Ten Tips for Making Meetings Matter
by Nan Joesten

Many leaders have never been trained in how to run or contribute to a great meeting, but it's not difficult, and small changes can make a big difference. We've all been a part of meetings from hell, or tried to avoid meetings that we know will be a waste of time, but it doesn't have to be that way! Try these ten tips the next time you call a meeting, or are invited to attend one, and you too will rise to the level of being known as someone who Makes Their Meetings Matters.

#1 **Understand the Meeting Objective And Agenda, and Share It In Advance**. People shouldn't show up for a meeting if they don't know why they are there. Let attendees see that you are planning a focused, productive meeting as evidenced by the agenda, and send it out in plenty of time for people to be able to review it.

#2 **Facilitate People Getting Acquainted.** If your team is already functioning, you might minimize the time devoted to this, but in settings where team members work independently, or perhaps even remotely, a short investment in reconnecting to the larger group is time well spent.

#3 **Nail The Logistics**. Make sure the room is big enough to accommodate everyone where they can face each other. For a virtual meeting, circulate the correct call-in numbers, and have documents ready to project or share online, so that you don't waste time fumbling with files.

#4 **Start and End On Time**! This one is a no-brainer, yet it is often the meeting "party foul" committed most often.

#5 **Keep Peoples' Attention**. Keep your meeting moving, and you'll minimize the tendency for people to tune out and start working their smartphones. Draw out the folks who are sitting silently. As an attendee, avoid being rude with side conversations, passing of notes, and the like.

#6 **Share The Credit, And Accept The Blame.** A good meeting should be a source of energy, ideas, and collegiality. Remember, praise in public, and if you must criticize, do so in private.

#7 **At A Minimum, Capture Action Items**. Take brief bullet point notes on the agenda, or, for a more complex project with many moving parts, track the various status updates on a chart listing progress, next steps, and due date, and of course, the name of the individual responsible.

#8 **Solicit Feedback From Meeting Attendees**. Have the group briefly answer the questions of what should Stop, Start, and Continue happening, in the meeting to be more effective, and then act on the feedback.

#9 **Circulate Notes or Next Steps As Appropriate**. Consider who needs that information, and how you can most efficiently get it to them. Consider an intranet posting to cut down on emails.

#10 **Do You Really Need To Have A Meeting In The First Place.** Are your meeting out of habit? Perhaps there is a better way to share information, solicit input, or decide on strategy.

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