Effective Meetings

Meetings have been around as long as humans have felt the need to accomplish tasks, but unfortunately there are hundreds of horror stories about poorly run and ineffective meetings. The internet is filled with websites, articles, and videos of how to make your meetings more effective, what to avoid, etc. This page will guide you through a summary of the best tips to run an effective meeting that leaves everyone feeling satisfied their time was well spent. While some tips may seem blatantly obvious - they are still important to consider, other tips are brief ways of ensuring you have the key components to effectively use the time and talents of those who are impacted.

Preparation:

Decide if the meeting is necessary. If the information is one-way and requires no feedback then a simple email to members will suffice, but if input is needed from everyone, a meeting is important.

Decide who MUST be there and include no one else. There is no need to waste someone’s time if they do not need to be involved.

Ask for agenda items to be submitted well in advance. This will assist you as you set the agenda and establish what items must be included and the length of the meeting.

Set an agenda. Send this agenda out at least a day in advance to give members an opportunity to make suggestions and properly prepare for the meeting.

Assign roles. Have people help with keeping minutes, writing down ideas/actions to be taken.

Utilize a meeting note template. This will force you to take notes in a format that identifies the next steps for each discussion item, when the item should be accomplished, and who will be responsible for that item. See below for an example.

During the Meeting:

Start on time. This may seem obvious, but rarely happens. If you get a reputation for starting late, team members will start showing up late.

Review what was accomplished in the last meeting. Take a few minutes to review what has been accomplished during and since the last meeting, this will be helpful for those who may not remember - or who were not able to attend.
Identify the appropriate length of the meeting. Allow for time to review the last meeting and to summarize next steps at the end of the meeting. Then be sure you are realistic about what can be accomplished in the remaining time. Rarely is there a reason a meeting should last longer than an hour. Much more than an hour is generally excessive and most participants will be unfocused.

Develop a strong agenda. And be strict about not allowing too much onto the agenda for one meeting. If you allow time for folks to review the agenda in advance and request that agenda items be submitted, then any new items identified during the actual meeting can be added to the agenda at the next available meeting.

Stick to the agenda. Do not go off on tangents or let a member bring up complaints that could be addressed individually.

Allow everyone a chance to contribute. Make sure one member is not being silenced by one or two long winded members. Also, acknowledge when a member is staying silent, work to have them contribute as well.

Be clear on WHO does WHAT, and WHEN. Hold people accountable to accomplish what was discussed during the meeting. A quick wrap-up at the end of the meeting will work for this.

End on time. If a meeting must run late, simply ask members to stick around for 10 more minutes to wrap things up.

After the Meeting:

Distribute meeting minutes. Make sure everyone from the meeting gets a copy.

Get feedback from participants. Welcome all positive and negative feedback so you can see where you can improve your meetings and what you did well.

Check up on members. Make sure each member understands what he/she is supposed to accomplish and is staying on task.

Extra Tips:

Think about the setup of the conference room. Depending on the topic being addressed the room may need to be set up differently. If there is a need for a strong, clear leader a “U” shape is most effective in still getting members to contribute. If you want to be actively involved and not be a superior a circle is the way to go.

Try This: Consider holding a stand up meeting - with an agenda - and a time limit of 10 minutes --- still have an agenda, a meeting notes page, and keep to a single topic. You will be amazed at how much can be done if all in attendance know that they have a limited amount of time to accomplish the tasks.
Write down EVERY idea. Even if the idea does not seem to have much potential, it is important to acknowledge every one’s ideas and discuss them.

Take notes. If there is no recording of the meeting, no action will be taken.

Take charge in the meeting. Do not let an employee distract you, keep conversation on point and moving forward. Sitting on one topic too long may lead members to become distracted and start zoning out.

Have a clock or timer VERY visible. If there is a clock in plain sight, people will feel better about knowing you are serious about starting and ending on time. It is easier for you to stay on agenda this way as well without looking at your watch or phone repeatedly.

What NOT to do:

Hold a meeting to motivate a select group of slackers. This is something that needs to be addressed individually. There is no need to embarrass someone in front of the whole group.

Getting people on YOUR page. If there is disagreement between your group and yourself, a meeting may lead to disaster if members work together against you. Address these issues individually.

Hold a motivational meeting. This is something that needs to happen every day; a special meeting just to boost morale is not the answer to a team that is losing sight of its goals.

Let side-meetings go on. With a larger group it is easier for people to start whispering to neighbors and this can be very distracting for everyone involved. Take control and have the people in the side conversations join the larger group.

Sources:

http://www.happiness-project.com/happiness_project/2009/07/14-tips-for-running-a-good-meeting/


http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-505125_162-51061211/how-to-run-an-effective-meeting/
Meeting Notes

Date:

Location:

I. Attendees:

II. General Goal:

III. Agenda Topics:

IV. Discussion Items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Task/Follow Up</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. Next Meeting Date:

VI. Proposed Agenda Items for Next Meeting: