

SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS

“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.” – Unknown

Did you know that there are approximately 20 million business meetings occurring in America every day? Mind boggling, isn't it? What is even more mind boggling is how many of these meetings are unimportant, unsuccessful or simply unnecessary. Do not let your group meetings fall into these categories. There are a ton of hints and reminders to consider when deciding how, when and if you should hold a meeting, so let's jump right in:

When scheduling a meeting:

- Decide the purpose of the meeting. Don't have one? Then don't have the meeting. If you do have a reason and a purpose, continue with the next step.
- Ask key people when they are available. Between classes, work schedules and extra-curricular activities, it is difficult to find an agreeable time when everyone can meet. Try to make sure the people who really need to be there can be there (i.e. if the meeting is to discuss the progress of an event, the event coordinators should be there).
- Make sure the room and any equipment you need are available. You may want to consider places outside of your normal meeting place, such as a coffee shop or the Quad.
- Make sure members are prepared for the meeting. Send out an email telling them the purpose of the meeting, what topics will be covered and what they should review before coming (i.e. minutes from the last meeting).
- Make sure you are prepared. There are five elements of a meeting to prepare:
 - Greeting. How will you welcome your members?
 - Opening. How will you introduce your presenters, leaders, objectives?
 - Delivery. How will you present the contents/concerns to be discussed?
 - Closing. How will you summarize decisions, delegate tasks, create deadlines, generate action?
 - Feedback. How will you record notes from the meeting, check progress of items, evaluate the meeting?
- Have a written agenda for each meeting. List each item to be discussed along with a time limit for each. Distribute copies of this to your members prior to the meeting and ask if anything needs to be added.

At the meeting:

- Arrive early. Get there before everyone else to organize yourself, set up the room in a welcoming manner and make sure all necessary equipment is in the room.
- Welcome members as they arrive. Let them know you are glad they are there and that you appreciate their time and input.
- Announce the agenda. State the purpose of the meeting and summarize the agenda. Stick to the established time limits.

- Summarize. To close, summarize main points and evaluate action plans. Thank everyone for coming.

After the meeting:

- Treat yourself. Reward yourself for a job well done!
- Within an hour, jot down notes. Note things that went well in the meeting, ways to improve the next one, items to be sure to address.
- Start next agenda. Within a day, begin the agenda for your next meeting.
- Follow up. Make follow-up calls/memos to members who missed the meeting, to make progress checks on activities and so forth.
- Send thank you notes. Thank special presenters, key contributors or others performing special tasks.

In general, remember the following:

- Be prepared!
- Encourage teamwork.
- Be specific and concrete when addressing topics or delegating.
- Maintain a positive, enthusiastic attitude.
- End meetings with a laugh.
- Stay on one topic at a time.

Reference:

Anderson, K. (1993). *The Busy Managers' Guide to Successful Meetings*. NJ: National Press Publications.

Related Leader Readers: [Credible Leadership](#); [Delegation](#); [Effective Listening](#); [Making Meetings Fun](#); [Getting Organized](#); [Team Building](#)

[Leader Readers](#) | [Illini Union](#)