



Organizational DEVELOPMENTS

Volume 15, No. 2 • Summer 2003

Published by Creative Resource Development, Inc.

Planning productive meetings

If you're like most managers, you're wasting nearly an entire work week each month sitting through meetings you don't need to attend.

Research indicates that most professionals attend an average of 61.8 meetings a month, more than half of which is considered a waste of time. Based on those numbers, if each meeting lasts only an hour, professionals waste about 31 hours a month in unproductive meetings.

"One of the most expensive decisions a manager makes today is the decision to

hold a meeting," says CRD President Diane Hanson. "When you add up the cost of salaries, meeting room space, refreshments, supplies and travel expenses, if necessary, meetings can be very expensive. The managers today who maximize meeting productivity are respected and appreciated by colleagues."

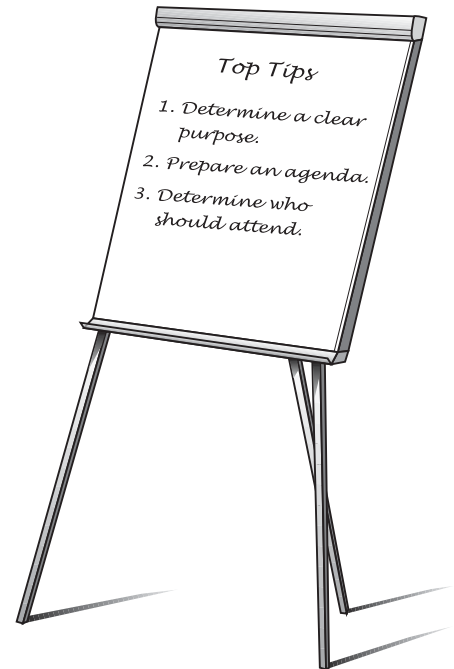
Most individuals identify lack of planning and organization as the most common reasons for ineffective meetings. At CRD, we coach managers at all levels on how to master these problem areas in order to get the most from every meeting. Based on our experience, we've compiled the "Top Seven Tips" to enhance meeting productivity.

We're confident these recommendations will help you overcome the most common mistakes when conducting meetings.

Determine a clear purpose. Many professionals admit they don't clearly determine the need for the meetings they organize. From routine staff meetings to major sessions, a

meeting without a clear purpose or objective is almost certainly doomed to failure. Before you conduct a meeting ask yourself: "What is the main purpose for this meeting?" and "What do I hope to accomplish?" By answering these questions, you will be able to eliminate routine and unproductive meetings from your schedule.

"Keep the minutes short, listing key decisions, outcomes and follow up actions with the responsible person and target date listed."



Prepare an agenda. Only one-third of the individuals who plan meetings prepare an agenda. Even fewer prepare an agenda and send it in advance to those invited to the meeting. Creating an agenda is quick and easy. Start by listing the topics you want to cover. Number them in order of priority so that the most important topics will be discussed first. That way, if you run out of time, you will have covered the most important topics. Set time limits for each topic on the agenda to prevent excessive discussions or tangents.

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We have to start meeting like this

To help you conduct more effective meetings, CRD offers a meeting planning workshop called **“Conducting Effective Meetings”** as well as individual coaching on meeting management.

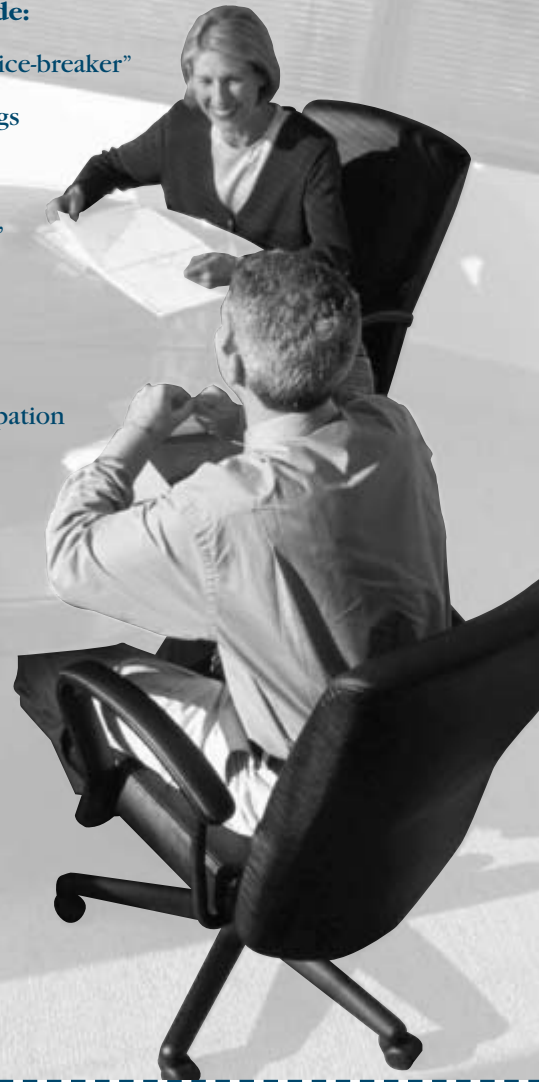
The coaching and one-day workshop are designed for people who conduct meetings or for those who attend meetings and would like to make their meeting time more productive. You will learn how to plan and conduct meetings that avoid wasted time and bring issues to resolution.

