

Leading An Effective Staff Meeting

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A well run staff meeting can be a powerful way to improve morale, motivation and organizational efficiencies. Run a staff meeting well, your staff will be energized and you will be seen as a credible and professional manager. Run a staff meeting poorly, your staff will get frustrated and you will be viewed as unprofessional and disorganized.

To determine if you are leading an effective staff meeting, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you find it difficult to get people to talk during staff meetings?
- Do you feel like you continuously cover old ground?
- Do your meetings feel productive?
- Do the same people always do all the talking?
- Do you feel difficult issues never get addressed?
- Do your meetings always seem to end later than you expected?
- Do you dread leading your staff meeting?

If you answered “yes” to more than one of the above questions you can improve how you lead your staff meetings.

Invest more time in planning the meeting. Leaders should invest about one planning hour per meeting hour. This planning investment has a high ROI. Consider this example. You are a manager with a staff of six. You currently invest a half hour to plan your weekly staff meetings. Let's say you commit to investing an extra half hour to plan your next staff meeting. This extra investment enables you to reduce the meeting time by 10 minutes. This saves you 70 minutes (10 minutes times 6 staff and yourself). The ROI is 230% (you invested 30 more minutes and got a return of 70 minutes).

Create an agenda. To appropriately plan a staff meeting, you should ask the following questions:

- What tangible and intangible objectives do you want to achieve by the end of the meeting?
- Which objectives are worthy of meeting time, and which are not and could be better handled by a simple memo?
- How should the agenda be sequenced to accomplish the meeting objectives?
- What processes should be used to accomplish each objective?
- What information can participants read before the meeting to help prepare them for the meeting?
- What obstacles could emerge during the meeting?
- How can these obstacles be managed if they do emerge?



Leading the meeting. Now that you have a well planned agenda, follow these rules when leading the meeting:

- Always introduce the meeting by reviewing the agenda and objectives with participants.
- Adhere to the agenda timeframes. *Start on time, stay on time, and stop on time.* If your meeting is going to run late, let participants know and excuse those who cannot stay past the originally scheduled end time.
- Encourage open communication. Ask what people think, listen, paraphrase what they say, don't get defensive or judgmental, and emphasize there are no stupid questions.
- When brainstorming ideas, write participants' ideas on a flip chart paper. It makes it easy for all participants to track the conversation and it validates each person's idea.
- Respect participants' time and their ideas. Treat your staff with the same courtesy you would give members.
- Take action on the action items. Listen to, and move on actions that emerge during the staff meetings. You can run an effective meeting but if you do nothing with the actions items, future meetings will quickly be viewed as a waste of time and no one will actively participate.
- Ask staff how to improve meetings. Periodically, at the end of a meeting, take five minutes to ask participants how the meeting could be improved. This helps participants get comfortable with providing input.
- Solicit suggestions for the future meeting topics. Allow time at every meeting to ask participants what topics they would like to discuss at future meetings. This builds participant ownership for future agendas and provides managers with agenda ideas, thus shortening the planning time for the future agendas.

Staff meetings are great opportunities to build teams and motivate staff. If a leader invests time in planning and follows the guidelines listed above, meeting times will be reduced, input will increase, issues will be discussed, decisions will be made, work will get done, everyone will leave the meetings energized and on time, and the teambuilding opportunities will be maximized.

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