

# Conference Café

EUS Continuing Education Department Newsletter

November, 2006

*The Conference Café is a newsletter for EUS ACSs and HPSCs providing articles on different aspects of conference planning, with the emphasis on simplifying wherever possible. Please let us know if you cannot view this newsletter, have suggestions for future articles, or any other questions, by emailing [dbaier@mac.com](mailto:dbaier@mac.com).*



**In This Issue ...**

**Top 10 Ways to Unproductive Meetings**

**Representatives at Conferences**

**CEU/CERP Procedure Review**

**LLL-EUS CEUs for Leader Applicants**



*We hope this newsletter will simplify the conference planning process, enrich your time as an ACS or HPSC, and bring more joy to the work you do.*

*So pour a cup of tea or spiced cider, put up your feet, and please enjoy a break on us as you read!*

*Warmly, the EUS  
Continuing Education  
Department Staff*

## The Top 10 Ways to Assure Unproductive and Frustrating Meetings

### 1. Show Up Late.

Nothing says "I'm disorganized" like walking into a meeting already in progress. Arriving a few minutes early not only demonstrates that you respect your colleagues' time, but guarantees you get a good seat as well.

### 2. Be Unprepared.

If you've been given an agenda or materials beforehand, read them. Think of any questions you have or contributions you could make to the subjects being discussed.

### 3. Monopolize the Conversation.

When discussion ensues, it's protocol to let more senior figures contribute first. Once they've said their piece, concisely make your points. Don't drone on—or feel compelled to speak at all if you don't have anything purposeful to say. As the old adage goes, "Better to be thought a fool, than speak and remove all doubt."

### 4. Make Your Statements Sound Like Questions.

Phrasing your statements as questions invites others to say no, argue, or take credit for your ideas. Speak in declarative sentences, such as "Let's do more research on that."

### 5. Misread Signals.

Try to gauge the needs and mood of those in the room. Listen carefully to what people are saying to discern how receptive they might be to your ideas. You need to make your message relevant to your audience. For example, if everyone is focused on cutting costs, and you're angling for a some extras or an expensive speaker, you'll either want to stress how the speaker will bring in more attendees—or table your request for another day.



*"If winter is slumber, spring is birth, and summer is life, then autumn rounds out to be reflection. It's a time of year when the leaves are down and the harvest is in and the perennials are gone. Mother Earth just closed up the drapes on another year and it's time to reflect on what's come before."*

*—Mitchell Burgess, Northern Exposure,  
Thanksgiving, 1992*

## 6. Get Intimidated.

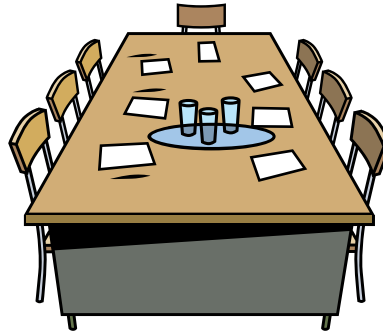
Unfortunately, some of your co-workers may view meetings as a battleground and themselves as verbal gladiators, sparring for favor. If you become the victim of a put-down or accusation, calmly defend yourself. If you need to buy time to think, do so with a question that will make your attacker accountable. For example: "Vicky, when did you start thinking I don't care about our income results?"

## 7. Chew Gum.

The smacking, popping, cracking, and cow-like chewing are annoying. Plus, it's rude and unprofessional. 'Nuff said.

## 8. Keep Your Cell Phone On.

You turn it off in restaurants and at the movies. Turn it off for your meeting. A ringing phone interrupts the presenter and distracts the audience. And whatever you do, never take a call in the middle of a meeting.



## 9. Wander Off Topic.

Don't hijack the agenda. Stay focused on what you and your team are trying to accomplish. If you must digress into unrelated areas, make sure it's alright with the others present. A good way to handle important issues not related to the topic at hand is to record them on a flipchart and revisit them at an appropriate time.

## 10. Skip It.

Sure, you might get more done if you forgo a meeting to stay home and do your actual work. But you'll miss an opportunity to make yourself known and have input into the planning that will happen. Remember, in the end, meetings aren't about productivity, they're about projecting a positive image and forming and building relationships that are crucial to the success of your objectives.

