

EFFECTIVE MEETING CHECKLIST

If you want to get a snapshot of your organization's efficiency and the health of its culture, look at your meetings. Are they efficient and productive? Do their results justify the time and expense? Are meetings an occasion for collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and teambuilding? Or are they a waste of time and a cause of needless frustration?

The answers to these questions matter. Meetings aren't cheap, so you want to make each minute count. The less efficient and productive meetings are, the more they cost. One employee's lost hour is bad enough. When meetings are a waste, the costs are multiplied. Too many bad meetings and you risk creating a culture marked by disorganization and dissatisfaction. Use this checklist to make every minute in a meeting count.

- ☐ Write and distribute an agenda for each meeting. The agenda should indicate what topics will be discussed, who will lead the discussion of each topic, and how much time will be allotted for each topic. Email the agenda to participants so they can prepare. At the meeting, stick to the agenda. Whoever leads the meeting should bring everyone back to the agenda when the discussion veers too far off-topic.
- ☐ Invite only the necessary people. If someone doesn't have something to say or hear at the meeting, they probably don't need to be there. Remember, you pay for these meetings, and the more people attend, the more the meetings cost.
- ☐ Assign someone to write minutes of the meeting. Ideally, this person would not be leading the discussion and can focus quickly and accurately recording what was said and decided. Online apps can help as participants can see notes in real time and make corrections and suggestions. These apps are also great for easy reference and tracking progress on action items.
- ☐ Stay focused on the agenda. If a particular topic needs more discussion than is allotted, you may want to table it for a future meeting. However, an agenda shouldn't always be the last word on what happens. If the agenda must be changed mid-meeting, do it, but take care to record what changes were made and what needs to be discussed later.
- ☐ End the meeting on time with clear action items for the next meeting or follow-up discussion. Every participant should have gained something from the meeting: information important for their work, a better understanding of something, a direction to take, or a task to do. If the meeting hasn't "produced" something, it probably didn't need to happen.

These tips are easy enough to put into practice, but they're also easy to forget or neglect. Forgetting to create an agenda here and there might not seem like a big deal, but it adds up to hours of work without organization or focus.

Effective meetings require good organizational skills, but also good habits and discipline. If you put these tips into practice and commit to them, you'll be well on your way.