
How To Prepare for A Management Meeting?

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Abstract:

This article has been written with the objective of encouraging the readers to be more productivity conscious in their day to day working through effective planning and home work. This is applicable both for the juniors before meeting their seniors, and for the seniors before calling for a meeting, Effort has been made to bring out relevant issues and factors to be kept in mind by the individuals. These appear to be quite simple and probably, a number of readers might find these really common, yet the writer is confident to say that if the readers take these points seriously, they will definitely be benefited by following the suggestions made in this article.

Why a Meeting is Required ?

A meeting may be required at the first instance in the following circumstances:

- A meeting called by the superior in the management hierarchy to delegate the work / assignment / project.
- A meeting as a result of the junior, in the management hierarchy, walking to the seat of the senior for seeking guidance in respect of the job being undertaken by him.
- A pre - planned / scheduled meeting between the Senior & Junior(s) to review the progress of the ongoing work / project and take corrective steps as desired.
- A mandatory meeting required to be held under the provisions of the law.
- A meeting organized to have a brain storming session for innovation of new ideas regarding Processes / Products / Plant & Machinery / Services.

Agenda of the Meeting:

No meeting called by the management or a senior official can ever be successful, if the agenda of the meeting is not planned and circulated in advance to all the members of the meeting. While planning

for the agenda, it is important to remember that controversial points / topics for decision must be included. The circular should, besides the agenda of the meeting, indicate the time frame and the venue, where the meeting is scheduled to be held. It is always desirable to postpone the meeting, rather having it without prior information about the agenda.

What to Prepare Before the Meeting?

- About the topic / problem to be discussed:- An employee needs to carefully read the agenda of the meeting. This requires thorough understanding about the topic / problem to be discussed including the possible causes of the occurrence of the problem, impact on the overall assignment / project in terms of costs and delay in completion. The best thing is to visualize the possible solutions to the problem, the additional costs / investments required and revised expected completion schedule

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- **Prior Information:** Circulate the data / information already available, well in advance, to all members who are required to participate in the discussions for sorting out the issues pertaining to the problem(s) under investigation. If possible, data may be collated in a manner which a reader not only, can easily understand but also is in a position to analyze critically. This will help in reducing the overall time required for the meeting and at the same time ease the process of coming to a consensus by all concerned members.
- Take written confirmation for attending the meeting on scheduled date, time and place. Emphasize the importance of being present for the meeting, ten minutes prior to scheduled start time. It may be a desirable approach to verbally send a reminder about the date, place and time of the meeting one day in advance and send even a flash reminder one hour before the start time. This will ensure the timely presence of all the members, who are expected to join the meeting.
- An individual must call up before walking into senior's room for any discussion.
- Convert potentially difficult participants into your best advocates by taking them into confidence, discussing in detail the issues involved and taking their suggestions much before the meeting. Individuals should also adopt this technique before making suggestion to the management.
- **Invitees:** Plan the list of members to be called for attending the meeting. Care should be taken to drop those who are really not interested in participating rather their motto is to disturb the meeting to the extent, that no decision can be taken.
- **Refreshment:** The menu of refreshment needs to be decided in advance. This depends upon the duration of the meeting. For meetings of 15 minutes' duration, a simple cup of tea / cold drink can be easily planned. Care has to be taken for its timely servicing.
- **Seating Arrangement:** It is a common practice in some companies, where the

management calls for a meeting and the seating capacity for all the participants, is not sufficient. This acts as an irritant and a de-motivating factor. It may be even advisable to plan and fix the particular seating arrangement that may lead to more effective participation by the members.

- **Repair & Maintenance:** Ensure that no repair and maintenance work is done during the time meeting is on, especially when, it is likely to distract the attention of the members.

Do's & Don's for Conducting the Meeting?

Don't Wait: Meeting must start on scheduled time. There is no need to wait for any one to join. Rather, if some one arrives late, don't go back to review what has already been discussed. While it may be somewhat courteous, for a senior man coming late, to brief about the matter covered, it is not at all a desirable practice. This just wastes the time of the people who come to the meeting at scheduled time. On the other hand, if for any reason, organizers of the meeting don't turn up at the meeting venue in time, the meeting may be considered as cancelled / postponed. Waiting for more than ten minutes is not desirable in this case.

- **Environment:** The success of any meeting is dependent upon the environment / atmosphere in which the meeting is conducted. Do create healthy atmosphere of mutual trust, which is essential for the members to express their views freely and make them eager to achieve the objectives of the meeting and prepare them not to settle for anything less.
- **Do Encourage Participation by** all the members of the meeting. It is important to have an eye contact with all the participants and ensure to involve those members, who are silent spectators. The simple way to involve any silent spectator is to ask his / her opinion about the topic / issue / point of difference under discussion.
- **Keep the audience awake and engaged.**
- **Never hurt the ego of any participant**

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- **Stay Focused:** It has been observed that many a times during the course of meetings, the basic issues which need to be discussed are left far behind due to related problems having been raised, sometimes intentionally, by some members. This situation needs to be avoided through timely interjection by the chair – person. In fact, it is more appropriate to keep the members informed about the ground rules of the meeting. Points / issues other than those on the agenda should be allowed to be raised towards the end of the meeting and need to be planned for discussion at some other time.
 - **Minutes of Meeting:** Always give responsibility to one member for keeping a record of the points discussed and decisions taken and action(s) to be taken for achieving the target objectives. Keeping a record of the details of the meeting held, circulating these minutes to all concerned members, helps the management in fixing the responsibility / accountability for the corrective actions to be taken in respect of decisions taken to sort out the problem(s) being encountered by various functionaries.

- **Distribution of Minutes of Meeting:** It is a healthy practice to ensure that the minutes are prepared, finalized and distributed to all those who attended the meeting, invitees who couldn't attend due to some unavoidable circumstances and all those who are affected by the decisions taken. Distribution of the minutes is a means to remind individuals for the actions to be taken and informs the absentees about the progress made.

Conclusions:

Meetings can be very productive provided these are conducted professionally in a planned manner, in a conducive and healthy environment of mutual trust. If not, these can be a waste of lot of time. *Preparing for the meeting* and *Do's & Don's* suggested above will definitely prove to be useful to the readers.

References:

- An article by Jim Hastings, Staff Development & Training Manager Hoffman Professionalism Center.
- Human Resource Development 9th ed. 2004, by Dessler Gary