

CONDUCTING A SUCCESSFUL MEETING

We all know that time is one of our most valued resources; a resource that must be managed efficiently to help us reach our goals. We also know that meetings occur frequently in organizations, yet are seldom conducted efficiently and thus are typically viewed as a waste of time. The guidelines listed below are intended to improve meeting efficiency.

1) BEFORE THE MEETING

- Determine the desired outcome the meeting must produce.
- Develop a tailored agenda that will direct focus onto the desired outcome.
- Invite only those attendees directly related to the meeting outcome.
- Solicit comments or questions from attendees prior to the meeting.
- Identify the location, start time, and end time of the meeting.
- Send the agenda to the meeting attendees at least three days before the meeting.
- Practice how you will conduct the meeting, at least one day before it begins.
- Ensure resources (e.g., hand-outs, laptop, data) are ready before the meeting begins.

2) STARTING THE MEETING

- Start the meeting on time; never be late.
- Welcome the attendees and thank them for their participation.
- Review the agenda and state the desired outcome, before addressing the first item.
- Establish meeting norms (e.g., turn off cell phones, confidentiality, don't interrupt, no side conversations, parking lot issues, roles and expectations, conflict resolution).
- Assign someone to take notes (e.g., topics, decisions, action items, completion dates).

3) CONDUCTING THE MEETING

- Manage participation (e.g., encourage input, prevent anyone from being too dominant).
- Use active listening skills (e.g., open-ended questions, clarify, rephrase, body language).
- Ask for different points of view; promote creativity, not status quo thinking.
- Record ideas, notes, and the action list on a flip chart or computer with a screen.
- Keep the focus on the agenda topics, not the people or parking lot items.
- Summarize the content and assignments before moving to the next agenda item.
- Periodically comment that you value the attendees' ideas, opinions, and questions.
- Help the group reach conclusions and achieve consensus decision making.
- Make sure the meeting achieves the desired outcome.

4) ENDING THE MEETING

- Restate conclusions, accountabilities, action items and dates, and follow-up procedures.
- If necessary, determine the next meeting date, time, and location.
- Thank the attendees for their time and participation.
- End the meeting on time.

5) AFTER THE MEETING

- Evaluate the meeting (e.g., what went well, what might have been done differently?).
- Draft and distribute the meeting minutes to the attendees within one day of the meeting.
- Share results with others who need to know what occurred.
- Keep your commitments, and do follow-up on others as agreed in the meeting.