

How to make meetings more effective

January 20, 2016 by Nazley Omar



Businessman Checking Phone During Meeting In Office (GETTY IMAGES)

Business meetings are either a critical element of an organisation's success or a waste of valuable time and resources. Here's how to make the most of all your meetings

Meetings allow for the sharing of ideas and important decision-making, and are an opportunity for employees at all levels to buy into all major decisions. Businessman and billionaire Warren Buffet believes meetings are an intergral part of his success. "You will never see eye-to-eye with someone if you never meet face-to-face," he says.

While there is definite merit to business meetings, too often they are too long and unfocused, and they chew up valuable time while work remains undone. Executive coach Penny Holburn says the productivity and brevity of meetings often suffers when there is no objective or agenda.

"The most important aspect of a well-planned meeting is inviting the right people. Not sticking to time, going off topic and allowing someone to dominate or disrupt the meeting will all have a negative impact on the outcome," she says.

Holburn suggests the following tips for making the most of your meetings:

Make the objective of the meeting clear

Meetings need to have a specific, defined and understood purpose. Tell the participants: "At the close of this meeting I want us to have achieved x, y or z." Send out the objective of the meeting

when you send out the agenda so participants know why they are coming to the meeting and can prepare.

Create an agenda

Your agenda needs to include a brief description of the meeting objective, a list of the topics to be covered and a list stating who will address each topic and for how long. When you send the agenda, you should include the time, date and location of the meeting and any background information participants will need to know to hold an informed discussion on the meeting topic. Send the agenda out at least two days prior to the meeting.

Attendees

Pick the right people and ensure that the right number of people are given the agenda and objective of the meeting.

Manage the meeting

The chairperson needs to manage the meeting, which includes encouraging all to participate and to stop anyone from dominating, disrupting, or derailing proceedings. No mini-meetings should take place and no staring at phones and tablets unless the meeting requires it.

Timing

People have other tasks to address, so it's very important to start and end on time. If a critical person is 15 minutes late for a meeting with 10 participants, that is 2 ½ hours of company time that is lost.

Closing the meeting

Summarise the next steps and send out a meeting summary. List all tasks generated in the meeting and make a note of who is assigned to do what and by when. Include this information in the meeting summary.

After the meeting

Reflect and debrief over what went well and what could be done better next time. Welcome participant feedback and don't get defensive about it. Running effective meetings is good for any business because when you are great at it, people will be keen to attend and participate.