How to hold a successful meeting

What can meetings achieve?

Meetings are often seen as a waste of time, but well-run meetings can achieve many important results, such as:

- Giving you an opportunity to efficiently get information out to the whole team.
- Allowing your staff to share their information and ideas.
- Conducting important business activities, for example:
  - Planning,
  - Problem-solving,
  - Decision-making, and
  - Reporting.
- Developing your staff in activities such as planning and problem-solving.
- Developing your team by focusing a meeting on where the team is at and what they could be doing better.

How can I make our meetings successful?

Here are some tips to help you run efficient, successful meetings.

Preparation:

- Have a clear purpose for the meeting, and if you actually don’t need it, don’t have it.
- Prepare and circulate an agenda before the meeting and ask your staff to add to it if they wish.
- For each agenda item, state the purpose, such as to discuss, to brainstorm, to decide or to report. This way all participants will know what outcome they are working towards.
- Have a comfortable location and access to such things as a computer if you need it.
- Schedule the meeting at a good time for everyone, and ensure they all know where and when it will be, and that you expect them to be there.

Running the meeting:

- Start on time and don’t wait for late-comers.
- Ensure someone takes notes and circulates them afterwards.
- Have agreed meeting rules and stick to them. For example, only one person to speak at a time and to be respectful of other people’s contributions.
- If the meeting is longer than one hour, make sure you have a break so everyone can maintain their concentration.
- Give each person the role of running the meeting from time to time, to increase their feeling of responsibility and to develop this important skill.

After the meeting:

- The notes from the meeting should be written up and circulated to the whole team. Here is a simple format that can be used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of meeting: (e.g. Planning meeting to increase production)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start time:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finish time:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key issues or discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action to be taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person responsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Follow up on actions that have been decided in the meeting. If this is not done, the meeting will be seen as a waste of time.
- Regularly ask your staff for feedback about your meetings so you can improve them.

Work together to make your meetings effective:

Everyone working together will make your meetings a vital business tool that also develops your team and your individual staff members.