

Maximizing Business Meetings

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It is 8:00 o'clock Monday morning and although you would rather stay in your office working on your own projects, you find yourself walking towards the boardroom once again to attend the weekly meeting with your fellow business associates. Praying along the way that today's meeting will not take too long, you begin to question the effectiveness of this weekly ritual.

Today's business communities are beginning to realize that certain changes affecting their daily operations may be necessary in order to remain competitive. One of the most common changes taking place is the effectiveness of weekly meetings.

If you would like to make your meetings more effective, try these tips.

1. **Only invite those necessary to attend** - When you conduct a business meeting, only invite those people directly affected with the sharing of specific information. It is not necessary to have a room full of people, for effectiveness is not based on numbers in a meeting, but rather on the group's ability to share the information necessary with those not in attendance.
2. **Forward highlights of the meeting beforehand** – It is a common courtesy for the person leading the meeting to offer key highlights of those areas requiring some discussion. Forwarding these highlights onward BEFORE the actual meeting takes place allows for better response by all those in attendance. Granting them time to think about, create and respond to these concerns makes for stronger communication to take place.
3. **Be prepared** – In order to save time and money, be ready, willing, and able to share specific details on the work you are doing, and how it relates to the vision or mission statement of the organization. Be ready to answer any questions or concerns that may arise as a result of your recently shared information. Having the opportunity to discuss important information directly to the person will help improve the pace to which decisions can be made.
4. **Offer possible solutions at every meeting** – The one challenge facing some businesses today is their approach to working through organizational difficulties. Expecting those directly affected to be the only ones capable of offering possible solutions may be misleading.

As an idea, if every person attending the meeting is granted a few minutes to share one possible solution to any challenge within the organization, the gateway for further communications and creative investigations to take place, may open. During this process however, it is important to remember that only the possible solutions should be mentioned, further discussion can take place at a future meeting if found to carry some merit.

5. **Be responsible and accountable for any implementation that must take place** – As with any meeting, you can have all the greatest ideas, strategies and solutions mentioned but without any action, you have done nothing but waste time and money. Get the most out of your meeting by making it clear that each person in attendance will be held responsible and accountable for their actions or lack thereof, during the implementation process. Be sure to set measurable, realistic goals to ensure everyone stays on course.

Although the key issues bringing business associates together for regular meetings may vary, the most important thing to consider is the time and day the meeting is to be held. For me, I encourage businesses to decline having meetings on Monday mornings, especially when most people are still thinking about or talking about their weekend. In addition to this, if someone is absent due to illness on a Monday, too much time is wasted trying to find their whereabouts. Therefore, the prime time for an effective business meeting, according to my professional standards, is on Tuesdays between 9:30 – 10:00 o'clock in the morning.

Starting this week, take an honest look as to how you can improve the effectiveness of your business meetings. Then, find the window of opportunity to do what you can to improve your results...in the boardroom...on the front lines.

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