



Meeting Best Practices Toolkit

A recent study of office employees lists meetings as the #1 time waster, with employees identifying 50% of meeting time as wasted. With proper planning and preparation, any meeting can be effective. Effective meetings can create energy and a feeling of accomplishment. The three primary activities in a meeting are **Informing, Discussion and Deciding**.

Tips to make your meeting worthwhile

Make sure it is necessary. Before sending out the invite, ask yourself whether there is another way to move the issue or project forward. Can you get input via email? Can you gather a sub-group to solve the issue? A phone conversation will often get you the quickest resolution to an issue.

Prepare an agenda. Create an agenda to ensure you cover only what needs to be covered and you stick to relevant activities,. To prepare an agenda, consider the following factors:

- Priorities – what absolutely must be covered?
- Results – what do you need to accomplish at the meeting?
- Participants – who needs to attend for the meeting to be successful? Decision makers? Don't over-invite.
- Timing – use your agenda as your time guide.
- Length – Try not to schedule meetings longer than one hour (or preferably 50 minutes).
- Get feedback on agenda from key participants.

Distribute the agenda 24 hours in advance to allow participants to think about discussion points.

When and Where.

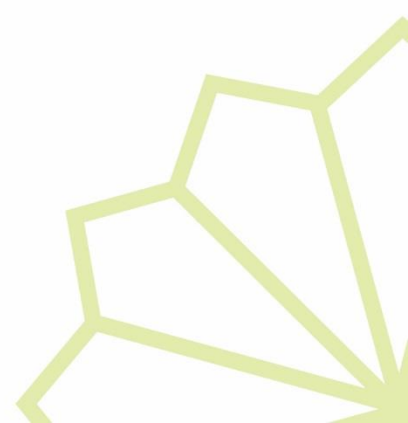
- Limit “travel time” - try to set up the meeting on the same floor as the majority of the participants.
- Be conscientious of different time zones.
- Within your immediate teams, consider not scheduling meetings on one day a week (Fridays?) if possible to provide some catch up time.

Be clear about the objectives. State the purpose of the meeting in the invitation and again at the beginning of the meeting. Be sure to explain how the meeting will achieve the objective.

- Do you want a decision?
- Do you want to generate ideas?
- Are you getting status reports?
- Are you communicating something?
- Are you making plans?
- Who will do what and when?

To help determine what your meeting objective is, complete this sentence.

At the close of this meeting, I want the group to.....





Focus. Just because you have an hour scheduled, don't take it. Keep the discussion focused and avoid unnecessary side conversations. If a discussion does not affect at least 50% of the group, save it for later.

Take back 10 minutes. Insist on 50 minute meetings. What can be done in 60 minutes can probably be done in 50 minutes with focus and discipline. Defy the default on your calendar and send meeting requests that end 10 minutes before the hour. Take up the minimum amount of time while still achieving your goal. This will have the additional benefit of reducing meeting overlaps.

Start on time. End on time. Do not recap discussion for latecomers. Keep in mind, if a critical person is 15 minutes late in an eight-person meeting, that person has cost the organization two hours of lost productivity.

Encourage meeting participation. Meaningful contribution is the key to meeting success. Everyone at the meeting is accountable. Set an expectation at the beginning that everyone will weigh in on the final decision. This will help keep all participants focused. Ideas to keep more people involved:

- **Don't dominate.** This not only gives others less time to speak up but also sends the message that their ideas are not important. Let at least three people speak before you talk again (unless to prompt).
- **Be Positive.** Demonstrate that all ideas are valuable. Thank people who are usually reticent for their comments.
- **Ask directly.** To get input from everyone, ask each person for their thoughts.
-

Participant expectations. You were invited for a reason, PARTICIPATE.

- Make every effort to arrive on time.
- Review the agenda prior to the meeting.
- Bring the agenda and other needed documents.
- Prepare to contribute.

Given the frustration most people feel when their time is wasted; gaining a reputation for running efficient and successful meetings is good for all involved.

