

# How to Have a Great Team Meeting

(Right place, right time, right reason, right people)

 <p><b>Purpose</b></p>	<p>A great team meeting is one which is purposeful with <i>everybody</i> contributing towards a shared outcome. People go away from a great team meeting committed, motivated and clear about their own and their department's goals.</p>
 <p><b>Application</b></p>	<p><b>What is your team meeting for?</b></p> <p>If you seriously do not know then you shouldn't be having them!</p> <p>Ensure everybody knows the ground rules for how the meetings are run, the purpose of them and what their role in the meetings should be.</p>
 <p><b>What happens?</b></p>	<p>Your team meetings are to give direction to the work, to ensure everybody know what they are doing (and why), to translate strategy into actions and to agree who will do those actions and when. Team meetings keep the team informed about important initiatives and topics and you informed about the concerns of the team.</p>
 <p><b>Resources</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The right people</li> <li>• The right place</li> <li>• The right amount of time</li> <li>• An appropriate agenda that is followed</li> </ul>
 <p><b>How do I do it?</b></p>	<p><b>Prepare to succeed – have an agenda</b></p> <p>Create an agenda, with timings, and circulate it before the meeting. Ask the team members if they want to include anything on the agenda – this will keep “any other business” items to a minimum (or remove them altogether).</p> <p>Get others to lead on different agenda items so that it isn't just you speaking all of the time – give people time limits (and enforce them) to ensure that the meeting keeps moving. There is nothing worse than a meeting getting bogged down, dragging, falling behind schedule and “never seeming to end”.</p> <p><b>Stay in control and keep things moving</b></p> <p>There are many ways to stay in control without becoming a dictator, but to keep things moving along at a good pace (to keep the energy levels high).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stick to the agenda</b> and the timing (including the start and finish times) – if the item has not been covered sufficiently then tie it over to the next meeting or continue after the main meeting with the interested parties.</li> </ul>

- **Start and finish on time** – start whether everybody is there or not as delaying the start annoys those who did get there on time and gives the message that it doesn't matter to any late-comers.
- **Look forward, not back** – do not waste time going over what has happened in minute detail, but focus on what the team is going to do about it in the future.
- **Involve the quieter members of the team** – ask them for their opinions but try and avoid putting people “on the spot”. Don't allow the louder members of the team to talk over the quiet ones – everybody's contributions are valid and valued.
- **Focus on facts**, not rumour, opinion or hearsay. But allow feelings.
- **Use active listening techniques** when others are contributing:
  - Pay attention
  - Nod and use facial expressions to indicate you are listening
- **Summarise** at the end of each agenda item and at the end of the meeting – it shows you are listening and draws a line under that agenda item. It also has the added benefits of:
  - Clarifying what has been decided
  - Clarifying who has to do what (and when) for each action
  - Clearly states “the way forward”
- If an item keeps appearing on the agenda time after time without any progress being made then remove it from the agenda – re-energise it and re-introduce it as a new item at a future meeting.
- **Ask for feedback**, and *listen* to the replies. Act on the feedback.
- **Halt inappropriate discussions quickly** and deal with them after the meeting – this includes people going off-topic or venting frustrations – they could all have very valid arguments but the team meeting is not the place to discuss them. Ensure you **do** follow them up though.

**Keep minutes – if it isn't in the minutes it didn't happen!**

Meeting minutes can be a pain to type up but brief, appropriate, accurate, useful minutes have a very important role:

- They form the official record of what was said and

	<p>agreed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They itemise the actions – who should do what, and when</li> <li>• They can clarify and simplify important messages you want to get across to your team.</li> </ul> <p>Use the minutes for those with actions to update the team at the next meeting as to the progress of their actions. Discuss any serious lack of action with individuals outside the meeting, not in front of the rest of the team. Be sure to close down actions which have been completed</p>
 <p>Note</p>	<p><b>Own the corporate approach</b></p> <p>Don't side with your team if you don't agree with what you are asked to implement by your manager. Have your disagreements and discussions with your manager, in private, agree an approach and then give a single message to your team - whether you agree with it or not.</p>
 <p>When?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply these principles each time you organise and run your team meetings</li> </ul>