How to Have an Efficient and Effective Meeting

Executive Summary

Most people consider meetings to be necessary, but a waste of time and inefficient. The common meeting has many shortcomings, the worst of which is not accomplishing necessary tasks that are crucial for the welfare of the business. Many articles and research papers have been written on the topic of improving efficiency in the workplace, and there are some common themes. The most commonly identified method is to have an agenda and to keep it focused. The director of the meeting should prepare ahead of time and have at least a general idea of what needs to be covered, and only topics that are relevant to the whole group should be included. The agenda should be focused on a goal or several goals, and the director needs to make sure participants stay on track with achieving the goal. It is also important to make sure that the people that need to be included are, and the ones that are not necessary are not. If they need the information, that’s what minutes are for. The talk of the meeting should be focused on decisions, not discussion. People could discuss in circles all day, but the meeting is only productive if decisions have been made. Lastly, the conversation in a meeting should go both down and up between employees, rather than simply a top-down distribution of information. Meetings can and should be an effective communication tool between members of a business that need to interact face to face.

Annotated Bibliography


The Senior Correspondent of the company TRW interviewed a seasoned business whiz who founded the company on tips for handling meetings. He found that better meetings happen when led by someone wanting productivity about the process. They determined that the most important thing was to be prepared, to know the subject and purpose of the meeting and what you hope it will achieve. He recommends picking carefully who to include in meetings in order to have people that will contribute, and keep the objective of the meeting always in mind so that progress is made towards the goal. Resist unnecessary elaboration; stick to the main point.

An interview with a man knowledgeable of the subject was an appropriate method for this application.

The suggestions provided are all good and can be applied to every meeting in the workplace or out. Being prepared and working towards a goal contribute a great deal to reaching a goal in a timely fashion. The suggestions are all one man’s opinion, but they can be added to the big picture of meeting etiquette.

Boyd M. Four ways to more efficient, effective meetings. Incentive. 1995;169(4):69
This article did not include the method of information collection, so the source of the recommendations is questionable. They appear to be personal opinion, but that can be useful when added to the big picture. The article recommends 4 methods to having efficient and effective meetings. The first one is to create a reward system for the team that holds the fewest meetings, or start a “late fund” that people have to contribute to if they are late to a meeting. The second one is to draft a summary memo including questions that can be sent out in lieu of having a meeting. The third suggestion is to use emails to communicate where possible instead of meeting in person. The last is to make sure that participants have background materials or a list of materials they need if they need to do “homework”.

The recommendations could be helpful depending on the type of workplace they are employed in. Trying to simplify information distribution seems like a good idea.

**Daniels W. Lead meetings. Leadership Excellence. 2007;24(4):17-18.**

The author spent 30 years observing and taking steps to understand how managers acquire the reputation that allows them to become leaders. He found that regular management meetings are the most frequent and intimate test of a manager’s integrity and competence. For these meetings to be beneficial the members need to be focused on a goal and they need to use the meeting to integrate their piece of the team’s work. The team leader should hold all members accountable for accomplishing all of their tasks, and they should have set metrics to determine if tasks have been accomplished. Issues should be focused on rather than just activity reports, and the member reporting the issue should have a recommendation for a solution. All members should commit to immediate implementation of each decision, and doubts or disagreements should be addressed and smoothed over as quickly as possible.

The method of data collection was appropriate for this situation, as the article was one man’s observations and suggestions on a topic.

The article was helpful in that the author stated that the best tool for a manager to become a leader was through meetings, and he also suggested ways to make those meetings effective. He didn’t just give a solution, he gave a process. It makes sense that a manager who leads great meetings will be more trusted and respected, whereas a manager that leads poor meetings will just be seen to cause confusion and waste time.

**Downton J. Make your meetings work for you. Accountancy Age. September 23, 2010;:13.**

The author compared meetings in the UK businesses to meetings in Japan businesses in order to identify differences in style and determine why Japan was more efficient. The suggestions the author gave appear to be personal opinion based off of the differences. The author recommends several ways to improve meetings. The first is to make sure all attendees receive an agenda. Second is to have participants turn their phones off, and have individuals take a break around an important call if necessary. The third one applies to meetings with participants in competing positions. Make sure you contribute fully, even if you have to address other members directly and ask them to allow you to finish your statement. The fourth is to handle distracting behavior by stopping mid-sentence. They will realize that they are the cause of the hold on the meeting, and they will be quiet. Finally, to make a point in a meeting you must know your
point. Similarly, when answering a question, make the answer the first thing you say and elaborate briefly after.

