

Is Attending Meetings a Pain in the Neck?

How would you like to save between \$54 million and \$3.7 billion every year? It's quite easy really! Every business, organization, sports and volunteer group has meetings. Unfortunately McKenzie states half of these meetings are a waste of time which can mean the loss of millions or even billions of dollars.

Any loss might be due to the lack of results coming from meetings. The average person suggests they spend anywhere from 25 to 80 per cent of their time in meetings. Generally the higher the level of meeting time the higher the position in an organization. Executives tend to spend an inordinate amount of time in meetings.

If we lose so much money in meetings how can we make those meetings more productive? That is the question. Meetings are an integral part of organizational success so what do we need to do bring success? Following are a number of steps to make your meetings more valuable to all those who attend:

- Only invite people to your meeting that need to be there
- If you are invited to a meeting ensure you can contribute – if not, kindly abstain
- Decide who is to chair the meeting
- Send an agenda prior to the meeting indicating an RSVP to the Chair and give the chair's phone number/email address for responses
- The agenda needs to state the start time and the end time for the meeting
- Ensure everyone who is invited is listed in alphabetical order for all to see
- State the expected outcomes for which the meeting is being called
- Outline the topics to be addressed, who is the key stakeholder to address this topic and the length of time to be spent on the topic
- The position of Chair is responsible for keeping the meeting moving forward by calling on everyone to participate, to keep any one person from high jacking the meeting and to ensure there are outcomes for each topic
- Every participant also has a job – to keep the meeting focused on outcomes and to assist in getting to those outcomes by keeping the meeting on track with their own comments and by helping others stay focused
- The Chair is to appoint a secretary for the meeting – the job of the secretary is to make notes about the discussions and their outcomes and primarily **who** is to do **what** by **when**
- It is always wise for every Chair not to leave a topic until there is an outcome
- At the conclusion of the meeting the secretary copies and distributes the meeting minutes BEFORE people leave the meeting
- Now it is time for each person who was at the meeting to do their job by the date they indicated they would
- By reporting to the Chair, and now, with email, it is also easy to report to all those who were at the meeting, with the outcomes accomplished
- Remember, if you can't accomplish the outcome as expected, it is everyone's job to report on what CAN be accomplished – everyone must do their part or the meeting becomes a waste of time

- The Chair is responsible for ensuring the meeting ends on time and the outcomes of the topics are caught on paper

There is only one reason for a meeting – results. If there are no results forthcoming then your meeting was a waste of time, yours and everyone else who is in attendance.

Everyone who attends a meeting has a purpose. If meeting attendees are not prepared to be there to participate and bring their abilities then they must question whether they will attend. Everyone has a brain and will hopefully use it in meetings. Add to this the need for the Chair to be strong and lead the meeting and you have a thoughtful group of individuals who can come out of the meeting with a direction to achieve results.

If your meetings are cumbersome you may have some similar challenges in your organization. Are you achieving the results from your meetings that you are after? If not, now is the time to explore the reasons why and possibly change the approach.

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