

Effective Meetings

STEP 1 – The Objective of your meeting

An effective meeting has a useful purpose. This means that in it, you achieve your desired outcome. For a meeting to meet this outcome, or objective, you have to have clear idea about what it is.

- Do you want a decision?
- Do you want to come up with ideas/brainstorming?
- Are you getting reports from others?
- Are you communicating with/updating your attendees?
- Are you making plans/goals for the next meeting?

With the end result clear in your mind, you can then plan the details of the meeting, and determine who needs to attend.

STEP2 - Effective use of your time

- Streamline your meeting as much as you can, (stick to a set start time, location, and meeting length.
- Make sure your agenda items have been decided on and confirmed well in advance.
- Keep your meeting objective in mind, everything that happens in the meeting should help you take a step towards your objective.
- To make sure that you cover only what needs to be covered and you stick to relevant topics, you need to put together an agenda. This is vital to ensure the meeting runs on target and on time.

To put together an agenda, take in to account the following points:

- Priorities – what the key things that must be covered?
- Goals – what do you need to achieve at the meeting?
- Attendees – who needs to attend the meeting for it to be



successful?

- Sequence – in what order will you cover the topics?
- Timing – how much time will spend on each topic?
- Date and Time – when will the meeting take place?
- Place – where will the meeting take place?

With an idea of what needs to be covered and for how long, you can then move on to looking at the information that needs to be prepared beforehand.

- What do the attendees need to know in order to make the most of the meeting?
- What do you need the attendees to do in the meeting, so that they can prepare?
- Giving a particular topic of discussion to various people is another great way to keep them involved and interested.
- On the agenda, give the name of who will lead the discussion or presentation of each topic.

Use your agenda as a guide for how much time to spend on each topic. When you notice that time is running out for a particular item, try pushing the discussion towards a decision or set aside the discussion topic until another time.

An important thing to stress or emphasise in a meeting is that everyone respects the time available.

Key things to remember:

- Start the meeting on time.
- Do not spend time recapping for people who arrive late, when possible, finish on time.
- Anything that can be done outside the meeting time should be. This includes circulating reports for people to read beforehand, and assigning smaller group meetings to discuss issues relevant to only certain people.



STEP 3 - Making sure the attendees feel the meeting is worthwhile.

Once you have an agenda prepared, you need to send it to the participants, get their opinions and make any changes they feel appropriate. Chairing a meeting is not dictating to others. You have to be participating and contributing right from the start. It is important you get feedback attendee's about your proposed agenda.

Once you're in the meeting, there are several things you should keep in mind:

- If certain people are dominating the conversation, make a point of asking others for their ideas.
- At the end of each agenda item, quickly summarize what was said, and ask people to confirm that that's a fair summary. Note items that require further discussion.
- Ensure the meeting stays on topic (avoid tangents).
- List all tasks that arise at the meeting. Make sure someone takes notes during the meeting if you think you will be too busy to do so yourself.
- At the end summarize what you need to do next and state that you will be sending out a meeting summary.

After the meeting is over, take some time to work out what went well and what could have been done better.

Lastly, prepare a summary of the meeting and send this out to all of the attendees and anyone else who may benefit.

Key Points:

- Make sure to stick to your objective
- Keep the time of your meeting to a minimum
- Make sure to engage with the participants, keeping things clear and concise avoiding tangents.

