Top tips - get what you want from meetings

How often do you hold meetings? Do you view them as time well spent or do you end up feeling frustrated because you didn't get down to the main facts? Do the people in your meetings seem to talk about the same things, but never actually get round to solving anything? If any of these scenarios sound familiar, it means you're not being effective in your meetings. The points below are designed to ensure that you get what you want from each meeting.

1.) Is it needed?

Do you really need to have a meeting, or could the issue be solved via email or on the phone? People can feel resentful if they feel you're wasting their time so make sure there is a genuine need for face time with the other party before making the arrangement.

2.) Set an agenda

It's important that the purpose of the meeting is clear to all attendees before the event so they have time to prepare. It also helps to keep the meeting on track if you know which points you need to cover in advance.

3.) Preparation

If you want people to prepare for the meeting, i.e. read a document or come ready with questions, let them know in advance. If the topic of your meeting is controversial, seek out opinions beforehand. Focus on who you can count on and who you need to win over.

4.) The meeting environment

While it's important for everyone to feel at ease, a meeting room that's too comfortable will only encourage cosy chats with tea and biscuits. If you really need to get down to business, make sure you have a room that's well lit, clear of distractions and as quiet as possible.

5.) Start on time

If a person arrives late it might reflect how important the meeting is to them, or it might simply be a case of poor time management. Whatever the issue, a late start is a bad start so emphasise the importance of promptness when you send the invitation and, of course, make sure you're on time yourself.

6.) Set ground rules

This helps to prevent unwanted or counter-productive behaviour. Simple things such as asking attendees to switch their mobile phones off will ensure that you're not interrupted. If you need to communicate a message to the team, it might be worth explaining this at the start and advising that there will be an opportunity to ask questions at the end in order to avoid interruptions while you are speaking.

7.) Problem solving

If the purpose of the meeting is to come up with solutions to a problem, brainstorming can help. They key to making this productive is to write down all the solutions that pop up, no matter how feasible or ridiculous they might seem at the time.

8.) Keep control

In order for the meeting to be effective, it's important that someone takes responsibility for chairing it to ensure that you focus on the desired outcome. This person needs to ensure that the discussion remains on point and follows the agenda, but they should also be a good listener and ensure that everyone gets an opportunity to have their say at the appropriate time.

9. Summarise

People often leave meetings unsure of what the conclusion was, so try to sum up at the end of your meeting what it is you want your colleagues to understand and make sure everyone is aware of any action points decided in the meeting and who is responsible for carrying them out.

REMEMBER!!!

Don't' be afraid of asking your colleagues for feedback on how they think the meeting went and which parts of the process you could do better next time. Also, don't expect people to read your mind - if someone has acted in a way you think is inappropriate, take the time afterwards to tell them in a calm and friendly manner.