The method of information gathering was comparison and personal insight. It was adequate in an article like this, but it should be remembered that these are the opinion of one man. The information is useful though.

This was an adequate article, and certain principles could be applied to a wide range of meetings depending on the setting. The recommendations in this article were intended for a specific setting, so it may be hard to translate all of them over.

**Efficient Meetings. Journal of Sport Management. 1993;7(2):175-176.**

This article was based on an older article in Executive Excellence. They did not state how they came up with their statistics or suggestions. The author(s) state that meeting efficiency can be improved with better planning and more efficient and effective execution. Meetings should be well organized, have an agenda, pursue a clear objective, have a time limit, and involve only those who need to be involved. Minutes should be taken and distributed to persons that are interested but not necessary to have in the meeting. Any action items need to be recorded, and a person assigned responsible for that action item. Deadlines should be in place and followed.

There was no record of method of data collection in this article. The recommendations appear to be personal opinion. This could be a weakness because the source of the data is unknown, but even if it is personal opinion the points can still be taken and added to the bigger pool of opinions that makes up soft science.

This is a good article, and has some practical advice for efficient meetings. The suggestions seem pretty universal, and they could be applied to many different settings.


Researchers systematically observed people in their natural meeting environment. They identified seven types of activities that may occur from the perspective of the speaker: describe, explain, evaluate, predict, formulate, alternative, negotiate, and decide (DEEPAND). Based off of the DEEPAND system, they came up with three criteria to evaluate the quality of a meeting: meeting effectiveness, meeting efficiency, and participation value added. The DEEPAND aspects that made a valuable meeting were: explain, evaluate, alternative, formulate, and decide. The current method of planning is to include all suggested topics on the agenda. In order make a more valuable meeting, researches implemented a VCG planning mechanism. They evaluated three regular meetings first, then implemented the mechanism on the fourth meeting in order to compare results. Essentially, the list of possible topics is presented to all members of the meeting, and each member votes to include (+1) the topic, exclude (-1) the topic, or exclude (-1) and send to a small group discussion. Implementing this voting system resulted in an agenda drop from 52 to 32 items. It also shifted the DEEPAND focus from descriptive over to decision-making, which was more productive. Group satisfaction increased and meeting effectiveness was evaluated as high.
The research methodology was effective in determining meaningful results in regards to using the VCG planning mechanism. They quantified and classified verbal behaviors and value, and compared the treatment group to similar control groups. The intervention was only tested once however, so it may be beneficial to determine how this method works in the long run. However, the design was well done.

This was a very interesting article, and it involved some intricate formulas and processes for developing a good agenda and determining effectiveness and value. The most applicable takeaway is that planning an agenda to benefit the entire group present is beneficial to all parties. The article included many ways to determine what a good agenda looked like, essentially coming down to anything that needed the attention of the whole group that couldn’t be announced in an email.


Researchers interviewed professional communicators as well as top leaders for more than two years to determine the best way to have a conversation with their people and the best way to advance the conversation within their companies. From these interviews, they developed a model of leadership called organizational conversation. There are four elements of this model that reflect the essential attributes of interpersonal conversation: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

Interviewing communicators and leaders seems to be an appropriate method for gathering data in this situation. The data can’t be quantified because it is all subjective, which is potentially a weakness, but there may not be a good way to quantify data like this.

This study and article recommend that leaders engage with their employees in a manner that is more similar to a person-to-person conversation instead of a series of top-down commands. The advice sounds practical and beneficial to the workplace.


