

One Easy Step to Better Meetings

Do you ever find yourself wondering just what the hell you accomplished in the 70 minutes you just spent in the conference room?

Do you ever sob at the thought of all the work that piled up during the pointless excuse for a team meeting you just snored through?

Do you ever wish that your meetings were actually, you know, productive?

Here's one very simple step that will help ensure your meetings have value: set a GOAL for the meeting. Not a TOPIC.

Most meetings have topics: "2009 New Product Launch." "New Customer Credit Guidelines." "Performance Review Policies." The problem with topics like these is that no one knows what the outcome of the meeting is supposed to be. As a result, there's a lot of talking without direction -- no one knows what they're supposed to get out of the meeting. Sound and fury signifying nothing, as it were. So you go into the meeting clueless, and walk out not sure what it is you were supposed to accomplish or learn.

Instead, let people know what the goal (the purpose) of the meeting is. For example, "Brainstorm 10 Ideas for Cost Reduction." Or "Develop a Clear Explanation for the New Credit Policy." Or "Teach Staff How to Fill Out Performance Reviews Properly." When you go into a meeting with this title, you know what you're supposed to achieve at the end of the hour. And while you're in the meeting, you know whether or not the discussion is getting you to that goal.

Give it a try. You'll be amazed at the difference such a small change can make. And you're far less likely to walk out of a meeting thinking, "I'd rather have a root canal than sit through that again."

Questions? Comments? I'm electronically ubiquitous:

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