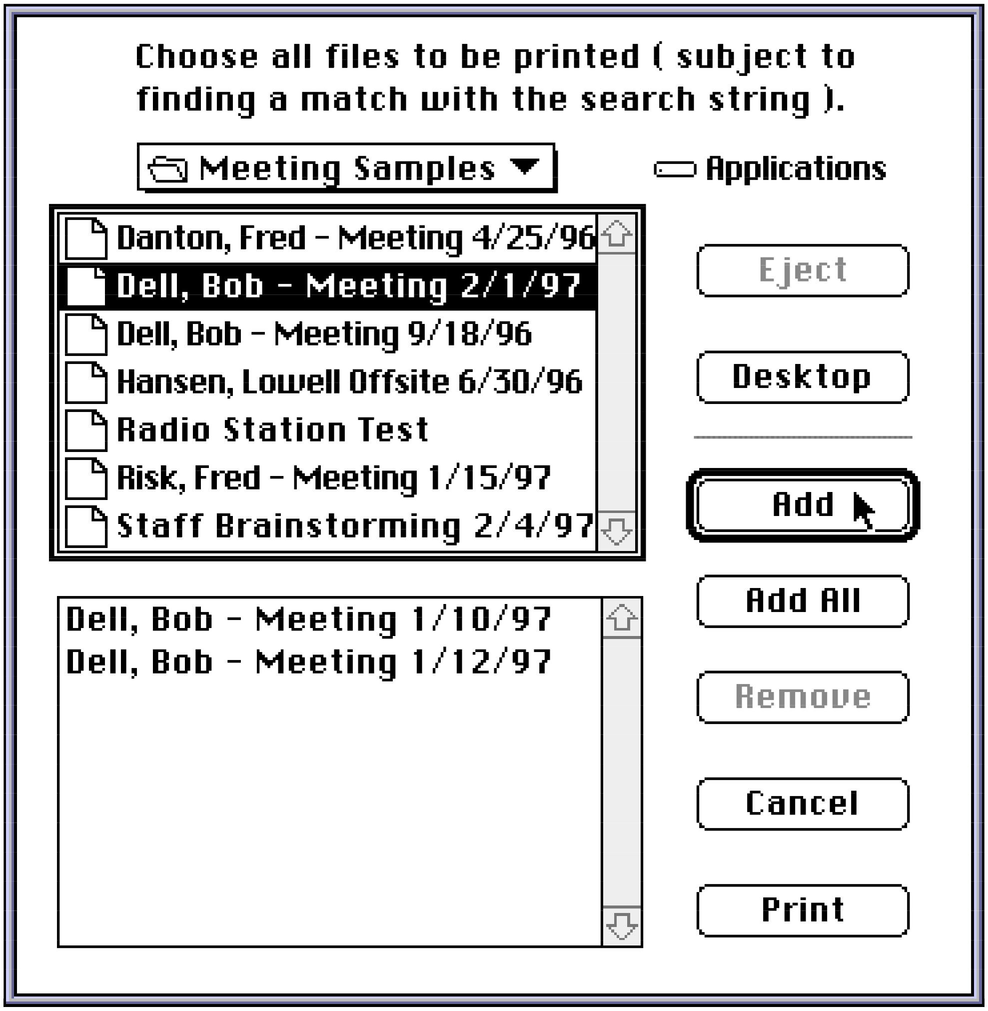

Figure 15: Print Multiple Select File dialog

2. A string search dialog will appear as shown in Figure 14. If you want to print all the files that are in the selected file list, then do not type in a search string and click the **OK** button. If you wish to only print certain files from the list, enter a search string here, then click the **OK** button. If you type in a search string, then a file will be printed if it is in the selected file list AND the search string appears in the title, an attendee name or agenda item button, or in the notes window.

