

# More efficient meetings

## Top 10 tips for more efficient meetings

Take a look at your calendar this week. How many hours will you spend in meetings? What proportion of your time is spent in meetings each week? At an average hourly rate, how much is it costing your organisation to have you sitting in meetings rather than being productive and actually doing your job?

Meetings can be a very useful way of getting things achieved in an organisation. But with our packed schedules and ever-lengthening task lists, it is worthwhile employing strategies to ensure that your time spent in meetings is as effective and efficient as possible.

Follow these simple rules to make meetings shorter, sharper and more productive for the benefit of all involved:

1. Ask 'Is a meeting really necessary or can the decision be made via email, in an informal chat or quick stand up brainstorm in the office?'
2. Once determined that a meeting is required, draft an agenda to detail the objectives of the meeting and the topics to be discussed.
3. Only invite people directly relevant to the discussion. People on the periphery of an issue tend to need a briefing of what has happened to this point – and this will take up valuable time.
4. Circulate the agenda and any pre-reading in plenty of time for review. Make it clear that attendees should read the contents as it will be referred to in the meeting.
5. Start on time. If you wait a few minutes for latecomers, you might need to cut short the discussion or rush the decision making process. If people miss critical information at the start of a meeting, they will soon learn to turn up on time.
6. Actively run the meeting and stick to the agenda. Ask at the start of the meeting if there are other relevant agenda items to add. If not, then the meeting should stay focused on the topic at hand. It is easy to go off on a tangent discussing interrelated matters. The agenda is there as your best tool to guide the discussion back on course.
7. Don't be embarrassed to ask people to hold their small talk or sideline discussions until after the meeting. Again, if it's not on the agenda, this is not the time to talk about it. Smile and ask attendees to refocus on the agenda.
8. Have someone take notes to summarise meeting achievements and required actions. Check these notes or minutes before they are sent out to ensure they are an accurate representation of what was discussed.
9. Finish on time. After all, running over time might make people late for their next meeting!
10. Follow up by email and circulate minutes or a record of the decisions made and agreed deadlines. This should help to kick start the work to actually achieve what was agreed. It will also help at a later date when checking in with attendees on the progress they have made.