

Q: Our meetings have been called “Corporate Sominex”. How can I make our meetings more effective and engaging?

Meetings have become the bane of business. How many of you have gone to a meeting and left asking yourself: “*What was the point of that? Why was I invited? Will any actions take place as a result of this meeting?*” Sometimes just getting people to meetings is a trick in itself. One company I worked with forced late arrivers to sign a song: *incentivize promptness through embarrassment*. Back in the 90s the amount and quality of food offered to employees at Microsoft determined how many people showed up for a meeting: *Incentivize attendance through food*.

So what is the cost to business when meetings are ineffective? Results from a recent national survey stated 69% of all meetings are considered unproductive. Factor in the average middle class income and the average number of meetings we sit in on each day, the cost to business for unproductive meetings is \$44 per employee per day. That means a company with 200 employees could be losing \$2.3 million annually in unproductive meetings. Wow!

Office politics, laziness and avoiding accountability are why we have ineffective, boring meetings. Well-run effective meetings inspire engagement, drive decisions and produce accountability for results. Here are sound ideas for how to make your meetings engaging and effective: *(for more resources on effective meetings visit: www.missionfaciliators.com/meetings.)*

Meeting Preparation

- Establish doable goals. This will determine the meeting focus, agenda and who should attend.
- Make sure you need a meeting. Since 65% of all meetings are not called for making decisions, can you accomplish your goals through email, SharePoint or other communication medium?

- Determine who must attend and what you want their involvement to be: *Brainstorming, helping make a decision or providing feedback to an issue or initiative?*
- Distribute reading materials 48 hours prior to the meeting. Attach a standard agenda that clarifies the reason for the meeting, desired outcome, who's attending and why.

During the Meeting

- Establish and follow meeting code of conduct.
- Review the anticipated outcomes and agenda.
- Facilitator keeps discussion on track.
- Avoid PowerPoint presentations. They distract more than they engage.
- Involve each participant in the discussion by calling out quieter individuals and limiting air time for those who easily dominate the conversation.
- Determine next step actions by clarifying who "owns" the actions and when they are to be completed.

After the Meeting

- Publish action item list within 24 hours.
- "Owners" of action items schedule time in their calendar to complete their items.

Since 80% of time in meetings is devoted to less than 20% of a company's long-term value we have a huge opportunity that doesn't cost a dime. Without having to lay people off or cut expenses, companies can see real improvement in productivity by making meetings more effective and engaging.

Sign up for the free webinar: **Corporate Sominex: How to Make Boring Meetings Effective and Engaging** by visiting www.missionfacilitators.com