3. Next, the Print Multiple Select File dialog will appear. Use the popup folder/volume menu at the top of the dialog to select the correct folder or volume. Click on the file name of the document you wish to add to the selected file list, and then click the **Add** button. That file name will be moved to the selected file list in the lower box. Continue doing this until all the file names of the documents you may want to print appear in the lower box. If you change your mind about a file in the selected file list, click on its name and click the **Remove** button.

4. After selecting all the files for printing, click **Print**. *Meeting Maestro* will open each file, search for the specified search string if provided and ignore any file with no match, and print the report for each document.

Note: If the Notes feature was used when any of these measurements took place, the notes page(s) will also be printed at this time.

9 Analyze and Improve

The final two steps to the *Meeting Maestro* system, will be examined together in this chapter, **Analyze** and **Improve**. Several topics will be addressed that illustrate common meeting management difficulties. Each topic will begin with a brief explanation of the problem, why it needs improvement and how it can be identified using the *Meeting Maestro* Report. Next, several improvement tips will follow each topic that can be used as reference points for development.

One should not be concerned with the results of analyzing one or two meeting reports. It is certainly acceptable for anyone to dominate (or not talk) in an occasional meeting. The point is "How much is too much?" It is important to take several meeting measurements to get a good cross section of performance. That is why the steps of Measure, Report, Analyze, and Improve should be repeated often, continually building on past improvements toward a more efficient future.

While it is true, if you take action against meeting problems, overall meeting efficiency will improve, it is also true that not everyone is interested in exposing potential weaknesses. Therefore, not everyone will be interested in having their meetings measured.

There may be people who will change their meeting personality just because they might be measured. If that happens and they improve (without being measured) this program has completed its task without even being used.

9.1 Balancing the Presence of Power

It is not uncommon for the highest ranking person in the room to dominate the meeting. If this goes unchecked it can lead to the ranking person in the meeting not getting information from the rest of the attendees. It can also make it difficult for other attendees to get information from the rest of the group.

Often, the highest ranking person in the room has more information to share (e.g., a weekly staff meeting). There is nothing wrong with this taking place occasionally or at the beginning of the meeting. Taking blocks of time at the beginning of a meeting (or at the beginning of each agenda item), is much different than continually dominating the entire meeting.

In the book *Mastering Meetings*, the National Institute of Business Management suggests the meeting leader should not take more than 20 percent of the time.

The key issue here is, how much is too much? Understandably, it can be difficult to tell your manager that he is dominating meetings. With most people, as soon as they see the evidence of their domination in the first report, they will change from that point on.

The Report Measurement

There are three measurements on the report page that can indicate a potential problem:

1. **Percent of Time** - If a person's percent of time talking is twice that of the meeting average, this can be an indication of a problem.
2. **Time Measured** - If the total time you talked is more than double the time of each of the other meeting attendees, this could be a problem.
3. **Time Line Bar Graph** - If the highest ranking person is out of balance and a visual check shows that this person has a solid block of speaking time in the beginning of the meeting this could indicate a “down loading of information” process which is certainly acceptable. If the speaking time is excessive and it is spread evenly through out the meeting this could be a problem.

Improvement Tips

1. Expose this person to the report(s) and the *Meeting Maestro* manual.
2. In the book *TIME Management for Teams*, Merrill E. and Donna N. Douglass have included a chapter entitled “Managing the Boss.” This chapter covers material that can be a great resource whether or not anyone is at fault.

9.2 Taking Too Long to Make a Point

As described in Chapter 7 under the section 7.6, “Count Over :30,” making your point should only take 30 seconds: get in - make your point - get out. It’s important to get the group’s attention, state your message and use an example for verification (evidence). After that, you risk repeating the obvious and losing your audience.

The Report Measurement

On the *Meeting Maestro* Report page there is a column entitled **Count Over :30**. Occasionally measurements show up in this column depending on the type of meeting and the person’s role in it. However, if a person has measurements in this column often, or if the count that person has is always more than anyone else, he or she should make an effort to be more concise when speaking.

