

Proven Methods for Planning more Efficient, Productive Meetings

Meetings can be **highly effective** for addressing issues or achieving your organization's goals. They also have the potential to consume time and energy better spent elsewhere without careful planning and management. Here are some **proven techniques** to keep your meetings productive and on time:

- Determine if a meeting is really necessary. You may be able to achieve your goals through a **conference call** or an internal notice.
- If a meeting is essential, set a time, place and agenda. A **good agenda** includes time limits for each topic.
- Keep your **meeting short** – no more than two hours – for maximum success.
- Always lead with **priority items** that require little or no discussion. Pick critical topics or attention-grabbers to encourage people to show up on time.
- **Schedule topics** likely to generate debate at the end of the meeting when people are eager to leave. This will help keep conversations short and focused.
- Limit invitations to those people who are critical to your meeting's success. And, try to keep the number of invitees small (no more than eight if possible).
- **Organize and layout** any essential materials – from handouts to pens and paper – before the meeting starts.
- Always **start on time**. Tell those who arrive late where you are in the agenda, and that you'll brief them on what they missed after the meeting.
- **Set out the goal** or purpose of your meeting at the start to help keep everyone focused.
- Make sure everyone is clear on meeting rules before you begin – i.e., no side conversations, time limits on agenda items, etc.
- **Stick to your agenda** and end the meeting when you've covered all topics. Asking participants if there are other matters to discuss will only prolong your meeting.
- If someone is frequently late to your meetings, **give them a responsibility** such as bringing refreshments, or place their presentation at the top of the agenda.
- Keep your meeting on time and on topic by avoiding interruptions from calls, visitors, and unrelated conversations.

- **Assign someone to take notes** outlining decisions made, action items, who is responsible for each item and deadlines for completion. Review the notes at the end of the meeting to ensure everyone knows what is expected of him or her. Get the notes out to participants quickly after the meeting.
- Assess and **evaluate the success** of each meeting. This will help you to plan more efficient meetings in the future.

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