



Effective Meeting Strategies

Meetings can take up a large portion of your busy week. Make them count by ensuring your meeting behaviours, and those of the people you meet with, are efficient and productive.



This following paper will examine a range of strategies that you can implement to ensure your meetings are productive. Adapt has identified eight key issues that can reduce the effectiveness of your meetings.

Each meetings issue is broken down into strategies that you can apply if you are the owner of the poor meeting behaviour, or if you find that other meeting participants are the cause of the problem. Either way, *you* can take control and ensure that you get your meetings back on track quickly.

1) Arriving late to meetings

You: If you regularly arrive late to meetings

Schedule your meetings for 45 minutes and leave a 15 minute buffer to deal with run-over's.

Start to wind down your previous meeting 10 minutes before the end. Assess where you are up to and ask participants how they would like to use the last 10 minutes of the meeting.

Review your calendar at the start of each day and identify possible pressure points.

Schedule in travel time between meetings to give yourself enough time to get there

Use calendar reminders to alert you of upcoming meetings. Try not to use calendar reminders for anything else to get cut through.

Others: If others arrive late to meetings

Set up a late fee charity jar for regular meetings. Late-comers put \$1 in for each minute late.

Remark on the fact that someone is late - don't let it pass unnoticed as that reinforces the behaviour.

Clarify that the meeting will still end on time even though it has started late.

If the meeting organiser is more than 10 minutes late, leave a note to say you had to leave.

Agree on a set of meeting behaviours with your team, and display them in each meeting room



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2) Finishing meetings late

You: If you regularly finish meetings late

Use a timed agenda to stay focused. If items run over the allocated time, ask the group if you should stay with the topic or move on.

Start to wind down your previous meeting 10 minutes before the end. Assess where you are up to and ask participants how they would like to use the last 10 minutes of the meeting.

Agree on a strategy with the group to cover unfinished items.

Leave small talk until the end of the meeting.

Prioritise the agenda items by importance so that the important stuff gets covered first.

Others: If others cause meetings to finish late

Keep attendees focused on the agenda, and manage diverting "rabbit hole" conversations.

Alert attendees to the fact that you will need to finish at the appointed time. This will focus the group and reduce any awkwardness when you wrap up.

Focus progress reports on only the actions that have delays or issues. Do not waste time going over ground that does not need covering.

Place a clock on the meeting table so that everyone can be aware of the time.

3) Unfocused meetings

You: If you are not focused in meetings

Turn your phone or BlackBerry to silent.

Clarify the meeting objectives and agenda at the start of the meeting.

Stay on topic.

Use a parking lot (whiteboard list) for topics that arise that should be taken offline.

Others: If others are not focused in meetings

Get down to business quickly by stating the meeting objectives and agenda at the start of the meeting.

Suggest that "off topic" items be placed in the parking lot.

If an agenda item runs over time, alert the group and decide whether to stay on topic or move on.

Ask participants to put BlackBerries away or ban them from meetings.

Limit the use (misuse) of laptops and iPads



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4) Wrong people in meetings

You: If you end up in the wrong meetings

If unsure, clarify the reason for your attendance before accepting the meeting invite.

Ensure an agenda is sent to you before the meeting.

Delegate the meeting if it is not the best use of your time. Make sure the person who represents you has the authority to carry out the reason for attending.

Others: If the wrong people are in your meeting

Ensure that the meeting agenda has the required action (Decision, update etc...) and person responsible for each agenda item clearly identified.

Use the "Required" field to signify attendees that are critical to the meeting outcome.

Reschedule the meeting if the "Required" cannot attend.

5) Not following through on meeting actions

You: If you struggle to follow through

Ensure you have captured all actions and due dates.

Schedule your actions into your planning system as soon as possible after the meeting.

Do what you say you will do by the agreed deadline, or renegotiate if a delay is inevitable.

Others: If others struggle to follow through

Distribute meetings actions and minutes as soon as possible after the meeting (24 hours is best practice).

Clarify actions and due dates with participants at the end of the meeting.

Agree on what should happen if actions are going to be delayed.

6) Lack of preparation

You: If you don't prepare for meetings

Book meeting resources when booking the meeting.

Cancel meeting resources if the meeting is cancelled.

Schedule preparation time into your calendar when booking the meeting, or when planning your week.

Others: If others don't prepare for meetings

Clarify what preparation is needed by participants when sending the agenda.

Request that any handouts, presentations etc... are sent to the meeting organiser ahead of time.

Set the expectation that preparation for the meeting is done before the meeting, not in the meeting.



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Use the "Required" field to signify attendees that are critical to the meeting outcome.

Reschedule the meeting if the "Required" cannot attend.

8) Meeting interruptions

You: If you allow meeting interruptions

Turn your phone / BlackBerry to silent mode.

Allow others to finish speaking before jumping in.

Close the door and set an expectation with other members of your team that you are not to be interrupted unless it is truly important.

Others: If others allow meeting interruptions

Set an expectation upfront about the use of Phones / Blackberries.

If participants absolutely have to have the phone on when awaiting an urgent call, ensure it is set to silent and the call is taken outside.

If participants are called out of meeting, move on to a topic that can be covered without them until they get back.

One person speaks at a time.

With a little effort, your meetings could soon be the envy of the organisation! People appreciate attending well run meetings, and the benefits that you will gain by squeezing every last drop of productivity from your meetings will be worth the effort.

Happy Meetings! - The Adapt Team