Improvement Tips

1. Expose this person to the report(s) and this page in the *Meeting Maestro* manual.
2. Get a copy of the book, *Making Your Point in 30 Seconds or Less*, by Frank O. Milo
3. Some people have a habit ending sentences with “**conjunction noises**” such as: um, an, so, again, etc. Others can interpret this as a signal that you have more to say, and therefore they do not feel free to go on to the next point. You might interpret this quiet time (which can actually be only 1 - 3 seconds) as an invitation for you to continue. Avoid being trapped in the habit of “conjunction-itis”.
4. Some people take a lot of time to qualify their statements before they actually start to make a point. Many times this is not necessary and doing this “point prepping” takes time and often leads into overstating something that is probably obvious. For example: “I don't want to sound like I am complaining but....” “I don't want to come off like a know it all but....” “I am afraid to make this point because I might sound uninformed but.....”   All of these take time and some people have developed this as a habit. They could immediately change if they were aware that they were doing it.

9.3 Assisting Those Who Struggle to Get to the Floor

Some people are shy and some are just afraid to make a point because they might appear uninformed. There are people who actually believe they do speak because they are listening and forming opinions as the meeting progresses. However, in reality they make very few or no comments at all.

Before sharing a meeting report with an individual that routinely does not take his fair share of speaking time, ask him how often and for how long does he think he took the floor. Most of the time people will guess that they talked more than they actually did. Usually they are surprised when they find out they did not participate nearly as much as they thought they did.

This phenomenon of persons thinking they said something, when they did not, is quite common. It can be called "**Thought Talk**."

The Report Measurement

If there is a person who speaks very little in meetings, compare that individual's **Count** and **Time Measured** fields with those of the other meeting attendees. Because there are people who seldom take the floor, but when they do, they go on forever, it is important to watch both of these measurements.

When both of these measurements are low and percent of time is high, the report might show an occasional measurement in the **Count Over :30** column. This happens when the person has a lot to say but simply does not know how to get to the floor. Then, after taking the floor, the person occasionally takes too long to make a point.

Improvement Tips

1. Expose this person to the report(s) and this page in the *Meeting Maestro* manual.
2. Get people involved by asking them to help in a demonstration or to make a report during the next meeting.
3. Seminars such as Dale Carnegie can make dramatic improvements in people who have trouble speaking in meetings.

9.4 Starting and Stopping Meetings on Time

Meetings that start late for any reason cost the organization money, time, and are a source of tremendous frustration. We live in a busy world, and some of us spend 20%- 50% of our time in meetings. If the meeting runs overtime, everyone will potentially be late to their next meeting, causing more meetings to be inefficient. In some cases there are bosses that believe too strongly in the privileges of rank, and at times believe it is acceptable (even fashionable) to come to meetings late. Left unchecked, meetings that start late can cause a nonproductive ripple through an entire corporation.

The same is true if the meeting starts on time but runs overtime. Soon everyone is clearing more calendar time because of the inefficient management of meetings. When this happens the potential negative effects are staggering, and the scary part is, if it goes on long enough, it can become an accepted method of operation in an organization.

The Report Measurement

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			Start	Duration	Total Cost
Date	12/21/98				
$/person/hr.	$100	Goal	2:00 PM	15:00	$200
$/meeting	$50	Actual	2:09 PM	15:31	$179

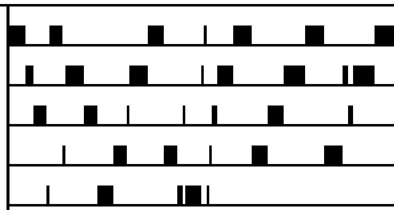
#	Attendees	Time Line Bar Graph	Time Measured	Count	Percent of Time	Count Over :30
1	Bill Davis		4:30	7	29.0%	6
2	Ken Howell		4:16	8	27.5%	5
3	Burce Chapman		2:29	7	16.0%	3
4	Dave Garrett		2:41	7	17.3%	4
5	Fred Sprague		1:34	5	10.1%	2
		Average			20.0%	

Figure 16: Time Line Bar Graphs can indicate a problem between two individuals.

When the meeting starts and the monitor clicks the Start button the time of day is entered in the **Actual Start** time data box. The report page will show the variance between **Start Goal** time and Actual Start time.

When someone arrives late, the monitor clicks the In checkbox by that attendees name. A small upward pointing triangle will appear in the report's Time Line Bar Graph, indicating the time of arrival graphically. (See Figure 13, where Charles arrives late and leaves early, twice.).

This measurement is important because if the meeting is stopped and this latecomer has to be brought up to date, the measurable costs are at a rate of everyone in the room multiplied by an hourly rate. The inefficient domino effect starts again, because even if the meeting does not run overtime, there is less time available to cover the other issues on the agenda, therefore causing another meeting, etc.

There is a data entry field on the document window which is labeled **Goal Duration**, which is displayed on the report. Comparing the **Goal Duration** to the **Actual Duration** of the meeting will help individuals develop an awareness for starting and stopping on time.

Improvement Tips

1. Expose this person to the report(s) measured and this page in the *Meeting Maestro* manual
2. Sam Deep and Lyle Sussman, in their book *Smart Moves*, provide eight steps to get a meeting started on time.

Additional points:

Ask late arrivals to let you know if they are going to be late.

If they are not going to make it at all, they should let the meeting leader know as soon as possible and/or send a substitute.

If the boss is continually coming late, share measurements that have been recorded for a few meetings he attends that show him coming late. This would be great background for asking "When you are 15 minutes late, we find ourselves starting over for you while eight other people wait. Can we select a different time or day that would allow us all to start on time?"

If there is a group that has an unusually hard time starting and stopping on schedule, try scheduling the meetings before lunch or at the end of the day. It is amazing to see how many issues can get resolved when everyone is hungry or is ready to go home.

9.5 Break the Habit of Commenting on Every Issue

A habit of commenting on every issue is something that is hard to identify without measurement, because it does not necessarily mean this person is taking a lot of time. There are some people who feel the need to comment or acknowledge every point someone else makes. People who struggle with this issue can be split into two groups: The people who do not actually know they are doing it, and the people who have been made aware they dominate meetings and simply do not care.

The Report Measurement

The primary measurement for this is **Count**. As mentioned previously, **Time Measured** and **Percent of Time** can be indicators of this, but only if the person goes beyond a simple acknowledgment of someone else's point. If all three are high it could be an indicator of multiple issues.

The **Time Line Bar Graphs** can indicate a problem between two people. If someone speaks immediately or only after another individual speaks, this could indicate a need to credit or discredit certain people. This can be obvious to everyone in the room except the person doing the excess speaking. Figure 16 indicates such an example between Bill and Dave, where Dave is speaking after almost every statement Bill makes.

Meeting Analysis

The following points should be considered when reviewing the report in Figure 16.

1.The meeting started 9 minutes late.

2. Almost every time the boss, Bill Davis, spoke, the next person to speak was Dave Garrett.

3. This group talked a fairly even number of times, however, 3 people talked nearly three times as long as the other 2.

4. Bill talked longer than 30 seconds 6 of the 7 times he took the floor. Bill should refer to section

9.2, “Taking Too Long To Make a Point.”

5. Bruce talked 16% of the time, but Fred talked only 10% which is only half of the average time of 20%. They also had a good (not great) count of how many times they took the floor over 30 seconds.

6. This whole group should read section 9.2, “Taking Too Long To Make a Point”. It is common for a meeting to have only 5% of the points being made take longer than 30 seconds. This group took longer than 30 seconds to make their point an exorbitant 20 times out of 34 times to speak, or 59% of their turns to speak.

