



Twelve Steps to Great Team Meetings

Few things cost a company more than ineffective management meetings. When you consider the salaries of everyone sitting around the table, each meeting represents a significant investment of the company's resources. Add in the cultural impact of a management team that can't come together to solve problems in an effective and efficient manner and you end up with serious long-term consequences.

To turn your management team meetings into crisp, fast-paced sessions that accomplish meaningful outcomes, using the following steps:

1. **Have a designated time for starting and ending the meeting.** If someone arrives late -- even the CEO -- start without them. People may grumble at first, but eventually they will come to appreciate the punctuality.
2. **Have a prepared agenda for every meeting.** An agenda provides essential structure and focus for the conversations that take place during the meeting.
3. **Have clearly stated outcomes for every meeting.** Have a definite purpose for meeting and make sure every conversation is directed toward achieving that purpose.
4. **Distribute written assignments prior to the meeting.** When people receive assignments in writing, they can't show up and say, "Gee, I didn't know I was supposed to get that done before the meeting."
5. **Allow only those who can contribute to the solution(s) to attend.** Extraneous people cause distractions and slow down the pace. If someone can't contribute to the solution, they don't belong in the meeting.
6. **Draw out participation.** Some are not comfortable speaking in meetings yet they may have the best ideas. It is the facilitator's job to draw other out. Make it clear total participation is a goal.
7. **Publicly record all agreements and decisions and distribute them to everyone on the team.** A public record prevents conflict during the meeting and keeps people on the same page in between meetings.

8. **Rotate the meeting leadership.** Rotating leadership keeps the meetings fresh and helps to develop the skills of everyone on the team.
9. **Review prior decisions and actions taken.** Start every management meeting by reviewing the outcome of the previous session. Pay particular attention to successes.
10. **Increase the speed and pace of your meetings.** Don't be afraid to move fast. People appreciate it when the meeting moves at a good clip.
11. **The CEO speaks last.** Have all team members contribute before the CEO gives his or her perspective. This prevents the CEO from dominating the meeting and the rest of the team from parroting his or her ideas.
12. **Critique each meeting for process and the outcome.** One popular method involves a "plus/delta" exercise. Divide a flip chart into two columns. On the "plus" side, capture everything that went right with the meeting. On the "delta" side, identify areas for improvement.