



Eight Steps to Running Meetings Confidently

Effectively run meetings enable managers to accomplish more in a shorter amount of time, with the added benefit of group involvement and buy-in. This article highlights a few things to consider as you prepare to confidently run your meeting.

Running meetings can be time-consuming if they lack focus, the right members, or effective facilitation tools. On the other hand, they can also be an extremely efficient way to get things done quickly, to support building a team environment, and to enable collaboration among key people to produce a better outcome than possible working independently.

If you are responsible for running meetings, and aren't quite sure how best to go about creating an effective meeting experience, follow these 8 key steps for successful meeting management. Attending to each of these steps will enable you to repeatedly create a well-organised productive experience, and therefore build your confidence that you can run effective meetings.

1. Meet with a purpose

If you ask most people, they have been to one too many meetings that seemed to have no purpose.

- Be sure to call a meeting only if you have a clear reason for doing so.
- It doesn't matter what your reason might be.
- If you need information from the group, set a clear agenda with key questions ahead of time.
- If you want to share information, draft an outline of your key points. If you just want to get the team together to allow for bonding time, then organise so that an interactive environment will be facilitated (order pizza, etc.)

2. Communicate your purpose/agenda

So, you know why you're meeting—great!

Now, tell everyone else why you are! Be sure to let all attendees know how long the meeting will be, where it will be, and what information is to be covered.

Be sure to let them also know what the goal of the meeting is—what deliverables, outcomes, etc. are expected so they can come prepared.

Just because you've called the meeting doesn't mean you're the only one who has to do the talking.

Enable them to participate—sharing relevant information ahead of time will ensure they come prepared to contribute, and take the spotlight off of you at the same time!

3. Supporting materials

Come prepared with the appropriate supporting materials.

If this is an information gathering session, bring forms or tools for completion. Will you deliver a presentation? Bring slides/handouts, etc.

Whatever materials you will use to support the communication of your key points, gathering of the required information, or structuring of the discussion should be included to create a stronger sense that everyone's time is being well spent.

4. Everyone present for a purpose

Please ensure that every single individual invited to the meeting is there for a reason. More importantly, make sure each attendee clearly understands his/her specific role.

When planning your meeting consider team members' roles.

How can they contribute?

Do they have key information, skills, experience that you can leverage in the meeting?

Help them feel useful by letting them know the important role you'd like them to play.

It is helpful to assign meeting management roles before you begin the meetings.

Some specific meeting facilitation roles might include:

§ Scribe: to record key information, and meeting minutes

§ Flipchart recorder: to capture key points, questions visually on flipcharts

§ Timekeeper: to help keep to the agenda

§ "Devil's advocate": should the group tend to always passively agree to all suggestions, it might be helpful (and fun) to assign someone to play devil's advocate purely for the purpose of creating creative debate and discussion.

5. Outcomes/agreements captured and reviewed

Before you end the meeting, review the agreed action items, along with the responsible parties for each item as discussed during the meeting.

If you've assigned meeting scribes or flipchart recorders, then this step should be relatively simple.

6. Next steps defined

Discuss timeframes for completion of action items, and also make sure to review next steps.

Set expectations now for a follow-up meeting, should one be required.

Let everyone know what you anticipate will need to be covered in the next meeting.

7. Show your appreciation

Every single person's time is precious.

So, be sure to thank them for their participation and contributions. Motivate key participants by letting them know after the meeting just how helpful their contributions were during the meeting.

This will help to ensure that next time you need to have a meeting you'll find willing participants ready to go.

8. Reflect on your process

Identify what went well, and what didn't.

Learn from your experience and find ways to improve as you move forward. Don't forget to seek support from your Human Resources Training group should you be interested in building your facilitation skills.

Following these eight simple steps will ensure that with practice, you will be effectively and smoothly running meetings—with confidence!

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