

This Meeting's a MUST!

Show your colleagues that you value their time. Get to the point in your meetings.

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Time is a precious resource, so when your practice leaves little time to spare, you can't afford to attend another unproductive meeting. Whether you are a planner or a participant, an exercise in focus management will help you structure an effective meeting and reduce the stress that wasted time can cause. Here are some tips.

WHEN YOU ARE IN CHARGE

Since few people know how to run a productive meeting, they don't happen nearly often enough. The next time you are planning a meeting, add energy and purpose by following some simple guidelines.

- An agenda is the road map for a successful meeting. Ask colleagues for points they need addressed and form the agenda. Provide everyone with a copy before the meeting.
- List a handful of goals of the meeting and stick to it. Don't accept additional agenda items unless they are critical.
- Put a time limit on each point to be discussed. It helps maintain focus and structure.
- Include a plan of attack. What is to happen with each item? Does there need to be a decision, further discussion or clarification? Assign responsibility for each item and ask for a follow-up at the next meeting.
- Don't underestimate the power of the old adage, eat, drink and be productive. Have some snacks and beverage and take a minute to greet everyone. Spending a few moments to mingle can build some fun into a meeting, not to mention a working repore.
- Start on time.
- Layout the ground rules (e.g., "We will focus on issues, not personalities").
- When possible, change the location of your meetings. It's a simple way to freshen the approach.
- Don't meet if you don't have to.
- Begin developing the next agenda before the meeting ends.
- End on time.
- Don't spend time explaining what happened at the meeting to those who didn't attend. When possible provide only a brief synopsis.
- Measure the success of the meeting by how well your objectives were met.
- Celebrate when your team accomplishes a major goal.

WHEN YOU ARE NOT IN CHARGE

You don't have to be held hostage by unproductive meetings. Break the old mold by making sure you have done your own homework.

- If you don't know, then ask how long the meeting will be.
- make sure your attendance is necessary. if you are not the right person for the discussion, you can use your time more wisely.
- Ask about the ground rules for the meeting. if there aren't any, then it may be an opportunity to suggest some.
- Be prepared. Read up on the agenda topics and have your own thoughts in order.

A productive meeting means success for everyone.

Pam Vaccaro, CSP is a professional speaker whose expertise in managing time and attention brings her before audiences internationally. She is a Certified Speaking Professional, the highest earned designation by the National Speakers Association. Her company Designs on Time challenges companies and associations to rethink traditional time management. She is most known for tailored programs and innovative ideas.

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