

Michael Hyatt - No Fail Meetings

Monday, August 13, 2018 1:29 PM

What makes great meetings? Partly based on [Michael Hyatt - No Fail Meetings](#)

- 1. Establish hard edges.** Good meetings start and end on time. When you start late, you inadvertently penalize the punctual and reward the tardy. This only make the problem worse rather than better. People get “trained” to come late because they know nothing significant will happen until well after the announced start time. When you finish late, you also frustrate participants. People are busy. Meetings that finish late cascade into other meetings which must then also start late. Instead, we have to be as disciplined about our ending times as our beginning times. It’s amazing how much you can cover if you know you absolutely must finish on time.
- 2. Create an agenda.** I don’t think any meeting should proceed without an agenda. If it’s not important enough to create a written agenda, then it’s not important enough to attend. Leaders must set the example here. They need to think about the topics to be covered and how the meeting should flow. I always like to start the meeting with a review of the minutes from the previous meeting (more about this in a minute). I like to end every meeting with two items: a review of the agreed-upon action items and setting—or confirming—the date for the next meeting. Agendas should always be circulated in advance of the meeting, so that people know what to expect and how to prepare.
- 3. State the desired outcome.** If you are the leader, it is important to know exactly what outcome you want from the meeting. If you don’t know where you are going, how will you know when you have arrived? I would suggest that you state the desired outcome in the meeting invitation and then re-state it as you begin the meeting. For example, “the purpose of our meeting is to report on the results of our latest market research and give you a chance to ask questions.” By stating the outcome, the participants can work together to achieve it and keep the meeting from wandering off-track.
- 4. Review the notes and action items.** The first thing I do in any meeting is to review the minutes and action items from the previous meeting. This gives the participants context and gives those that were absent an opportunity to get up-to-speed. You also want to get a progress report on each action item from the person responsible for it. If you make a habit of always doing this, people will soon learn that you expect them to complete their assignments. If they have to give an account in front of their peers, so much the better. This may give them the added “incentive” to complete their assignments, so that they are not embarrassed in front of their colleagues.
- 5. Take written minutes.** Someone should take minutes, even if the meeting only has two participants. However, detailed notes that chronicle the discussion as it unfolds are usually—in fact, almost always—unnecessary. In most meetings, recording the key decisions and action items are sufficient. You want to document decisions, so there is no misunderstanding later. You want to document action items, so that you can hold people accountable and track progress. Beyond that, you’re probably just engaging in busy work. You should distribute minutes as soon after the meeting as possible, so that participants can review the key items while they are fresh in their memory as well as review what is expected of them.
- 6. Clarify action items.** At the end of the meeting, the person recording the minutes should read off the action items. It is particularly important that these be stated in a specific format.
 - **Start each action item with a verb.** For example, “*Review Milford contract with the agent*” or “*Call Jim and get latest turnover figures.*”
 - **Specify the deliverable.** What exactly do you expect the person completing the action to do. It must be an observable behavior with a specific end-point. It may be a phone call, a written report, or a presentation. It should not be a process.
 - **Assign a single owner to each action.** No action should have more than one owner. You want one

person to blame if the action isn't completed.

- ***Agree on a due date.*** Get a commitment from the person responsible. Be realistic but put it in writing. This is a commitment and should be treated as such.

- 7. Determine the next meeting time (if not a regularly scheduled meeting).** This is easy to do when everyone is together. Everyone should be encouraged to bring their calendar to the meeting (or their iPad, iPhone, or Blackberry). If the meeting disperses without setting the next date, it makes it that much harder to schedule the next meeting. Take advantage of everyone being in one place to get this settled. It's one less thing you have to do later.

Improving the quality of meetings takes work. Every once in a while we need to step back from the meeting itself and ask, "How can we make our time together more productive?" We need to be honest. Meetings consume a lot of resources. The more efficient they are, the better the return on our investment.

Question: What else do you think is necessary for effective meetings?