

Managing Meetings

Many managers attend more than 200 meetings every year – research suggests that many of these meetings are unproductive. Here are 10 simple steps to boost managers' effectiveness as meeting leaders and ensure that meetings have meaningful outcomes for all participants.

Setting up a meeting

1. Don't meet if the same information can be communicated via a memo or phone-call. One of the keys to having more effective meetings is differentiating between the need for one-way information dissemination or two-way sharing of information, ideas etc.
2. Identify the meetings overall objective (for example – decision making, problem solving, gathering information etc). Based on the objective, identify the topics for discussion.
3. Identify who needs to attend – always select the minimum number of people to achieve the meeting objective.
4. Produce and distribute a written agenda before the meeting. Limit the agenda to issues affecting the entire group and keep it to one page. Always include the time, date and location of the meeting, topics, time allocated to the topic (if appropriate) and topic leader.

During the meeting

5. Start on time and begin by reviewing the agenda.
6. Proceed to discuss each topic, remain focussed and progress logically by:
 - Stating the issue
 - Discussing the data/evidence etc
 - Reaching a conclusion
 - Planning a course of action
 - Identifying who will take the action
7. Avoid these non-productive behaviours:
 - Letting one or two people monopolise the meeting (incl yourself)
 - Rehashing old ground after an agreement has been met
 - Moving from topic to topic without resolving anything
 - Leaving next steps and accountabilities unclear
8. Conclude the meeting by briefly restating what's been decided, next steps and responsibilities

After the meeting

9. Finalise and distribute a meeting summary to all attendees and copy interested parties. List key decisions made and who is responsible for what and by when.
10. Follow up on all 'to do' items decided at the meeting.