



How to Run an Effective Meeting

Running effective meetings is a crucial leadership skill that in turn builds other's confidence in your ability to lead. Well-run meetings provide opportunities for other students to become part of the team, feel that their ideas are valued, demonstrate creativity, and ultimately help solve problems within the school community.

While meetings may have different purposes, group sizes, and settings, here are some guidelines that will help you run more effective meetings:

1. Hold meetings that have a clear purpose or goal(s).

Decide ahead of time the reason for the meeting, who needs to attend, the desired outcome, the meeting location, and the necessary timeframe.

2. Set an agenda and distribute it before the meeting.

Distributing an agenda in advance allows participants to understand the purpose of the meeting and to prepare accordingly. Provide any background information and related materials to help ensure that participants are prepared.

When creating an agenda, address the following:

- Priorities – What must be covered?
- Participants – Who needs to be there?
- Location/Date/Time – When and where will the meeting take place?
- Goals – What is to be accomplished by meeting's end?
- Timing – How will the meeting be sequenced and how much time will be allotted to each agenda item?

3. Assign specific responsibilities to meeting attendees

There are a variety of jobs that make a meeting run more smoothly. What's more, giving individuals a role to play fosters greater constructive engagement. Key roles might include moderator, timekeeper, note taker, or whiteboard scribe.

4. Get creative input from everyone present.

It's easy for a few outspoken people to dominate the meeting or pressure others to see things their way. A good leader solicits feedback from everyone present, demonstrating respect for all positive input.

Rather than allowing certain people to dominate the conversation, make a point of asking others for their ideas. Or set a rule at the beginning of the meeting that each person must be given an opportunity to speak before anyone can speak a second time on the same item. Provide index cards or Post-It notes so that everyone can write down their ideas anonymously.

Keep meetings small in number; the more people, the harder it is to explore everyone's ideas and reach consensus. If you must have a larger group, you will need a more formal meeting structure. Large groups may be broken down into smaller working groups after common information is shared.

5. Create an action plan.

Never leave a meeting without a clear understanding of "next steps." Also confirm that individuals who have responsibilities between this meeting and the next are aware of their responsibilities and the timeframe for following through.

6. Start and finish on time by staying on task.

Demonstrate respect for people's time by keeping the meeting focused on the goals outlined in your agenda. If discussion strays, refocus the group by referring to those goals. Worthwhile ideas that do arise should be put on a list for future consideration. Finally, if you accomplish your goals prior to the originally scheduled end time, it's fine to wrap up early!

Use time effectively by starting the meeting on time. Don't recap for latecomers. Have the timekeeper politely keep speakers and presenters to their time limits.

Be sensitive to the group's mood; pay attention to body language, level of involvement, and distractions. If participants are running out of energy, take a break, change the order of the agenda, or engage them in a more interactive task. If the group as a whole is distracted, you need to address this.

7. Provide follow-up.

This may involve distributing minutes of the meeting or a summary of the action steps agreed upon, as well as a timeline and the names of specific individuals responsible for those action steps. If approval is needed to implement the action plan, decide who will be responsible for securing that approval and informing the group. Set the date and time for the next meeting.