So now that you know what NOT to do, maybe you want to do some research to make your meetings even more effective. There is tons of information on the Web on this topic. Start with a google search of "effective meetings" and you can go from there. One thing is certain—holding in-person committee meetings during the planning period of your event is a great way to solidify your team, help them share ideas, get more volunteers, and give those that are helping a needed thank-you and boost to keep it up. This can be done online, though it takes more work and isn't as personal as sitting down and sharing time (and lunch) together. 😊

## LLI Representatives at Area Conferences

Everyone looks forward to the guests at an Area Conference. One LLL guest at an Area Conference is the official La Leche League International representative. She or he is to be a current member of the Board of Directors, a Founder, a Division Director, a member of the EUS Division Council, or someone from LLLI Headquarters who can speak on behalf of the organization, such as the Executive Director. Occasionally, especially for a spring conference, the representative may be someone who was serving on the Board at the time of the invitation and then was not re-elected to the Board.

An EUS Division Representative is also invited to attend. Traditionally, the RA or RALA is invited first. If the RA or RALA cannot attend, or if the Area has the resources, they might invite an additional EUS representative. Make these choices with Team input. These are members of the EUS Regional Support Team and their attendance helps their working relationship with the Team to blossom. When the RA and RALA have a chance to get to know more Leaders in an Area, they are of greater help when Area Council or Team job searches are done. Their conference experience and speaking talent are an added benefit. When Area Leaders see other Leaders volunteering beyond the Group or Area level, it inspires them to become more involved and consider an Area Council position.

## On Simplicity

*"Our life is frittered away by detail. ... Simplify, simplify."*

—Henry Thoreau



*"Simplicity is the glory of expression."*

—Walt Whitman

*You're  
Cordially Invited...*

These invited representatives can be asked to present one or two conference topics, unless they offer to do more or your conference is more than one day. At times LLLI and EUS guests have been able to fill in when other speakers have emergencies that prevent their attendance at the last minute.

It is expected that all expenses for LLLI and EUS representatives will be paid by the Area. This includes transportation, housing, registration, and all meals needed while the guest is away from home.

EUS Division Staff, LLLI Staff, and members of the Board of Directors who live in your Area are to be invited as guests. Offer them a complimentary registration and invite them to present at least one panel. Also invite them to attend any pre-and post-conference activities you may have planned. Each Area should have in place an Area protocol that addresses the invitation of these in-Area guests. Contact your ACL to determine if you have one, or to develop one. These guidelines will address any arrangements, in addition to a complimentary registration, that you will make for the LLL representatives who live in your Area. Whatever decisions are made, they should be specific and clearly stated in the letter of invitation. Communicating these provisions, in writing, to the people involved will do much to eliminate misunderstandings.

Formally introduce all LLL representatives, even at casual functions. Indicate their LLL position on their name tags. Include all LLL representatives in a separate listing in the Registration Brochure and the Program Booklet.

Once you have determined who your guests might be, you or someone you appoint writes an invitation for them to speak. It is a courtesy to invite these guests as early as possible. The person who writes to these guests will be their contact person and she should follow through on all communication with these guests. This initial letter should include the date and location for the conference as well as the topics you would like them to present and a request for other topics they might prefer to present, asking how many panels they would like to present. Additionally, this letter should clearly state what expenses will be covered by the Area.

Please pay special attention to the care of your guests. By sending them the [Speaker Information Form](#), you will find out about:

- ☞ their preference for sleeping; separate room or separate bed
- ☞ children who will be accompanying them
- ☞ their needs for audio-visual equipment
- ☞ special needs and any other needs they might have
- ☞ the conference events they plan to attend
- ☞ their travel plans

Arrange to have someone meet them at the airport and take them to their hotel or LLL home, offer to get them something to eat or drink, and provide transportation if they are not staying at the conference site.

At least three weeks before the conference, send a letter and updated [Everything In One Place](#) form to your LLL guests confirming the arrangements. You may have new information about:

- ☞ conference schedule. Send two Registration Brochures so guests can leave one with family members at home.
- ☞ arrival information, including the name of the person and where at the airport they are to meet (baggage claim area, etc.) Also include one or more phone numbers to call in case of emergency, including the phone number of someone who will be home while the guest is traveling.
- ☞ any other expectations you have for their time with you, such as opening introductions, special speeches, informal gatherings, or Area Council meetings.
- ☞ any special dress requirements for conference activities you have planned. Let the guest know if there is a pool and/ or hot tub at the facility.

