

Tips for Making Meetings Productive

At their best, meetings offer a great opportunity for team members to share information, make decisions, trouble-shoot problems, and celebrate successes. Unfortunately, many meetings fall short of their potential: leaders are unprepared, members are unfocused, conversations meander, and little is accomplished.

Below are some tips for convening meetings that are not only productive, but also enjoyable.

- **If you're facilitating the meeting, know what's expected.** Specifically, your job is to:
 - Determine meeting purpose
 - Oversee or construct the agenda
 - Determine who should attend
 - Establish meeting ground rules and take charge of the meeting
 - Afterwards, to share critical info/decisions to others not at the meeting
- **Make sure the meeting is needed.** Ask yourself whether *two* of the following are needed:
 - Personal interaction
 - Share and build off other's ideas
 - Group problem-solving
 - Group decision-making
 - A group of people who need to the same information, in the same way, at the same time

If NO, consider an alternative, such as a conference call with one or two group members, an email, or an intranet posting.

If YES, determine the following:

- WHAT TYPE of meeting makes the most sense (in-person, phone, online, combination)?
- What is the LEAST amount of time needed for this meeting?

- WHO needs to attend, WHY, and for HOW LONG?
- **Develop a clear agenda and disseminate it ahead of time.** When developing an agenda, consider the following questions:
 - What is the overall purpose of the meeting? (*Be succinct and think “big picture”*)
 - What are the agenda items? (*Be as specific as possible*)
 - What are the desired outcomes for EACH agenda item? (*E.g., to make a decision, inform others, obtain input, get buy-in, identify/clarify roles*)
 - How much time will be needed to discuss each item? (*Estimate*)
 - Are there any materials associated with each item? (*If yes, distribute at meeting or before?*)
- **Review the agenda at the start of the meeting—and stick to it!** By reviewing the agenda collectively, meeting participants gain insight into the expectations for the meeting and the outcomes to be accomplished.