



A Checklist for Taking Your Meeting From a Waste of Time to Worth the Time

Many people believe that meetings waste a large part of the workday. This checklist describes proven techniques to make your meetings productive. Compare a proposed meeting to this checklist. If you cannot check all of these boxes, the meeting may, at best, be a lost opportunity to make full use of the knowledge and skills of the participants and, at worst, could be a costly waste of time.

Meeting Goals

- ☐ The meeting agenda **clearly** identifies the goal(s) of the meeting.
- ☐ Each goal is stated in a way that participants can judge whether the goal was achieved at the end of the meeting.
- ☐ The goals justify having a meeting. The goals cannot easily be achieved by an email, video, etc.

Meeting Roles

- ☐ There is a clear leader for the meeting.
- ☐ There is someone to record important decisions reached at the meeting. This is a different person from the leader, if it is a big meeting.
- ☐ There is a coordinator for the meeting to handle logistics. This is a separate person from the leader, if it is a big meeting.
- ☐ Participants who have a specific task to perform at the meeting know their task and time limit.
- ☐ Participants who may not be instrumental in achieving the goal are told their participation is optional, so they can opt out if they feel their time is better used elsewhere.
- ☐ The agenda has been structured so that participants with an important but limited role can attend just for the items relevant to them.

Ensuring a Productive Meeting

- ☐ Materials that participants are expected to review ahead of time are succinct and in a format that people are likely to read/view/listen to ahead of time.
- ☐ The meeting agenda and supporting materials are sent to participants at least 24 hours before the meeting.
- ☐ The agenda minimizes or eliminates time spent reviewing/presenting supporting materials.
- ☐ The agenda maximizes time spent doing “real work” in service of the goals of the meeting.
- ☐ There is a clear start and stop time for each agenda item.

Scheduling the Meeting

- ☐ The meeting does not infringe on any agreed-upon “meeting-free” zones of time.
- ☐ The meeting is scheduled close to the beginning or end of the day, lunch, or some other natural break point to avoid interrupting individual work time.