A thoughtful touch is to send the guest's family a short note, one week before the conference, thanking them for sharing this special person with you. Include an index card with a short version of the conference schedule and the hotel (or LLL home they will be staying at) and conference site emergency numbers.



*"On Thanksgiving Day  
all over America, families  
sit down to dinner at the  
same moment - halftime."*

*—Unknown*



Try to welcome all guest speakers immediately upon their arrival and thank them for coming. Introduce them to their hostess for the day or help them acclimated to the facility if they do not have a hostess. At the end of the day, be sure to thank the guest in a personal manner and extend an appropriate compliment.

A small gift is a thoughtful way of saying thank you to your LLL guests. This gift should not be expensive. A home-made item, something typically LLL, or something special about the conference location will let the recipient know that thought and love went into its selection.

Within a few days after the conference, send a hand-written note of thanks and appreciation. At this time, you might also share comments from the evaluation forms. 😊

## **CEU & CERP Application Procedures - Reminder!**

This is one area of conference planning that we have taken strides to simplify. No matter what we do, though, sometimes it seems to be a confusing process. Please remind your CEU/CERP Coordinators to use the new application form (301), and to only send the topics that you want to be considered for CEUs or CERPs, not your entire program listing.

As a program planner, you may have a number of CERPs or CEUs in mind that you would like to offer attendees. For instance, it could be one CERP per session, and one or two CEUs per session. To achieve this, you need to do some advance “guessing” at which topics you think would qualify. While these are not always accepted, it is helpful for you to only send these topics with your application. If some of these don’t work out and you are determined to have a certain number, others can be discussed with the CECA.

For your own peace of mind (and that of your CEU/CERP Coordinator), think about the speakers you ask to present these topics. If they have a reputation for being slow at (or never doing) paperwork, no matter how dynamic a speaker, they are not a good choice for continuing education credits of any kind. By all means, ask them to present the topic they are passionate about, but skip the credits and save yourself a headache. (Simplify!)

One last CEU detail we are changing is that EUS-LLL CEUs will no longer be rounded off to the nearest quarter hour, as stated in the CPG. Most sessions are in quarter-hour increments anyway, and this way the CEU and CERP credits will be the same 1 hour = 1 credit (or percentages thereof). 😊

## **CEUs for Leader Applicants**

Announcing a new policy voted on at the recent EUS Council meeting - from now on EUS-LLL CEUs will be available for Leader Applicants as well as Leaders for any topic that is awarded CEU credits. This policy has gone through several stages historically, and CEUs were originally offered to Leader Applicants. We have come back full circle!

Leader Applicants are enthusiastic and excited about learning all they can about La Leche League and ways to help mothers and babies breastfeed. Awarding them CEU credits is one way to acknowledge and affirm their learning process and to encourage them to continue, just as Leaders are encouraged to continue their education as part of their basic responsibilities. 😊

## **Enjoy the Holiday!**

I hope you each take time to relax during the upcoming holiday and have special time with your family—when you’re NOT in the kitchen or dining room! For mothers, holidays can be even more stressful (and less simple!) than any other time.

Plan ahead and break things down into smaller jobs. Check out [www.realsimple.com](http://www.realsimple.com) for suggestions, lots of yummy Thanksgiving recipes, and ways to organize your time.

An article titled, What Was Norman Rockwell Thinking? at <http://www.slu.edu/readstory/more/1908> offers practical suggestions for getting through Thanksgiving (whether at your home or at relatives) without feeling like you need a vacation afterwards. It includes a link to tips on how to survive your college freshman’s first visit home—for those of us in that situation!

However you celebrate, remember the LLL adage, “people before things” (and that includes food) and know that when I think of “things” I’m thankful for, you are one of them! 🍷

- **Submit CEU/CERP topics on Form 301.**
- **Send only the topics for which you are applying for continuing education credits.**
- **Check out the Side-By-Side Form!**
- **LLL-EUS CEUs can be awarded for Leader Applicants**