Information was gleaned through personal example and experience within a business. The author determined that meetings are now more necessary than in the old days because the workplace has become more collaborate and democratic. The first suggestion in regards to useful meetings was to not always have a meeting. If the point is to share information, there are often better ways to do that. In order to decrease meetings it is important to delegate well, so subordinates do not need to be checked up on as often. Another key is to avoid simply discussing. Pare down the report to actionable issues; productive meetings depend on clearly defined objectives toward which people can work and against which they can measure progress. Be sure to spend an adequate time preparing for the meeting, to ensure it is organized and the right people are invited. During meetings, make a list of off-topic items to come back to if there is time. It may also be necessary to cut wordy monologues short, so that everyone can contribute and the content is applicable to the overarching goal.

The method of data collection was appropriate in this context, because it was a person sharing their experiences and suggestions.
This article has some good information that is applicable to many different settings. All of the concepts could potentially lead to more efficient and worthwhile meetings.


There is no description of data collection. This article was written by a professor of health management and policy, and appears to be personal conclusions based on observations and experience. The author states that meetings should have a clearly intended purpose, and should only be held when a less time-consuming alternative would not work. The most productive meetings tend to involve between six and 12 people, and everyone present should be there for a reason. Attendee convenience should be key when determining location, and if travel is involved then a non-physical meeting should be considered. The best time to hold meetings tends to be early morning with a light breakfast, late afternoons following office hours, or a noon luncheon. The agenda should be strategically planned, and the meeting should be no longer than an hour and a half if it can be helped. The meeting should be started on time and conversation kept on track.

The form of data collection was appropriate for this situation. Data was based on personal experience and suggestions.

The article includes some good advice that could be useful in many different areas. The suggestions are based on experience and it would be beneficial to learn from other peoples’ journeys.


The author of this article works in an international management consulting firm, and the contents are based off of his and his client’s experiences. He identified many problems with meetings (using examples) including: top management spends little time together normally; agenda setting is unfocused and undisciplined; too little attention is paid to strategy; and meetings aren’t structured to produce real decisions. He proposes seven techniques for exploiting valuable time. They are: deal with operations separately from strategy; focus on decisions, not discussions; measure the real value of every item on the agenda; get issues off the agenda as quickly as possible; put real choices on the table; adopt common decision-making processes and standards; and make decisions stick.

The form of data collection was appropriate for this situation. Data was based on the experience of many people and suggestions based off of those experiences.

The article includes some good advice that could be useful in many different areas. The suggestions are based on experience and it would be beneficial to learn from other peoples’ journeys.

There is no description of data collection in this article. It appears to be a compilation of personal opinion based on personal experiences. The author had several suggestions to make concerning improving meetings. These include: take ownership of the meeting; make sure everyone leaves on the same page; delegate appropriately; craft effective policy; ensure substantive content, clear purpose, clear contribution, clear results; measure by learning and enjoyment and how fair or timely the process was; and establish the importance of meeting content and clarify purpose and contributions.

The form of data collection was appropriate for this situation. Data was based on personal experience and suggestions.

The article includes some good advice that could be useful in many different areas. The suggestions are based on experience and it would be beneficial to learn from other peoples’ journeys.


There is no description of data collection in this article. It appears to be a compilation of personal opinion based on personal experiences. Four suggestions were given to make meetings effective, and these are: if the meeting is worth holding, it’s worth taking minutes on; it’s ok to depart from the agenda plan so you don’t miss a valuable point; have a visual aid for people to focus on; avoid letting things drag on. Some other advice from the author includes: let the length of time vary, shorter is not always better; allow experts in the topic of discussion to speak longer; and avoid group think by encouraging debate or independent ideas. Body language is something that can only be communicated face to face, and in some cultures this is extremely important.

The form of data collection was appropriate for this situation. Data was based on personal experience and suggestions.

The article includes some good advice that could be useful in many different areas. The suggestions are based on experience and it would be beneficial to learn from other peoples’ journeys.


This article is based on personal experience, with no formal data collection. The author suggests in meetings to be modest, listen seriously, invite disagreement, focus the agenda, don’t try to have all the answers, and don’t insist that a decision must be made. To be successful, the author says that managers must see themselves more as catalysts for problem solving than as problem solvers per se.

The form of data collection was appropriate for this situation. Data was based on personal experience and suggestions.

The article includes some good advice that could be useful in many different areas. The suggestions are based on experience and it would be beneficial to learn from other peoples’ journeys. The advice in this article was well organized in that with each piece of advice, the author gave a personal example so that the importance could be better understood.