How to Have a Good Meeting

We’ve all groaned or rolled our eyes when we’ve received a meeting request.

Good meetings can yield great results for an organization, but good meetings are rare.

More often, you have to suffer through meetings that are too long, are trying to cover too much, or get hijacked by someone with a different agenda.

\*sigh\*

I know some super-smart people, so I reached out to my colleagues who have run or endured countless meetings during their careers. As I read through their best advice for how to have a good meeting, some patterns definitely emerged.

**Create an agenda in advance**

Michael Sanders of Legacy Solutions said, “I like to cover old business first to see if there are loose ends.”

If the meeting is part of an ongoing project or strategic initiative, this could be a good way to stop someone from derailing the meeting by asking about a past issue.

Carol Roth shared this sage advice, “Have an agenda. Stick to the agenda. Don’t try to solve all the world’s problems in one meeting.”

That made me laugh.

Remember that it’s OK to have a “parking lot” for other issues that are raised by participants. Write the issues down on a white board or on big sticky notes. Assure the person raising the issue(s) that you will follow up with them and, if appropriate, that you will schedule a meeting at another time to cover that.

Pro tip: You may have to repeat this several times if someone is really fired up. Be respectful but also be firm. Do not let this person hijack your meeting.

**Stick to the schedule**

Trying to decide on the right amount of time to cover the items on your agenda can be tricky.

Personally, I think it’s better to err on the side of brevity, as work tends to expand to the amount of time allotted. If you have to schedule a follow-up meeting, so be it.

Many of my colleagues mentioned setting a time and sticking to it no matter what. Digital selling expert [Phil Gerybshak](https://philgerbyshak.com/) put it this way, “During the actual meeting, be sure to start on time and end on time. If you don’t do this, you’ll make sure that everybody is late and people run long.”

This was definitely my experience when I was suffering death by one thousand meetings in corporate.

**Get everyone engaged**

There will be the people who comment on everything, and there will be people who hesitate to speak up in most meetings.

Shep Burr of [Kingfisher Growth Strategies](https://www.kingfisherconsulting.com/) suggested, “Solicit attendees' opinions during the meeting. It is a way to get people engaged and feel part of the team. Being listened to is a sign of respect, which also builds morale and respect for the leader.”

**Have someone take notes**

Most of my colleagues recommended having someone take notes during the meeting.

If you’re covering some important or complex issues, it can be a good practice to have the person taking notes read back what they have written down in order to get confirmation from the group before the meeting ends. Sanders says, “What is captured by the scribe is recited at the end to gain acknowledgement from the stakeholders and identify anything that may have been missed.”

**Send a follow-up email**

It’s a good idea to send a follow-up email outlining what was discussed and identifying / assigning next steps. Gerbyshak says, “After the meeting is over, send out meeting minutes within 24 hours. Just the bullet points can be fine. Details are for those who attended the meeting, not for people who did not. Action items need to be included. and also share in the meeting minutes who attended and who did not, who is excused, and what was not done. Don’t point fingers - just state facts.”

If someone didn’t deliver, it’s best not to call them out. I strongly recommend you never play the blame game. It usually tends to backfire and make you look bad, not the other person.

Most of us will have to host many meetings during our career. I hope these points will help you have productive meetings, and not painful ones.