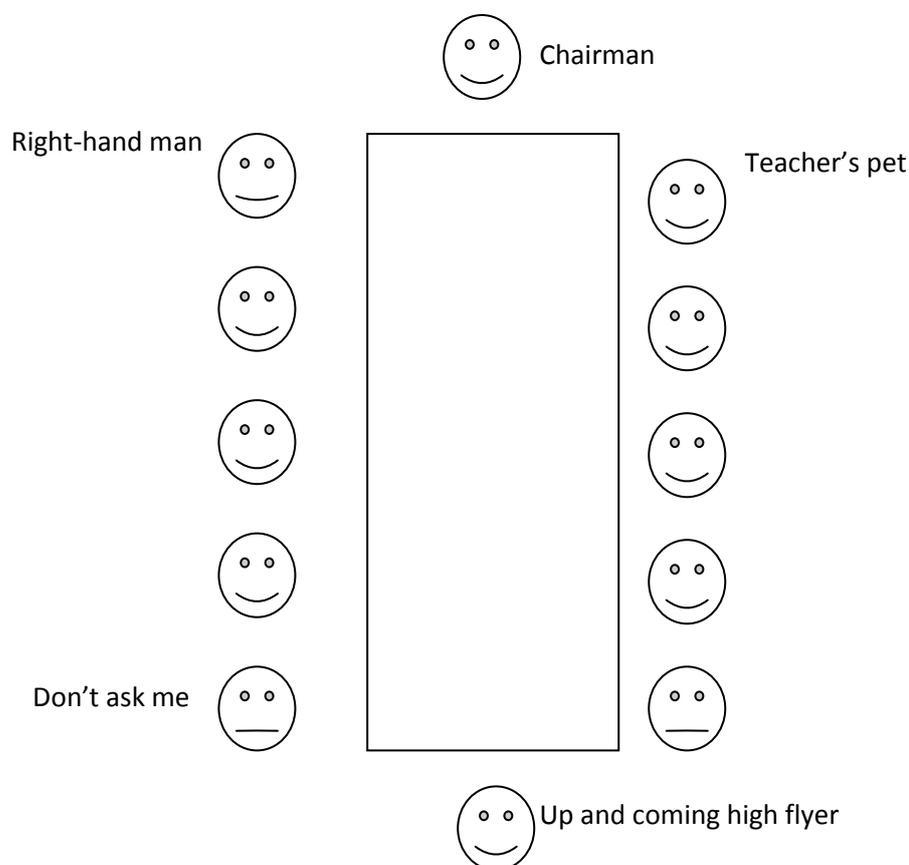


Seating Arrangements

Where to sit at the boardroom table is a perennial problem. Do you sit at the top or bottom, halfway down the long side (as the Prime Minister does) or on one of the corners? Well the answer all depends on what role you are taking in the meeting, what influence you want to have at the table and who the other participants in the meeting are.

The Classic Arrangement

At a classic board meeting the chairman sits at the top of the table, so he can see and be seen by everyone else.

