



How to Make Your Meetings More Effective

1. **Have an Agenda:** Outline ahead of time what points will be covered in the meeting. Write it out, and distribute it to participants ahead of time. This will help avoid the "chasing of rabbits," and help participants be more prepared for the meeting.
2. **Follow the Agenda:** This sounds very elementary, but you'd be surprised by the number of people who take the time to create an agenda, and then totally disregard the agenda during the meeting.
3. **Limit the Agenda to Three Points or Less:** Ask yourself, "What are the three most important things we need to cover in the meeting?" Limit the agenda to these three points. The rest of the things you wanted to cover, by definition, weren't really that important anyway, so why waste everyone's time?
4. **Set a Time Limit:** I would suggest setting the time limit for the meeting to be no longer than 30-minutes. In future meetings, shorten the time by five minutes until the time limit is 15-minutes or less. The leader of the meeting will become much more efficient, and the participants will become much more focused as well. When the time limit is up, end the meeting. You may not get to cover every single thing that you wanted to the first couple of times you try this, but within a short time, you will find that the major information points are being discussed and decisions are being made very efficiently.
5. **Encourage Participation from Everyone, but don't Force Them:** Instead of going around the table and asking for opinions or input, just ask a question and let people volunteer their answers. There will be times during any meeting that each person will "phase out" (especially if it is a loooooong and BOW-ring meeting.) If we call on every person, it wastes time, and puts people on the spot. Other ways of encouraging participation is to just ask a question, and after someone answers, say something like, "Good, let's hear from someone else." If there are people in your meeting who rarely speak, instead of calling on them directly, you might say something like, "I value the opinion of each of you, does anyone else have something to add." Then, just look at the person you want to hear from. If he or she has something to say, he or she will say it if encouraged in this way. If he or she doesn't, then you haven't embarrassed the person.