



Leading and Attending Successful Meetings

We've all been there. Trapped in the conference room listening to people who seem to be there only to hear themselves talk. Could you have escaped, you probably could have prevented the problem being discussed before the conference room clears out.

Even in the age of conference calls and e-mail correspondence, meetings are still very much a part of life in the business world. Take heart! It is possible to enjoy productive meetings by thoughtful and thorough planning on the part of all attending.

Successful Meetings magazine recently surveyed over 650 executives to identify reasons why some meetings are effective and others are not. Ninety-seven percent of respondents cited a succinct, solid agenda as the best way to ensure a successful meeting. Up-to-date presentation technology and strong audience participation were also mentioned.



Conversely, the most effective saboteurs mentioned were poor presentation technology, a wayward agenda and not sticking to the schedule.

From preparation to presentation and beyond, we offer some tips for effective meetings:

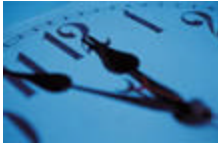
For the Chairperson: Preparation is key.

- Keep in mind that people are at their best in the morning and at their worst on Friday afternoons before a holiday.
- Hold a meeting, not a lecture. Get the audience involved.
- Have an agenda arranged by priority of issues.
- Distribute the agenda before the meeting. This gives participants opportunity to review the material and come to the meeting ready to contribute.
- Reserve the conference room, test the projector, count the chairs and make more than enough copies of materials for everyone.

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For the Chairperson: Utilize Protocol

- Regardless of the seniority of the participants, remember that this is your meeting. Conduct the meeting tactfully, and with authority.
- Don't forget the importance of good manners. Introduce those who have not yet met. This courtesy is especially important if some are attending by conference call.
- Start the meeting on time. This shows respect and appreciation for those who exercised the foresight to arrive on time.
- End the meeting on time. Even if the entire agenda was not covered, you will have already covered the most important issues because it was arranged by priority.
- Keep your meeting brief and focused. The participants will thank you for it.



For Participants:

- Read the agenda before the meeting, making note of your questions and comments. Bring it with you to the meeting.
- Arrive early and introduce yourself to others. If you are from outside the company, hand out your business card before the meeting begins.
- Unless seating is already pre-arranged, the hierarchy of seating goes from the left of the chairperson to the right.
- It should be unnecessary to mention that you should sit up straight, not shuffle papers, doodle or fidget. Clean up after yourself.
- Shake hands with and thank the chairperson as you leave. If you are from outside the company shake hands with the other participants.
- It may be appropriate to send a note of thanks to the chairperson and the person who invited you.



Social Gatherings:

- A work-related "social" event is still business. Even the non-mandatory occasions can be a great opportunity to further your career. Don't leave the party unnoticed. As with a formal meeting, have your own agenda.
- Do your "homework" beforehand. Find out:
 1. Who is the sponsor? Take the opportunity to express your gratitude for the invitation.
 2. Who will attend? Identify your clients and greet them when they arrive.
 3. If you are attending as an invited client, attempt to meet as many of the other guests as possible to identify competition or make a connection.
 4. Prepare for and research what may be discussed professionally and socially.



Make a Good Impression

Because the human eye notices movement and change, you can be sure that your entrance into the room will be noticed. The key to making a good impression upon entrance is to act as if you belong there. Show your self-

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confidence by walking into the room smoothly keeping good posture. Pause briefly to spot key persons and allow others to notice your arrival.

How to "Work a Room"

- At a small gathering, attempt to shake hands with everyone. For meetings with a larger attendance, focus on key people with the intent that every one of them knows your name when they leave.
- Approach a party of three or more. If you come upon two persons deep in conversation you only have two choices, to be rude and interrupt, or feel awkward as you wait for an opportunity to speak.
- To become part of a conversation already in progress, a polite question such as, "Excuse me, may I introduce myself?" is perfectly acceptable and effective.

Make Good Use of Handouts and Visual Aids

Many participants respond well to visual aids in presentations. Clearly labeled, colorful illustrations can pull a meeting together. Also keep in mind that no matter how polished your presentation or effective your speaking, your audience will not remember all the information you provide; send them on their way with an effective handout.



Some items to include in your handout might be:

Hard copies of transparencies or other visual aids.

- A brief outline of topics covered in the meeting, with room to allow note taking or to pass on to those who could not attend the meeting. This would be provided in addition to the agenda that is merely a listing of action items to be dealt with.

- Feedback sheets to evaluate the meeting or presentation

Whether you are the chairperson or an attendee, accept responsibility for creating a successful meeting. Do your part by thorough preparation and active participation and you may bring about the end of the dreaded ineffective business meeting. Your co-workers will thank you for it.