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Agendas Make Meetings Productive

By Martin Haworth

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Meetings take up time and effort, so they need to be very productive and useful. In meetings, one aspect worthy of focus is how well you organise your meetings and having a great agenda does just that.

Having a meeting agenda template that works well for you, week in, week out, creates a consistency which gets your people bought into the meeting process. Delivering an efficiency and effectiveness which makes the most of the valuable time you have together. Key points to note are:-

Circulate

Share your agenda in good time, well before your meeting (with reading material for preview). This gives time for review, preparation and challenge.

RolesIn a meeting there are various roles to be taken on from the start. Chair, notetaker, facilitator, reviewer and other, more specific roles. These should be clearly stated on the agenda in advance of the meeting.

Items for Discussion

Items on your agenda need to be selected carefully and only be relevant for the grouping of people who get together. Time is **precious**, so make sure that when together, only things which need everyone's input are given time.

Set TimingsGet clear on your agenda just how long the meeting will last and how long will be devoted to individual items on it. This gives clear indications of what will happen in meeting.

Ground Rules

Within your agenda will be some rules of how the meeting process will work. It is important to set standards of behaviour which everyone signs up to.

AOB

Often included in agendas, this item is one that really should not be there. Good preplanning **before** the agenda goes out should mean that all items are included at that point and, where dispute occurs, the meeting lead takes a decision. AOB can easily take a meeting off the rails and lead to missing time agreements.

Action Points

As the meeting progresses there will be action points that individual meeting members will be accountable for. By having a spot on the agenda for a quick review, prior to circulating these in writing, everyone will be clear on what is expected of them.

Parked Items

Sometimes during a meeting, items arise which whilst important, are outside the scope of that particular meeting. So by both 'parking' them during the meeting, thus validating their importance, and having a specific point to check the next steps for them is clear, they do receive attention. This then allows the meeting purpose to be maintained.

Next Meeting By ensuring the date of the next meeting is an agenda item, this serves three purposes It indicates to the meeting attendees follow up meetings

It gives an indication of when agreed action points from the meeting are likely to be required Finally, it reminds the person responsible for the agenda to agree a clear date during the meeting – if not, it is likely to slip.

Meeting Review

Your agenda should also be an ongoing learning tool. As such, and to ensure your meetings truly make a difference, there is a real benefit in reviewing how things have worked in the meeting – for **all** participants. Agenda it.

© 2005 **Martin Haworth** is a Business and Management Coach. He works worldwide, mainly by phone, with small business owners, managers and corporate leaders. He has hundreds of hints, tips and ideas at his website,

Time Management – How to Have Productive Meetings

By Lorraine Pirihi

One of the greatest time wasters of all are unnecessary or poorly run meetings. If you want to dramatically improve your time management skills, then learn how to have productive meetings.

"Brian" is the Operations Manager in a large corporation. Every Monday morning, his CEO has a

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managers' meeting .

This is what usually occurs:

The agenda is circulated the day before which means the managers have little time to prepare.

The meeting always starts late as the CEO will wait for latecomers. In fact, he's often late.

A couple of the managers tend to "waffle on". The CEO who chairs the meeting is not assertive enough to keep them on track.. He's also a 'waffler'.

Most of the managers sit there, bored out of their brains for a majority of the time. They also get stressed as they feel they are wasting time listening to the "wafflers".

As the CEO does not schedule a regular "catch up" time with each individual manager, many unnecessary issues are also discussed.

If this describes some of the meetings you convene then how about taking action and ensure from now on that they are highly productive.

If you're like "Brian" and you would have difficulty suggesting to others how they could improve their meetings, then I suggest you pass this newsletter on to them. Effective time management also includes effective meeting management.

"You'll do so much you'll be surprised when you get your meetings organised"

9 Ways to Improve Your Time Management by Having Super Productive Meetings

Ask yourself, is this meeting really necessary?

Do you need a face–face meeting? A phone call, email or conference call might be a better solution.

Invite as few people as possible

Only have the necessary participants attend.

Have a written agenda with clear objectives

Ensure it is circulated well in advance to those attending. Indicate timeframes allowed to discuss each item.

Double check the meeting venue has been organised the day before

If refreshments are supplied include water and fruit. Ensure the meeting area is quiet with no distractions.

Start and finish on time

Respect your time and everyone else's.

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Have an effective chairperson

Unsure who to choose? At the beginning of the meeting count up to three. At three, each participant points to the person they believe will keep the meeting on track.. The person with the most votes is elected.

Circulate the minutes within 48 hours

Ensure all actions have the appropriate person written next to them.

Stand up and stretch every 30 minutes

It's good for your mind and body.

Ensure all mobile phones and pagers are turned off

It's amazing – people have been known to survive without their phones and live to tell the tale.

Good time management is also about using your time wisely when attending meetings. If you can enforce these guidelines, you'll be happy to attend future meetings knowing that your time isn't being wasted.

Lorraine Pirihi is Australia's Personal Productivity Specialist and Leading Life Coach. Her business The Office Organiser specialises in showing small business owners and managers, how to get organised at work so they can have a life! Lorraine is also a dynamic speaker and has produced many products including "How to Survive and Thrive at Work!" To subscribe to her free ezine visit

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