You'll also learn how to prevent unnecessary meetings, decrease the amount of time spent in meetings, conduct more productive meetings, facilitate meetings that involve participants while effectively controlling tangents and other distractions, and effective follow-up techniques to maximize meeting results. Depending on the time available, you may even have the opportunity to plan and conduct a short meeting to practice what you learn.

Session segments include:

- Program overview and “ice-breaker”
- The high cost of meetings
- Meeting alternatives
- Meeting basics: purpose, agenda, preparation
- Presentation skills
- Facilitation skills
- How to increase participation
- Adding pizzazz and excitement to meetings
- Practice session (if time allows)
- Summary and action plan for future improvement

If you need help creating more effective meetings, contact Creative Resource Development at **877-692-5146**.



Reply Card



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“Meeting Mania”

By Diane Hanson, President

It's Monday morning and you're at the 9 a.m. staff meeting. With any luck, you'll make your 11 a.m. meeting, then your 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.

Sound familiar? Just another day in Manager Land, Corporate America.

What amazes me is that managers continue to spend extra time at poorly run, poorly planned meetings when they could better spend that time planning meetings that would be far more productive. It makes more sense to fix the deficiencies than to continue the detrimental cycle of meeting mania.

Unproductive meetings do more harm than just waste time. They decrease productivity, destroy morale, diminish confidence in the leadership, increase burnout and have a negative impact on an organization's bottom line.

When planned and executed properly, effective meetings allow you to give direction, feedback and recognition. They help you work out details and clarify responsibilities. I hope you will use the provided tips in this newsletter to help you plan a whole new dimension of productivity in your next meeting. Contact us for more help.

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Determine who should attend.

Often, people are invited to attend an entire meeting even though they only need to be present for part of it. By thinking through who should attend your meeting and planning the agenda so that those who may not benefit from the entire meeting can

attend only the beginning or end, you may be able to save people a considerable amount of time. One company saved \$100,000 a year by implementing this one suggestion. You may even find that some people will benefit most by simply receiving a copy of the meeting minutes.

Assign someone to take notes.

Conducting a meeting while simultaneously attempting to take notes is unproductive. Ask someone to assist you by writing key decisions and follow up items on a flip chart as you proceed with the meeting. Also, recording the essentials of the meeting on something as visible as a flip chart or white board can serve as a reminder to people to complete the tasks assigned to them. Distributing that essential information as meeting minutes also is a good way to ensure that people will complete tasks on time.

Send out minutes after the meeting.

To keep everyone informed, include all those in

attendance and those who have a valid interest in the outcome of the meeting, even if they did not attend. Communicate special

information or follow-up items assigned for those who could not attend or who had to leave early. Avoid formal minutes that are narrative. Keep

the minutes short, listing key decisions, outcomes and follow up actions with the responsible person and target date listed.

Evaluate the effectiveness of the meeting.

Get feedback from the participants on how the meeting went and if they have suggestions for improvement. This will enable you to continuously improve your overall meeting experience. For a free meeting checklist to evaluate the effectiveness of your meetings, please call us!

Follow up. Take the time to personally follow up with those who were assigned tasks to be sure they are completing their assignments in time for your next meeting.

For more information on planning productive meetings that could impact your organization's performance and bottom line, call CRD at **877-692-5146**.

“One company saved \$100,000 a year by implementing this one suggestion.”

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How to increase meeting involvement:

Generally speaking, the more attendees actively participate in a meeting, the better the meeting outcome will be. There are several things you can do to encourage meeting participation.

Get the meeting off to a good start. Inform participants of the purpose in advance of the meeting so they can come prepared. If participants don't know each other, be sure to introduce each attendee or use an "icebreaker" to make people feel more comfortable.

Encourage participation. Tell attendees that you want and expect their participation. Ask questions, especially open-ended questions that begin with who, what, when, where, why or tell. Acknowledge people who make comments both verbally and non-verbally. Ask for input from knowledgeable people. Ask participants to share experiences.

Demonstrate the right behaviors and attitudes.

Respect the ideas of all attendees. Avoid criticizing ideas or dictating solutions and demanding agreement. Maintain a positive attitude. Be open-minded about differing opinions.

Work toward genuine consensus. Remember that solutions or ideas agreed-upon must meet group needs not any one individual's priorities. Everyone needs to be vocal in expressing opinions and concerns so that all agree to and support the final outcome. Neither silence nor a "majority rule" represent genuine consensus.

Demonstrate the right facilitation skills. Make direct eye contact. Observe the body language of participants and positively acknowledge their ideas. Summarize and restate key comments.

Achieving Consensus

Here are some tips to help you achieve genuine consensus in your meetings:

- Share information and ideas freely
- Ask questions
- Really listen (use clarifying and paraphrasing as needed)
- Be open to the ideas of others
- Challenge assumptions
- Support the contributions of others
- Address differing opinions openly
- Keep discussion on track
- Summarize the discussion

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