



Top Five Tips For Running Productive & Effective Meetings

Have you ever been in a meeting where there is an agenda but it's not followed? Or, where you discuss the same issue repeatedly, with no resolution? If you answered yes, you are in the majority. Throughout my career, I have sat through hundreds of meetings that were unproductive and a waste of time. However, with proper planning and execution, you can host a well-run meeting. The following article provides some tips to develop and run effective meetings:

1. Decide why you want to have a meeting. What is the purpose of the meeting? What are you trying to accomplish, address, or resolve? If you can handle the issue by yourself or with a second person, then a meeting is not necessary. Only schedule a meeting when you need input from a larger group of people or have an issue that needs to be discussed with a specific group of people, such as your management/leadership team or a designated committee.
2. If you determine that a meeting is necessary, develop and share an agenda with those who will be attending the meeting at least one week in advance. The agenda should specify the items to be discussed, what type of outcome you expect in relation to each item (e.g., need sufficient input to make a decision, want to develop a plan of action), the time allotted to each agenda item, the start and end time of the meeting, and how the meeting will be held (e.g., face-to-face, teleconference call). Distributing the agenda one week in advance will give meeting participants the opportunity to ask any questions or seek additional information prior to the meeting. It will also help participants to be prepared for the meeting, freeing up valuable time during the actual meeting to get to the heart of the matter.
3. The person who runs the meeting (facilitator) should adhere to the items on the agenda. If someone raises an issue that is not on the agenda or unrelated to the agenda items, place it in the "parking lot." The parking lot serves as a reminder to discuss that issue at a later time, whether that is at the end of the meeting or at a future meeting.
4. The facilitator should also make sure that the time allotted for each agenda item is honored. Two suggestions to accomplish this include:
 - a. Establishing a rule, in advance, that people can not repeat what another individual has already said. They can, however, offer new ideas or suggestions, or ask questions for clarification purposes.

- b. Soliciting input from each participant first prior to allowing an individual who has already spoken to speak again. This ensures you hear everyone's perspective, and prevents verbose individuals from monopolizing the conversation.

The above suggestions should move the agenda forward, ensuring that the meeting ends at the time indicated on the agenda.

5. Once the meeting has ended, distribute the minutes in a timely manner, generally within a week following the meeting. The minutes should reiterate the agenda items, what was decided, what action steps will be taken, who was assigned to a specific action step, and when the action steps need to be completed. The facilitator or a designated individual should follow up with the meeting participants to ensure they complete their assignments in the agreed upon deadlines. When people take action, propelling things forward, this encourages people to attend future meetings, as they can see progress and success.

By following the five tips mentioned above, you should be able to run meetings that are more efficient and effective. Developing a specific agenda and sharing it in advance, sticking to the agenda, setting time limits for each agenda item, ensuring that everyone's input has been solicited, and following up to make sure everyone has completed their assignments in a timely manner can make meetings more productive and successful. When people attend well-run meetings and see that progress is being made, they are more likely to attend and participate in future meetings.

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If you want to make positive changes in your professional life, and create the job or career you desire and deserve, then working with Executive & Life Coach, Sharon L. Mikrut, is the solution. Although her specialty is in partnering with nonprofit executive directors and managers to maximize their resources in a competitive environment, she is passionate about working with all individuals committed to personal and/or professional growth. Visit her website at <http://www.createitcoaching.org> or Nonprofit Professionals blog at <http://www.createitcoaching.com>, and sign up for her free monthly newsletter that provides information and resources designed to help you manage your nonprofit organization in a more effective and efficient manner. You can also visit her Empowerment blog at <http://www.createitcoaching.net>, and sign up for her free monthly life coaching newsletter.