

Getting the most From meetings

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For many of us, time is money and there always seem to be too few hours in the day.

With technology advancing at a seemingly non-stop pace the first thing to consider when planning a meeting is: Is a face to face meeting is really necessary?

If you decide you need to meet in person here are Pickle's handy hints to ensure it is productive and hassle free.

Who to invite?

Who really needs to be at the meeting? What will they contribute? Do they have the authority to make decisions, influence the outcome? Remember that colleagues can always be updated at a later date.

The 5 W's

Who, What, Why, When, Where?

Ensure that your meeting invite covers all of these points and also let colleagues know if they are expected to prepare anything in advance. A few days before the meeting issue an agenda and a meeting reminder if necessary.

Be prepared

Check and double check that you have everything that you need and that everything works – there is nothing worse than preparing a killer PowerPoint presentation, only to be let down by a dodgy projector on the day!

Run it with military precision

Make sure you start your meeting on time and assign a set amount of time to each point on the agenda; you can always schedule a follow up meeting if you don't get through it all as planned.

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Work smarter, not harder!

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You can realistically only expect delegates to concentrate for an hour at a time so if you cannot cover everything off in this time, either consider holding multiple meetings or schedule in breaks to allow your participants to stretch their legs and refocus.

Keep it in order

As meeting leader, it's your responsibility to ensure all participants stick to the agenda. If a meeting heads off track then step in and remind everyone of the meeting goals. If there are issues not on the agenda that need to be addressed then suggest scheduling another meeting maybe? As chairperson it is also important to ensure that everyone has their say and that it's not just the 'usual suspects' that get to have their say.

Keep distractions to a minimum

Ensure the venue for your meeting is suitable. Is it private enough if sensitive issues need to be discussed? Are there lots of distractions just outside the door?

One of the biggest distractions are smartphones, ask all delegates to switch their phones off and then double check you have switched your own off! There may be a few exceptions to the rule if someone needs to be available at all times.

Follow Up

Post meeting follow up is essential.

Notes or minutes should be distributed as soon as possible after the meeting whilst events are fresh in everyone's minds. Include: what was discussed, any actions and who they have been assigned to, a date for follow up if applicable. A list of attendees is also useful to keep anyone who wasn't able to attend up to date.

We hope you find these hints helpful when planning your next meeting and as always if you need any assistance with any aspect of planning or conducting your next meeting then please do get in touch.

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