

Parking Lot

In meetings, topics often come up that do not fit into the meeting either in the time available or in the meeting agenda. The term “parking lot” refers to the topics that are “parked” for later resolution.

Other names: “the issues bin”, “issues list”

Materials needed:

- Something to write on (works best if it is visible to everyone in the meeting)
- Something to write with

Time:

As needed

Who is involved:

- Meeting participants
- Parking Lot recorder (usually a meeting participant also)

Directions:

- Make it visible and identify it as the parking lot to meeting participants
- Enlist a recorder (someone who will write down parking lot items)
- When topics appear in the meeting that are off the agenda or that will take too long to cover in the time allotted, record the topic on the parking lot, along with its originator (who identified this topic).
- Review the parking lot at meeting end.
- Assign actions to each item in the parking lot (who will resolve it, when it will be resolved)
- Follow-up. Each item in the parking lot should appear in a parking lot resolutions list, an agenda item for subsequent meeting, or an action item.
- Maintain a parking lot history (or resolutions list).
 - You can evaluate if some topics re-appear
 - You can evaluate if a topic originator is raising more issues than others
 - You can track the context (are these items of historical significance, are people getting ahead of the agenda, etc)

NOTE: Any tool can be abused. Keeping a parking lot history will show you patterns. If abuse is found, take corrective action on the abuser, whether it's the meeting chair or a meeting participant.