7. Fred did not make one comment during the last half of the meeting.

8. The overall meeting length goal was 15 minutes, therefore the actual meeting length of 15 minutes and 31 seconds is quite likely to be acceptable.

Improvement Tips

1. Expose these people to the report(s) and this page in the *Meeting Maestro* manual.

2. For those people unaware that they are taking the floor so often, exposing them to a report indicating this problem can be enough to curtail it significantly.

3. Unfortunately there are some people who actually believe they do “know it all.” This can be very difficult for the leader to have a person like this in a meeting. The meeting leader should not take on this person individually. Rather, ask others what they think about the subjects that this person is proposing. This will increase the balance of participation, and may reveal something important, yet otherwise unknown, to the problem speaker.

4. When a person wants to make a comment, yet feels they have already taken their share of time, a technique called **Comment Incubation** should be tried. When a person gets an urge to speak, instead of immediately making a comment, they should simply jot down their thought. After waiting for a few more comments to be made by others, then the person can make their point. This especially works if it is early in a meeting or at the beginning of an agenda item discussion. If a person has the patience to try Comment Incubation, it can be very revealing. An individual can learn from others and a lot about himself.

5. Some people will not care how much they talked after being exposed to the meeting report. Perhaps after a few *Meeting Maestro* sessions, they will realize the value of the advice. Perhaps a little peer pressure from the other meeting attendees who do value the experience will have a positive effect on other attendees behavior. Sometimes the dynamics of group consciousness are suprisingly powerful and will bring the most reluctant or the most talkative participant into a more harmonious relationship with the group, once there is a mutual awareness of the challenge.

6. If you have a problem with Show-offs and Hot-shots, read the book *A Guide to Managerial Communication*, by Mary Munter. On page 121, she has a section titled “How to Answer Difficult Questioners”.

7. Some people have trouble “**finishing listening**.” This happens when an individual is so anxious to make a point they stop listening before the person speaking has finished making their point. Unless a person has finished listening, they are not prepared to “start talking” and are likely to miss the complete thought of the person speaking previously. When this happens, it is possible that the individual will repeat exactly what the previous person said, and it will be obvious to everyone in the room that he was not listening.

9.6 Understanding Meeting Costs and Improving Efficiency

It is quite common for executives to spend 50% of their time in meetings. It should also be expected that the hourly rate for some meetings (depending on size) can be in the several hundred dollars per hour area. The goal of this measurement is not to find the true cost of a meeting so it can be assigned to someone's budget, but to provide a general number to be used as an awareness tool.

As an example, assume there are ten people in the meeting and that each earns $80,000.00 a year. It would be simple to calculate using a hourly rate of $40/hr (assuming a 2000 hour year). Other costs of retaining an employee are added (taxes, social security, benefits, depreciation, maintenance and operating expenses to support the employee, etc.) Many professional firms include this calculation in the accounting, referring to it as the “burdened” hourly rate. It is often 1.5 to 3.5 times the hourly rate. With a midrange factor of, say, 2.5, employee costs could be $100/hr times 10 people or $1000 per hour. If this meeting lasts three hours, it would cost $3000.

With meeting costs like this, someone should always be asking “Is it worth it?” If it is, then keep meeting with the same frequency; if not, meet less frequently. As an example of how difficult it is to measure the cost of a meeting, this question must be asked: “What value would these people be contributing (in other areas) if they were not in this meeting? This “**Opportunity Lost**” cost could easily increase the hourly cost of the meeting beyond its value.

The Report Measurement

Entering a **$/Person/Hour** will automatically calculate a meeting cost. It is important to do this $/Person/Hour calculation with some general guidelines. Asking everyone's salary is not appropriate and will get the meeting monitor in trouble quickly. One way to do this is to use a corporate guideline for the level of people in the meeting and focus on the middle of the range.

