

EFFECTIVE MEETING MANAGEMENT

A survey published by the Annenberg School of Communications at UCLA and the University of Minnesota's Training and Development Research Center revealed that on average executives spend nearly 40-50% of their working hours in meetings.

The necessity of meetings in the workplace is undeniable. Many groups face obstacles in structuring an effective meeting. A lack of preparation, organization and knowledge can create an environment not conducive to productivity and focus.

The goal is to stay focused and structured to ensure a meaningful and worthwhile meeting. The following guidelines provide a solid foundation for enhancing meeting management efficiency.

Guidelines for Meeting Effectiveness

1. Plan the meeting in advance.
 - Determine the meeting need.
 - Identify the goal(s) of the meeting and what must be achieved.
 - Invite only those people that are necessary to accomplish the objectives.
 - Allot sufficient time to attain the desired outcomes.
 - Indicate clearly the time and location of the meeting to eliminate potential confusion.
 - Start on time!
2. Inform the meeting participants.
 - Whenever possible, distribute the agenda to the participants in advance.
 - Notify participants of the purpose and desired outcomes of the meeting.
 - Clearly communicate the intent of each agenda item.
 - Ensure that each participant knows what information he or she is responsible for during the meeting.
 - Use visual aids such as flip charts to pique the interest of the meeting participants.
3. Thoroughly prepare for the meeting.
 - Prepare a concise agenda that includes a list of topics, individual responsibilities, and estimated time required. See following sample agenda.
 - Cover the logistics of the meeting. Arrive early and make sure all of the needed items are present (handouts, supplies, etc.).
 - Arrange the meeting room in an effort to have the meeting participants facing one another. A circle format works for small groups. For larger groups, a U-shaped arrangement is effective.
 - Organize material to be presented.
4. Structure the meeting to ensure a controlled environment.
 - Establish ground rules that will be followed during each meeting.
 - Designate a facilitator and a recorder to take minutes.
 - Address behavior that is diverting the meeting from accomplishing its tasks.
 - Eliminate all side conversations.

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- Use a timekeeper to keep the meeting focused and on track.
 - Get agreement on assignments / tasks, responsibilities and target dates.
5. Summarize the meeting.
- Record all decisions that were made during the meeting.
 - Document the names of persons responsible for overseeing tasks and assignments and target dates.
 - Agree on a date, time and location for the next meeting.
 - Monitor and evaluate the results achieved by the group.
 - Prepare and distribute minutes to the meeting participants promptly after the meeting.
 - Make a goal to end meetings on time.

Sample Agenda

Internet Marketing Association Meeting Agenda

Start at 10:00 a.m. in Board Room		
Item	Responsible	Time
Opening Remarks	President	5 min
VP Membership Report -intramural report -new member program introduction	VPM	20 min
VP Financial Report -status of budget -housebill status	VPF	7 min
VP Rush Report -status of current efforts -status of next term plans	VPR	7 min
VP Internal	VPI	5 min
VP External	VPE	10 min
Guest Speaker	Community Relations	15 min
End at 11:10 - Let's keep on track!		

Sources: http://www.meetingwizard.org/meetings/4_0.cfm
<http://www.themeetingedge.com>
<http://www.hightechcareers.com/docs/effective.html>
<http://www.triangle.org/howto/meetings/elements.html>