

10 Keys for *Running Meaningful and Results Oriented Meetings*

1. **Pre-plan the agenda**, including: assigning the role of meeting leader (designated by position or by the group), and with an established timeframe, such as 9:00 A.M - 10:00 A.M. or 9:00 A.M (not to exceed 90 minutes) so people can plan accordingly. Tip: Use a template for your agenda (see sample template on our website) to promote continuity and flow and efficiency in agenda development, results tracking and record keeping. Also, be sure you have planned for necessary equipment and technology needed for delivery. Common equipment and technology items include, a laptop, an LCD projector, a transportable screen (if there is no blank wall space for viewing in the meeting room), a flash drive, and flip chart (with paper and markers).
2. **Disseminate the agenda and necessary materials prior** to the meeting so people come prepared. We suggest a minimum of two days and up to two weeks prior to the meeting for adequate materials review to ensure a decision making versus discussion-based meeting (whereas people are trying to learn and catch up on what they should already have come prepared for). Tip: Save trees and your time by disseminating electronic packets.
3. **Start and end on time!** This is the responsibility of the person leading the meeting. This builds trust and credibility in the group and focuses people on the agenda, which fuels results and builds confidence and momentum of the group.
4. **Stay on point--** Stick to items on the agenda. This again, is the job of the meeting leader/facilitator. If something urgent comes up, ask for group agreement about what is priority now (by a quick vote of hands or post-it-note-vote if identifying the voter is sensitive); whereas people are clear on the priority and what will be tabled to the next meeting. If an item is not urgent, use the "parking lot" to capture and track future agenda items.
5. If the meeting will be two or more hours, schedule **breaks**. Most adults need and appreciate a 15 minute break after 90 minutes to two hours. Tip: Breaks also promote informal networking and relationship building among participants. Networking time is commonly indicated as one of participant's highest value take-aways from meetings and events.
6. Provide adequate and **comfortable meeting space** which promotes group participation. Critical elements are: comfortable seating and work space, seating arrangement that promotes group participation/participant visibility, and a well lit and ventilated meeting area.
7. Assign or rotate (share) the **note-taking function** to ensure record keeping. Using an agenda template greatly promotes standardization and thoroughness in capture, as notes will follow agenda items, and can even be added into the

template for dissemination back to the group. Make sure to capture the "parking lot" (pending items) so they can be prioritized and appropriately placed on future agendas.

8. Always end with **Next Steps/Action-ables**--that is the list of *who, what and by when*-- that needs to be accomplished for progress and results. Report on this as appropriate in the next agenda. Tip: You can include Next Steps on the agenda template; it focuses attention on action and results, and lends for easy monitoring.
9. If it is a long meeting (two hrs or more), beverages and snacks or meals are highly recommended, as it is a natural way to encourage group comfort and relationship building (although it has a budget implication).
10. Lastly, don't forget to assess the effectiveness of your meetings based on the group's experience and results. This can be done simply by asking, What is working? And, What could be done differently or better to improve efficiency and effectiveness? Then use this information appropriately for future meetings. Lastly, evaluation also allows a group to acknowledge and celebrate your success--what is working well and what you are proud of accomplishing. This builds pride and ownership, a sense of team and builds morale. Additionally it helps to keep others apprised of progress, which is especially needed for cross-functional units and inter-departmental meetings. Progress only is best shared early on the agenda, while a brief assessment for continuous improvement purposes is best placed near the end of the agenda. For ongoing (standing) meetings, assessment should be an intermittent agenda item (i.e., quarterly or semi-annually), or as a standalone annual agenda item.

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