Also try to be realistic about entering the **$/Meeting** value. If you are renting a room and buying donuts, it is easy to add these costs. If you are using leased or purchased office space with a room dedicated to meeting use, a more sophisticated approach could be taken. You may want to discuss with your accountant how much is being spent to maintain a facility where you can have meetings.

The value displayed in the report is **Actual Total Cost**. This is also updated in real time as the meeting is running in the document window. It is the **$/Meeting** plus the product of the **$/Person/Hour** and number of attendee hours for the meeting. Note that attendee hours for meeting takes into account the time an attendee was present in the meeting. This is controlled by the **In** checkbox displayed next the name button for each attendee in the document window. It is displayed on the report in the **Time Line Bar Graph** as a thin horizontal line for each attendee. The length of the line is proportional to the amount of time the attendee was “in” the meeting. If there is no line, the attendee name was entered, but the **In** checkbox was never hit, hence the attendee never arrived.

Improvement Tips

To improve efficiency in meetings, study section 9.7, “Ten Keys to Managing a Successful Meeting”.

9.7 Ten Keys to Managing a Successful Meeting:

1. Make sure you need to call a meeting. Will a memo do?

2. Select the proper meeting place and make sure the proper meeting aides (flip charts, overhead projector, video equipment, etc.) will be there before your start.

3. Determine who really needs to be there. Can some people get their information by getting a copy of the minutes?

4. Never hold a meeting without a written agenda, preferably one distributed prior to the meeting. Remember to include a meeting break on the agenda. A short break after 90 minutes or so can prevent individuals from leaving on their own to use the restrooms or to get coffee.

5. List the agenda items as descriptive goals rather than topics. For example, instead of simply listing “The Samson Meat Company” as an agenda item, you should list the agenda item as descriptively as possible, such as, “Determining alternatives to paying Samson Meat's price increases.”

6. Each item on the agenda should have the appropriate who, what, where, and when issues described in the meeting minutes, plus assign time for each item on the agenda and stick to it.

7. The meeting leader should be prepared and should take responsibility to make sure the meeting is balanced and the appropriate decision process will be used to bring items to an acceptable end point.

8. Start and stop meetings on time.

9. Follow up meeting with minutes that address the original agenda topics with an outlined action plan.

10. Occasionally monitor meetings and provide feedback in reference to meeting management and how individuals performed.

It is the last item where *Meeting Maestro* comes in handy. It takes a little effort and expense to use a meeting monitor. Some of the meeting participants may be uncomfortable at first if they have never had someone looking over their shoulder in a meeting. But, the potential savings in time and money, the reduced frustration and wasted effort and the increase in harmony amongst the participants should be well worth the dedication of some extra resources.

9.8 The Most Beneficial Time to Make a Point

As mentioned in other chapters, a person should try not to be the first to speak on every agenda item every time. It is a dangerous habit, because that person will not have the benefit of what others think before speaking.

It should be fairly obvious if the only time someone speaks is immediately after the boss makes a point (over acknowledgment) or right after someone with which they do not get along (the Devil's advocate).

One of the best places to express thoughts during meetings is to speak during the middle or at the summary of each agenda item. Another prime speaking moment would be toward the end of the meeting when the assignments are being issued. At the end of a meeting, there will be a wealth of information to synthesize and upon which you can reflect. As with all things, balance is key. If you never speak first on any issue, others may perceive you as lacking creativity or initiative.

The Report Measurement

The **Time Line Bar Graph** in the attendees section by itself is a good way to indicate when someone is talking during a meeting. You can tell if one person tends to be the first to speak after the boss, or after another participant. But if you compare the time lines in the attendees and the agenda items sections of the report, you can tell if a person tends to speak first on each agenda item, or saves comments for the end of the agenda item.

Improvement Tips

1. Expose this person to the report(s) measured and this page in the *Meeting Maestro* manual.
2. If there does seem to be a personal conflict issue between a few people, a copy of *Smart Moves* by Deep and Sussman could be helpful. In Chapter 7, “Manage Conflict Productively”, they deal with this matter very well.
3. In section 9.5, “Break the Habit of Commenting on Every Issue”, a technique called **Comment Incubation** was introduced. This is the practice of jotting down the comments that an individual would like to make and waiting until other meeting members speak before making those comments.

