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How to Lead Effective Business Meetings

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by Staff Writer

Introduction

Too many [business](#) meetings are ill-directed, digressive and drawn out. Call a meeting only when it's absolutely critical, and structure it firmly so that it achieves its purpose.

Instructions

Difficulty: Moderately Easy

Steps

1 Step One

Decide whether you really need to call a meeting. Can the issue be resolved by an individual or a conference call?

2 Step Two

Determine who needs to attend. Try keeping the number of attendees small, as large meetings get unwieldy. Suggest that people attend only the parts of the meeting that involve them. This way you can keep the discussion more focused.

3 Step Three

Set definite starting and stopping times.

4 Step Four

Prepare an agenda. Explain the goal of the meeting; if there are many goals, decide which ones command priority, and make this clear.

Step Five

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5

Circulate the agenda in advance to allow attendees to prepare.

6

Step Six

Assemble visual aids such as charts, handouts or slides.

7

Step Seven

Start the meeting at the designated time, regardless of whether everyone is present. Avoid taking too much time to summarize for latecomers.

8

Step Eight

Start off the meeting with straightforward, easily resolved issues before heading into thornier ones.

9

Step Nine

Allocate a specific amount of time for each issue. Move through issues, allowing for discussion but discouraging digression or repetition. Use a timer to help monitor the time.

10

Step Ten

Postpone discussion until the end of the meeting if debate on an issue runs overtime. Make sure to cover the other issues on the agenda.

11

Step Eleven

Follow up: Circulate copies of the minutes after the meeting to remind everyone of conclusions and action plans.

Tips & Warnings

Schedule a meeting before lunch, at the end of the day, or immediately before another one to prevent it from becoming too long.

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Member Comments

 by Murray Tarter on 11/22/2005 ★★★★☆

Lead Imaging Specialist - Consider using a facilitator (moderator) from the group whose responsibility is to keep the meeting on topic, keep everyone involved (no one dominating) and the meeting on schedule.

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 by Bob Priest on 11/22/2005 ★★★★☆

Involve your audience - Keep your attendee's attention through involvement. Have short periods for comments, questions, and discussions throughout the meeting instead of at the end of the meeting.

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 by Karen Rockafellow on 11/22/2005 ★★★★☆

Keeping the meeting positive - Try having a 5-minute recognition period where people are given a chance to show recognition to co-workers who have done a good job or worked extra hard on a project.

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 by Clare V. on 11/22/2005 ★★★☆☆

Stand-up meetings - If you are meeting to discuss just a few items or issues, have a stand-up meeting! Participants are more likely to keep on task and reach a consensus on their feet than in a comfortable chair.

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