



Organising effective meetings – hints and tips

Planning and running an effective meeting requires a certain set of skills and techniques, which an IET professional skills trainer has put together for you in this useful hints and tips guide.

Who will be attending the meeting?

This is an important question as you will need to know numbers in order to organise enough resources for those attending. Where possible, check the diaries of the people you will be inviting to the meeting. Aim to book a date where most people are available.

Send out a calendar invite. This will ensure the date is in everyone's calendar and reminders will be given.

What to include on the invite

First it is worth giving some thought to the time of day you run the meeting. If possible avoid afternoon as after lunch you will find your attendees will lack focus and feel lethargic. The earlier the meeting the more awake your attendees will be.

Include start time and finish times.

If you are organising an all-day meeting state what the lunch arrangements will be and ask attendees to let you know if they have any dietary requirements. Also provide the room details or if the meeting is off site the location address and provide a map and/or clear directions on how to get there.

On the invitation, it is also worth giving your attendees the opportunity to add to the agenda or even help form it. Ask them to send you any agenda items that they would like covered on the day – you can also ask them to present the topic at the meeting to allow for a variety of presenters on the day.

This will keep the meeting engaging and interesting for those attending. Once the agenda is written up ensure you send attendees updated invites with the agenda attached. If you have the venue confirmed including the room/telephone numbers also add this information to the updated invite.

When sending the invites, state a deadline for them to respond with an 'accept' or 'decline'. The sooner you know who can attend, the sooner you can plan for the meeting.

Booking a room

Questions to ask yourself include have you booked a room big enough and with all the facilities you will need on the day? Also, have you booked the room for long enough and do you need to allow for people to travel to and from the meeting? You'll need to take this into consideration when it comes to start and finish times.

Your meeting may entail a conference call or video conference. If this is the case then you need to consider the time of day for the call – are any attendees overseas with time differences? You will need to ensure attendees all have the correct numbers to dial in with including any pins they may need. You may also need to ensure several rooms are booked in various locations to allow groups to gather around a video link-up screen.

Set the agenda

A set agenda will allow you to manage your time on the day of the meeting. You will know the topics that you need to cover and how long you would like to spend on each agenda item. Add the timings to the agenda.

Your agenda should state the names of the attendees, meeting date, start time and end time, and the meeting location or venue. More importantly, it should indicate the title of the meeting; the topic headings for discussion; who is covering the topic; and timings. This way everyone knows what to expect and you know that you can fit everything in.

Roles

Remember to allocate roles to people attending the meeting.

You will need a minute taker to record the details of the meeting and cascade to all attendees, plus a timekeeper is good to have to ensure all agenda topics are covered.

You will also need a chairperson. This is usually the person who is organising the meeting. They will be responsible for monitoring attendance, running through the agenda and keeping control of the meeting. They will effectively be facilitating the meeting and will also be responsible for delegating any responsibilities.

Following the meeting

In order to embed any actions taken during the meeting, it is essential that the minutes of the meeting are sent out to all who attended as well as those who were unable to make it on the day. By doing this, everyone will receive the same information and can action any points that were discussed at the meeting.

Summary

Using these helpful hints and tips you are now on your way to organising effective meetings. Your meetings will now be an investment of time, rather than a waste of time.

You may find it helpful to attend an IET Lifeskills workshop to gain more in-depth skills and knowledge on this subject. Workshops are also a great place to network and pick up more tips by sharing experiences with the other delegates. For more information on IET courses please visit www.theiet.org/pd-courses.

www.theiet.org/careerzone

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