Doing this can have two good effects:

More facts can be learned prior to speaking, which increases knowledge of the subject. When a person is more informed before addressing a subject, the results can only be better.

Speaking at the end of a meeting or during the last section of time allotted to a subject, may result in thoughts being remembered longer, having benefited from other attendees’ thinking.

It is very difficult for some people to use **Comment Incubation**. It feels natural to make a point as soon as it pops into one’s mind. However, the longer you wait, the more you will learn and the more your opinion will be valued. Of course, it doesn’t always make sense—someone might be making an incorrect statement that could cause confusion unless you speak as soon as possible.

9.9 Agenda Time Management

This is probably one of the most abused areas of meeting management and yet it is one of the easiest to measure and improve. Unless a specific amount of time is allocated for each point, the potential for rambling is almost guaranteed. Of course, setting a certain amount of time for each agenda like “This will be a 3 hour meeting with 15 minutes allotted for each item” does the job very well.

In the book *Tips for Teams*, the authors suggest there are some organizations where individuals are not required to attend any meeting for which they do not get an agenda in advance. That is a little strong, but there could be corporations that could greatly benefit from a mandate like this.

The Report Measurement

If your goal was to discuss agenda items in approximately equal amounts, then the “Average” time spent can be compared to the “Time Measured” for each agenda item to see how balanced your agenda time management was. If you intended varying amounts of time to be spent, here is a suggestion. Instead of naming an agenda item, “Discuss XYZ Proposal”, name it “Discuss XYZ Proposal 10m” to indicate that 10 minutes were intended for that part of the discussion.

If you want to track for yourself how unannounced agenda items affect the way you spend time in a meeting, use the convention described in the section 5.2, “Unannounced or Undecided Agenda Items.” Then, in the Time Line Bar Graph for each agenda item, an horizontal line will extend all the way to the left for announced agenda items, while unannounced ones will have some empty space on the left and an upward pointing triangle when they were first discussed.

It also helps to create an agenda item named something like “Off Agenda” and use it whenever the conversation wanders off thedesired topics for discussion. Of course, if it turns out that the subject is one the group decides that it needs to discuss, the “Off Agenda” button can be renamed and/or a new “Off Agenda” button can be created while a meeting is running. If interruptions happen often during a meeting (even if legitimate), it is a problem.

Improvement Tips

Here are five simple steps to help stay focused on an agenda:

1. Stick to the agenda, refrain from adding new agenda items on the spot. There are times when this must happen. When it does, a less important item should be removed or more time should be added to the meeting. If the preset meeting length is kept and more items are “crammed” in, there is the potential of doing a poor job on several issues and not doing a complete job on any issue.
2. Prepare an agenda and distribute it early to provide time for preparation.
3. Set an allotted time for each agenda point and move on when the allotted time expires.
4. Close each point with next step action items - what, who, when, why, and how much.
5. Start and stop on time.

In his book *The Time Trap*, Alec Mackenzie discusses sticking to the agenda. If your meetings continue to have trouble in this area, check out this book and read Chapter 11.

10 Other uses for *Meeting Maestro*

10.1 Brainstorming

It is extremely critical that brainstorming sessions not be dominated by the moderator. Check for nearly equal participation by comparing each attendees **Percent of Time** calculation with the **Average Percent of Time** calculation at the bottom of the attendees section of the report.

10.2 Media Time

Radio stations set their rates by many air time variables. Buttons can be titled with radio events like music, advertisements, station I.D., weather, news, D.J. chat, etc. This gives a very accurate report that shows time in total and percentages. The **Notes** feature can be used to log what advertisements were played, etc.

