

EFFECTIVE TEAM MEETINGS

PLANNING FOR A SUCCESSFUL MEETING

Following these steps will help you prepare for and facilitate an effective meeting:

PRIOR TO THE MEETING

- 1** **CONSIDER NOT HAVING A MEETING**
Are you meeting for the sake of meeting? Could something be better communicated via email? Test the importance of a meeting by asking, "What would happen if we didn't meet?" If your answer is, "Nothing," then don't call the meeting.
- 2** **CONSIDER WHO SHOULD BE THERE**
Invite only those people who are absolutely necessary to achieve the objective of the meeting.
- 3** **IS IT THE RIGHT TIME TO MEET?**
Are all the necessary people available to meet? Do you have the necessary information?
- 4** **THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETING**
The person leading the meeting should be able to clearly state its purpose (e.g., decision making, problem-solving, planning, evaluation) and the desired outcomes.
- 5** **AN AGENDA**
This should be prepared and distributed before each meeting. Be sure to include the time allocated to each section of the agenda. Considerations around time constraints should be addressed beforehand. Do all the items relate to the purpose of the meeting? Arrange items on the agenda in order of their importance.
- 6** **IDENTIFY PRE-MEETING EXPECTATIONS**
The first part of a meeting should not be spent reading a document together. Let people know what "homework" should be done before the meeting.
- 7** **CONSIDER ROOM ARRANGEMENT**
This will often be determined by the size of the group and the physical space you have.

DURING THE MEETING

- Start the meeting on time.
- Review the agenda items and planned times for each.
- Establish ground rules. What are your expectations for the meeting? When will you elicit feedback? How much time will there be for Q & A? Etc.
- What is the desired cell phone and laptop etiquette?
- Take minutes. Minutes should be simple and clearly highlight decision points.
- Don't let people be silent participants. Make a conscious effort to include everyone. Usually it is just a matter of saying, "John, what do you think?"
- The facilitator should control interruptions and digressions.
- If this is a planning or brainstorming meeting, utilize a flip chart or whiteboard.
- Ensure that action comes out of discussions. Don't finish any discussion in the meeting without deciding how to act on it. Action items should include 1) what will be accomplished, 2) who will accomplish it, and 3) when and how it will be accomplished (time frames and deliverables).
- Have a "parking lot" for topics that come up that aren't on the agenda.
- If there is time after the initial agenda items are finished, move on to looking at issues in the "parking lot."
- End on time. Do not run over allocated time unless everyone agrees.
- Evaluate your meeting process. Assign the last few minutes of every meeting as time to review the following questions: What worked well in this meeting? What can we do to improve our next meeting?

AFTER THE MEETING

Get minutes to those in attendance shortly after the meeting.