

# Business Strategies

## Six Tips To Help You Master Your Next Meeting

(NAPSA)—A recent study from Office Broker found that the average office worker spends around 16 hours in meetings each week. Over a year, this translates into more than a month at the conference table. While meetings can be a great way to gather and provide team input and updates, chances are, much of your co-workers' time—and your own—could be used more effectively.

### How To Master Meetings

Fortunately, it doesn't take much to transform meetings into the worthwhile sessions they're meant to be. By following these six tips, you can become a Meeting Master and earn respect and appreciation from your managers and colleagues.

#### • Evaluate Your Goals—

Before setting up a meeting, ask yourself if it's really needed. It's easy to get caught in a routine of weekly update meetings, but depending on the week, it's possible that needed updates could be provided more efficiently with an e-mail or a brief phone call. Also, be sure you give participants enough time to effectively prepare valuable input and arrange to attend.

#### • Arrange For Efficiency—

If you're the leader of the meeting, all eyes should be on you. Arrange the seating so all the participants face you, as well as whatever screens, whiteboards or props you intend to use. This will help eliminate distractions and make it easier for everyone to stay focused and pay attention.

• **Keep It Exclusive**—Everyone likes to feel included but, when it comes to meetings, less is often more. With more attendees comes greater potential to veer off-topic. Also, keep in mind that each hour spent in a meeting is an hour that could have been spent on other work, so as a host, keep the meeting limited to the essential players and decision makers.

• **Put It On Paper**—Before hosting any meeting, send a bulleted agenda via e-mail to attendees and have paper copies in the meeting room for everyone in attendance. A written agenda keeps everyone on task, and ensures that



**Keep six tips in mind and you'll be able to make the most of your meetings in no time.**

priority topics and action items are discussed. Include a meeting objective so the meeting's purpose remains top-of-mind, and consider allotting specific amounts of time for each agenda item so they get the necessary amount of attention—nothing more and nothing less. For high-profile meetings, presentation counts. High-quality paper—such as Boise POLARIS® Premium Multipurpose paper—is excellent for impressive client- and customer-facing agendas and meeting documents.

• **Start And Finish On Time**—Don't reward stragglers by waiting for them to arrive before starting the meeting. Starting—and ending—meetings at the published times shows respect for your colleagues and their time, and helps set a precedent for the future. In that same vein, if you're invited to a meeting, be considerate and arrive on time. If being late is inevitable, send an update as soon as possible so the host can decide whether to continue without you or postpone.

• **Follow Up**—Once the meeting concludes, distribute paper copies of the minutes or to-dos within 24 hours. Minutes don't have to be word-for-word but they should include important topics and assignments. This last—but essential—step eliminates any ambiguity over assignments and next steps and ensures that everyone is on the same “page”—literally.

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