10.3 Behavioral Observations

Why limit your observations to meeting participants? Use the agenda item list as a list of behaviors of a human or animal subject in a laboratory or (with a laptop) in the field. You can quantify the time spent on each behavior and count the number of times the behavior was performed. In this setting, you might want to remember that you can end one observation without starting another by pressing the button which is depressed to end that observation. Also, if two behaviors are “back to back”, you can press the depressed button once to turn it off, and then quickly again to turn it back on.

10.4 Speeches

If you are practicing a speech, and want to spend a certain amount of time on each of several topics, *Meeting Maestro* can help you achieve a proper balance between the different sections by acting as a recording stopwatch to measure the amount of time spent on each topic. You can then edit the copy or change the pace of your speaking to fill the time appropriately.

10.5 Public Events

A public event, like a worship service, a wedding, a concert, or a talent competion, has distinct parts which each occupy time. Meeting Maestro can be used to time these sections during an early run through and help the organizer adjust the lengths of each section in order to fit the total time into a given schedule.

10.6 Your Creative Uses

We look forward to hearing from you about your creative uses of *Meeting Maestro.* Please send a note to maestro@su5.com. We will consider your suggestions in our future marketing and development plans, and we will post the best ideas on our website at http://www.su5.com.

Appendix A

Introductory and Follow-Up Letters

Informative letters should be distributed by the correct group inside your organization. The first example is a letter introducing the *Meeting Maestro* system and encouraging groups to take advantage of its availability. The second example letter is directed toward each individual participant in a meeting. This type of letter would accompany a *Meeting Maestro* Report, in which the individual might be made aware of potential ways to improve their own meeting skills.

EXAMPLE

Memo To: All Managers

From: Your corporate training and education group

Your training and education group has added the ability to measure and monitor meetings. If you are part of a group that meets on a regular basis, you can benefit from this program. We can measure individuals for several types of meeting participation and identify people who tend to dominate, people who have a hard time getting the floor to make a point, and other problems. We also monitor meetings for agenda accuracy and time accountability.

We have trained several people to use this software. All you need to do is let us know you are interested and when you would like to be measured and we will do the rest.

We will let you know who your meeting monitor will be and your meeting chairman should make sure the monitor gets a copy of the agenda and a list of participants in advance.

This system produces a private report that will be mailed to each of the participants. You will be given access to documentation that suggests how to address areas that might need improvement.

We have attached a meeting summary report that will help you get an idea of what kind of information we can provide.

Please give us a call to find out more and set up an appointment.

Sincerely,

Your corporate training and education group.

EXAMPLE

Memo To: John Doe

From: Meeting Chairman or Human Resources Training & Education. (In some cases, this report could come from a participant's supervisor, especially if there are repeated problems.)

Attached you will find a report that quantifies the results of a meeting that you were in last week. Everyone that attended the meeting received an individual version of this report. Notice that your copy of the report only shows your name and does not include anyone else's name that was in the meeting. This is provides an element of privacy in reporting the results. The other meeting attendees received similar reports with only their name displayed on the appropriate line. The line of measurements next to your name are the results of how you participated in the meeting.

You should be careful to not over react to one measurement. This measurement is for you to keep and use as a base measurement. The best way for you to get an idea of how others might be perceiving you in meetings is to compare your measurements to the measurements of your peers. If you have one or two areas in your report that stand out, you should read the corresponding section of the manual we have included with this package.

There is a bibliography listed in the back of the manual that is referred to often in the improvement process sections of the book. We have several of these books in our corporate library for you to use if you feel like getting deeper into any issue.

Everyone's role in each meeting can vary quite a bit. It is very difficult to form conclusions regarding any behavior issues with one or two measurements. However, if you keep several of these reports, you might see certain peer comparison measurements that need attention. If not, you are in a relatively small group of people who communicate well. Congratulations.

If you have any questions regarding this system please call to get more information.

Sincerely,

Your corporate training and education group.

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