

The ABCs of Avoiding Ineffective Meetings: Advance Output Using an Agenda

Meetings are a powerful tool for organizations. Secretly, though, you enjoy those Dilbert comics that feature the pain and frustration of poorly run meetings. It seems as if Scott Adams, the brilliant author of Dilbert, was a part of your last meeting!

Let's face it; meetings can be a real drag. We all hate doing them, but we also feel they are a necessary evil to ensure people work well together. For such a straightforward concept – essentially a group of people gathered to discuss an idea – we really do make a mess out of it sometimes.

While statistics vary widely on the amount of time spent in meetings, successful organizations know their teams spend so much time in meetings that turning meeting time into sustained results is a priority. Actions that make meetings successful require direction by the meeting leader before, during, and after the meeting.

Whether you are organizing meetings or simply attending them, you owe it to yourself to become more effective at this skill – especially if you are the team leader!

THE QUICK SUMMARY - [Meetings Suck](#) by Cameron Herold

We all know that meetings suck, right?

You hear it all the time. It's the one thing that almost everyone in business can agree on.

Except it's not actually true. **Meetings don't suck; we suck at running meetings.** When done right, meetings not only work, they make people and companies better.

In *Meetings Suck*, world-renowned business expert and growth guru Cameron Herold teaches you how to use focused, time effective meetings to help you and your company soar.

This book shows you immediately actionable, step-by-step systems that ensure that you and everyone in your organization improves your meetings, right away.

In the process, you'll turn meetings that suck into meetings that work.

A SIMPLE SOLUTION

A simple meeting agenda, distributed in advance, is perhaps the most important tool in ensuring a successful productive meeting, even when the meeting is between only you and one other person.

If you can't personally create a meeting agenda for the meetings you convene, at least delegate that responsibility to one of the participants. That way, you'll get all of the benefits of

having an agenda without having to do the work!

The difference between meetings with and without agendas can mean chaos, ruffled feathers and very few accomplishments. An agenda communicates to attendees that the meeting will be conducted in an orderly fashion and that productivity is the goal.

Organizations hold meetings to get things done, share information, develop plans, document progress, provide clarity and make decisions. An agenda can ensure that the meeting stays on track and that special projects and routine operations proceed as intended. An agenda can help a group of employees function as an effective team.

Without question, every meeting must have a clear agenda distributed to attendees in advance. If you skip creating an agenda, then your meetings can quickly go off track, get hijacked by a random topic, or include people who shouldn't be attending.

By taking the time to plan, prepare, and distribute an agenda before the meeting, you will reap considerable benefits.

Benefit 1: Introverts are engaged

When it comes to your more introverted team members, more often than not they won't speak up unless you ask them a question directly or they're passionate and engaged in the subject. Giving them an agenda in advance allows them the time they need to think through answers, frame their thoughts, or whatever else they need to do to raise their ideas.

Benefit 2: Time is maximized

Creating an agenda in advance gives you the distinct advantage of maximizing your time. Including time allocated for each item helps you realize whether you have too much or too little, and gives you the flexibility to adjust and split topics before the meeting begins, instead of trying to navigate this on the fly.

Benefit 3: Only essential employees participate

Creating your agenda in advance forces you to think critically about who you're inviting. It's highly likely that only select individuals need to discuss certain items on the agenda.

Benefit 4: People learn to opt out

An agenda distributed in advance helps people feel like there's a good reason for them to attend. But it also gives people the chance to opt out if they don't feel they can provide or extract value.

Benefit 5: Your team comes prepared

When you include the meeting style (information sharing, creative discussion, or consensus

decision) in the agenda, then you tell your team what to expect and how best to prepare.

When your agenda includes all items being considered, a purpose, and possible outcomes, then people will know exactly why they have been asked to attend the meeting and what they will be expected to accomplish during it.

[Cameron Herold, *Meetings Suck*](#)

A NEXT STEP

If you already prepare an agenda for meetings you lead, congratulations!

However, if you do not prepare an agenda or know yours could be better, consider the following ideas to help you develop an agenda for your meetings.

- Create the agenda at least three days in advance, to allow everyone time to review it and prepare for the meeting.
- Seek input from team members.
- Create a list of any pre-meeting work required by participants.
- Start with simple details: time and place and attendee list.
- State the meeting objective or goal.
- Create a list of meeting topics or questions to be answered.
- Add a realistic time allotment for discussion of each topic.
- If appropriate, list discussion leader for each topic
- Choose only topics that affect the entire team participating.
- Other pertinent information as required.
- Plan to end each meeting with continuous improvement by asking 1) What did we do well? and 2) What do we need to be different for the next meeting?

Excerpt taken from SUMS Remix 90-1, released April 2018

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