

Effective Meetings

Utilizing an Agenda

- Purpose
 - To provide the meeting with direction and keep everyone on the same page
 - To provide an outline for taking notes
- Contents
 - In-progress items/projects
 - Updates on progress
 - Issues/concerns
 - New business
 - General discussion
- Tips
 - Allow everyone to contribute to the agenda and assign persons to the agenda items
 - Keep the agenda as short as possible, one page is ideal (no more than 1.5 - 2 if possible)
 - Meeting leader should send out an email the day before
 - Meeting leader should bring copies, or arrange for copies to be made & brought to the meeting

Running Efficient and Effective Meetings

- Start on time
- The meeting leader starts the meeting and keeps it progressing in a timely fashion
- Each person reports on their agenda items and issues are discussed
- Potential outcomes of discussion about issues
 - 1) The discussion should lead to ideas about the next steps to take. The group should quickly choose someone who will take on any potential new tasks.
 - 2) If the discussion gets off-track or leads to ideas that are not directly helpful, write the idea in the discussion section and follow up with discussion on that idea at a later time.
 - 3) If the discussion leads to conflict or points of contention, time limitations provide a great reason to temporarily end discussion and move on. This gives people time to think and cool off. Simply note that the issue will be returned to later, and add it to general discussion. Alternatively, address it at another meeting (or outside the meeting as appropriate).
- Take notes about decisions, action items, and people responsible for each item
- Leave time for new business and other general discussion at the end if possible

Delegating and Action Items

- When new tasks come up, it needs to be explicitly clear who is going to follow-up on that item. Otherwise, people will assume that others are taking care of it and it does not get accomplished.
- The person discussing the item, or the meeting leader, should ask if anyone is willing to take on the item. If there is not a volunteer, then the person discussing the item or the meeting leader can do one of two things:
 - 1) Directly ask someone if they are willing to help with the item (this works best for smaller tasks, but may not work as well for larger items)
 - 2) State that he/she will allow time for everyone to think about taking on the task and follow-up about it after the meeting, or at the following meeting (if time permits)
- Once a person has been identified to take on a task, action steps should be identified:
 - What needs to happen next to make this happen?
 - Action items should be continuously added and updated as the task progresses

Evaluate

- Evaluate how meetings are working, and consider whether revisions are needed to any of the following:
 - Who attends meetings? Are important people missing from meetings, thus depriving the group of needed knowledge and experience? Are too many people attending, thus preventing active participation, wasting time, or creating inefficient discussions?
 - How often are meetings held? If meetings regularly run over time, maybe more frequent meetings or working group meetings are needed. If little is accomplished at meetings, consider whether the meetings are needed at all.
 - Is required information available at meetings? If not, consider whether more planning is needed for meetings.