



The following represent a collection of ideas from the continuing quest to improve the quality and effectiveness of meetings:

"A meeting consists of a group of people who have little to say – until after the meeting." P.K. Shaw

1. Leaders spent less than four hours/week in meetings in the 1960's. In the 70's it was twice that. It is estimated today that the typical American professional attends over sixty meetings per month. The participants of those meetings estimate that 50% of meeting time is wasted.

Just think of the positive impact even a 10% improvement in the effectiveness of meetings would have.

Having said that "your meetings hold the potential to drive alignment within the business, give direction; generate energy, focus and creativity; and inspire your people to elevate the business to the next level." Cameron Herold in his book *Meetings Suck*.

He suggests three points for conducting more effective meetings:

1. Define the meetings purpose and stay on track by having a concise agenda (1/2 sheet of paper) stating:
 - a. Clearly stated purpose for the meeting.
 - b. Desired outcomes.
 - c. Discussion items with allotted times for each.
2. Define the style and/or group the items on the agenda into three primary styles.
 - a. Information sharing.
 - b. Creative Discussion.
 - c. Consensus decision or just plain to arrive at a decision.
3. An effective meeting has the following components:
 - a. *Moderator* – To chair the meeting and oversee the agenda.
 - b. *Parking lot* – To capture good stuff but off-topic ideas that need to be tabled until later. Example – "Thank you for that point Steve, however, that topic goes beyond the purpose of this meeting. Let me write it down in the parking lot and I will include it in the meeting notes that I will send out by email so we can explore that point at the right time."
 - c. *Timekeeper* – To watch the clock and keep the agenda on schedule.
 - d. *Participants* – To learn and share.
 - e. *Closer* – To summarize the meeting and assign key action items.

One person may play multiple roles, but it is critical that all roles be filled.

Following are some personal thoughts for consideration in increasing the effectiveness of meetings and reducing the time invested in attending meetings.

1. Michael Hyatt, in his No-Fail Meetings Handbook suggests using the following questions as a filter for deciding whether a meeting should even be held in the first place:

- Do we actually need a meeting at all? Could I, as the leader, simply make a choice about the issue at hand, rather than roping in other people and belaboring the decision?
 - If this is a recurring meeting established more than six months ago, is it still beneficial? Do we still need to meet the originally-stated outcomes? Do all original attendees still need to be involved?
 - Could we accomplish this outcome just as easily in a different way—via email, Slack, video, etc.?
 - Could a subset of the group meet and still achieve the meeting purpose?
 - Could the team meet without me and then inform me of their decision(s) or offer me their recommendation(s)?
2. Don't call a meeting if there is a better, more efficient way to achieve your objective.
 3. Don't invite people who get or provide little to no value in the meeting. If you can achieve the purpose of the meeting with three people do not invite eight. Share with other who need to know in a meeting recap.
 4. Start on time and end on time. NO exceptions!
 5. Recurring meetings should follow a standing meeting agenda and whenever possible be held same day of week, same time, same duration. (See sample Standing Meeting Agenda Appendices)
 6. If you can accomplish the objective in twenty minutes do NOT schedule it for an hour. Meetings expand to the size and shape of their container.
 7. Block time periods twice a week in which meetings involving more than three people are to be held. ALL meetings must take place during this pre-arranged meeting block.
 8. Get in the habit of preparing a meeting re-cap for every meeting held to be shared with participants within twenty-four hours of the meeting end time. See additional thoughts following.
 9. Ask the participants after each meeting. Was this meeting an effective use of your time? What could be done to improve or eliminate the meeting? Listen and adjust accordingly. Gino Wickman suggests rating each meeting on a 1-10 scale by each participant at the end of the meeting. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HmV6_fH5NkU

PERFORM THE CEREMONY and RESPECT THE TIME

MEETING RECAP GROUP

1. Overall purpose of the meeting
2. Issues/matters discussed.
3. Decisions made.
4. Actions required by whom/by when
5. Resources needed.
6. Other informational matters.
7. Next follow up or meeting dates.

8. Issues put on the parking lot list or that may have been raised and deferred but do not require immediate attention.

MEETING RECAP INDIVIDUAL

Similar to the above but it is important that you share expectations and ask for agreement as well as describe the nature of the expected deliverable if any from the action items agreed upon.

Example: My expectation from this meeting is that you will have first draft of your annual objectives completed by next week. I will provide you with a list of the corporate objectives that you may want to consider when setting your goals by tomorrow.

Other recap ideas:

Accountability summary:

- What did we decide?
- What actions need to be taken? By whom? By when?
- What is the disposition or next action required for tangent alert or parking lot items that came up in today's meeting?
- What messaging to those not in attendance needs to take place? By whom? By When?

Meeting effectiveness summary:

Ask the participants after each meeting:

- Was this meeting an effective use of your time?
- On a scale of 1-10 how would you rate the effectiveness of this meeting?
- What can be done to improve the effectiveness of this meeting?
- Should this meeting be eliminated or held less frequently?

Listen and adjust accordingly.