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## Meetings That Work

"A meeting is a place where people take minutes and waste hours." Is this statement true of your meetings? Here are four tips for running meetings that are more productive and don't waste hours:

### **1. Have a Purpose for Meeting**

"We always meet every Thursday at 4" is not a sufficient reason to meet. You should be able to state the purpose for meeting in one succinct sentence. Make this sentence your "opening statement" at the meeting and write it at the top of your agenda. Some examples: "We will decide how to pilot our new flex-time policy." "We will draft the high-level project plan for the software upgrade." "We will review the data from the survey and decide our next steps." If there is no purpose or if that purpose could be better achieved through different means, don't meet.

### **2. Have an Agenda**

The agenda should include who will handle which topic and how long it should take. Send the agenda out before the meeting so the attendees will know what/how to prepare and what will be expected of them. Once you have an agenda, stick to it.

### **3. Stick to the Time**

Make the most out of everyone's time by starting and ending the meeting on time. If people tend to come late, start on time anyway and don't repeat everything each time someone comes in late; eventually, people will get used to showing up on time. Have someone keep track of time during the meeting so everyone stays within their allotted time and there is time to go through the whole agenda.

### **4. Set the Ground Rules**

If the group will meet often or for a long period of time, it's important to spend the first few minutes of the first meeting having the group develop ground rules for things such as the use of laptops/phones/email during meetings. People are more likely to hold each other and themselves accountable to the ground rules if they helped to develop them. Write them on a flipchart and post them in the meeting room or on the agenda sheet for the next meeting. Remind people of them at the start of the next meeting.

If you follow these tips, your meetings will become more productive. You'll achieve the purpose stated in the agenda while respecting people's time.

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