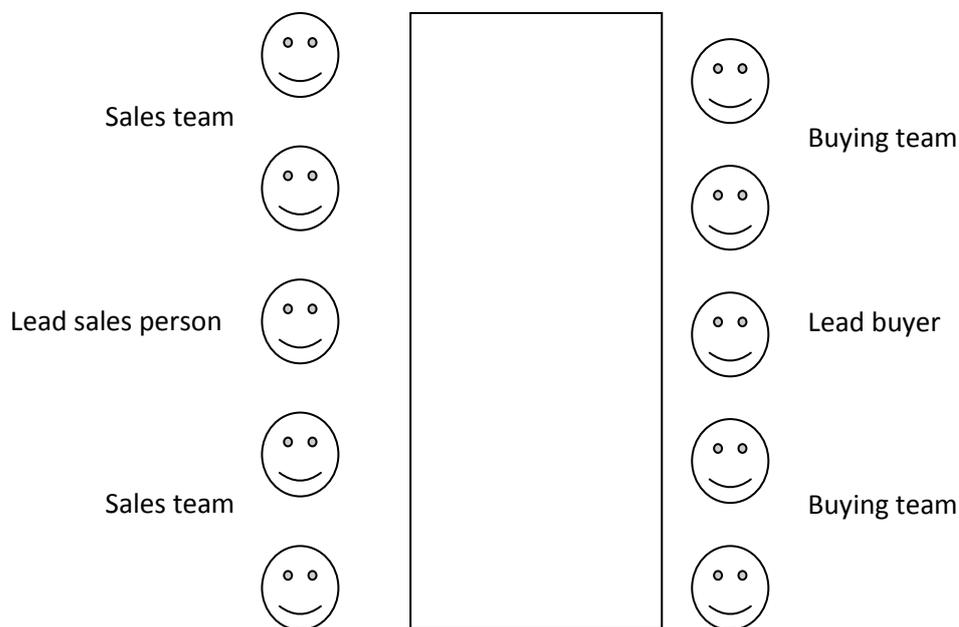


His right-hand man sits on his right and the current favourite employee will sit on his left. If you are of a lower position but want to make an impression sit at the bottom of the table opposite the chairman. Everyone can see you and you can make eye contact with everyone else. On the other hand if you are out for a quiet life sit either side at the bottom of the table. This is equivalent to sitting at the back of the classroom.

The First Sales Meeting

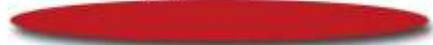
When there are two distinct groups of people, ie vendors and prospects, it is more normal to take up positions on either side of the table and leave the end chairs vacant. This says we are all equal and no one is more important than everyone else.

By sitting opposite each other the two groups have full eye contact with each other, so that they can easily see the facial expressions of their opposite number.

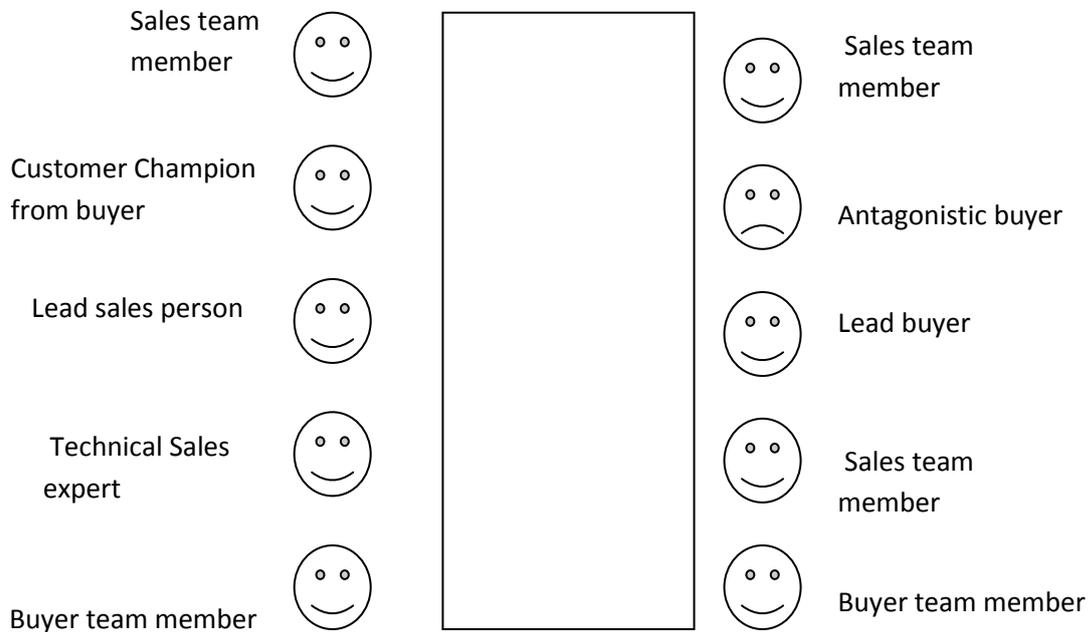


While everyone is equal, some are more equal than others, so the further away from the centre of the table you are sitting, the less important you are deemed to be to the sales negotiations.

This tends to create a “them and us” mentality across the table. This may be alright for an initial meeting, however, in many circumstances it is wise to mix up the two teams, particularly if there is likely to be conflict during the meeting.



Defusing Conflict



By placing the main two buyers opposite the lead sales person they can easily see each other. But by placing the person from the customer's buying team who is most supportive of the vendor, (ie the Customer Champion) next to the lead sales person, will reduce they level of antagonistic comments from the buyers as any criticisms the make across the table are also seen as criticising one of their own people.

Next time you are sat around a board table, take note of who is sitting where. It will highlight where they seem themselves within the overall business process.