

Effectiveness of Your Meetings

Keep the following in mind for your next meeting and reap the rewards of powerful communication.

- Prepare an agenda in advance. Productive meetings don't just happen; they require preparation. Laying out an agenda in advance will help attendees prepare for your meeting, focus on the topic(s) at hand, and serve as a reminder after the meeting once associated tasks may have been assigned. Communicating a clear purpose statement as part of your agenda will also help guide your meeting, maintain focus, and help achieve desired results.
- Ask for additions to the agenda before you start and write agreed additional issue on a board or a flip chart. If it is not likely that you will get through the full meeting agenda it is an option to get the group to prioritise the agenda topics with a quick 3, 2, 1 or 0 Urgency and Importance rating (3 for most critical and add two numbers together to get rating). There should be no discussion during rating or it will take too long.
- Encourage team discussion. Meetings are often taken hostage by people who either participate too much or not at all. Successful meetings require appropriate participation from everyone on the subject(s) at hand. Allot time for each major issue to run around the table and give each person a chance to add some input or to discuss what they have or will be been working on.
- Outline specific issues, special topics. Issues to be addressed at your meeting should be outlined in advance and may be included in the agenda to encourage preparation by attendees. The outline should identify why the issue is important, any implications that may result from it not being addressed, and other relevant details especially if it is complicated or complex.
- Ask questions. Once your meeting has started and the issue is presented, be sure to allow time for qualifying questions or prompt further discussion yourself if necessary. While it is important to stay on topic, there should also be complete understanding of the issue by everyone in attendance.
- Solicit solutions. Keep the conversation on track by next asking attendees for a one-sentence solution to the issue at hand, and allow each attendee time to give his or her recommendation. Remember to include everyone and keep the discussion on topic.
- Run to a strict time schedule and finish on time unless something very urgent is involved. If there is outstanding important issues schedule an additional meeting.
- Establish next steps. You can wrap up discussion on an issue by determining next actions to be taken and when they should be completed. This is a great way to signal a close to the meeting or discussion and keep everyone on the same page without doubt as to what happens next. Confirm the timing of the next meeting if that is required.