

MEETINGS THAT MATTER



We asked the project management community - How do you ensure attendance and full engagement at project meetings?

Here are their answers:

STAY FOCUSED

“Don't waste people's time. Make sure the meeting has a clear purpose and intended outcome. Use an agenda, distribute it in advance and stick to it. Unless it's a work session, participants should come prepared to report on work progress-not meet to accomplish the work.”

-John Bates, PMP, project manager, Abbttech, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

ENCOURAGE AND EMPOWER

“I recommend three steps.

- Develop an objective that explains why attendees were called to the meeting and how their expertise can contribute to it. This shows their input will be important to creating a solution and/or making a decision.
- Let team members express themselves so they will start to come up with ideas easily. The project manager just has to moderate the conversations and try to join the puzzle pieces to reach an outcome.
- When the meeting is about to end, give team members the opportunity to ask questions. This last step will again demonstrate that you are eager to listen and support your team.”

-Fernando Remolina, PMP, senior project manager, Damen Shiprepair and Conversion, Willemstad, Curaçao

A HUNGER TO SUCCEED

“You can increase participation by making meetings a social gathering-sometimes even with food. When I was leading a 14-week capital expenditure project aimed at upgrading the power distribution network across a factory, I visited each project site in the factory in the initial stages to note the progress. But it was time-consuming and laborious. So, each evening at the same time and place, I started providing snacks to all the team members. It was a daily social gathering where we discussed and solved most of the project's issues”

-Ajan Paul, CAPM, associate manager, technical, ITC Ltd., Chennai, India

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

“My organization has clear 'rules of the game' to reinforce that meetings are important and attendance is necessary. These rules include working together as strategic partners, treating everyone with respect and coming to meetings prepared to participate. We take a play-all-out-or-leave approach. If attendance or engagement is lagging, then ask questions to find out what's going on and try to reinforce why the meeting is important and what your expectations are.”

-Staci Jansma, production manager, Yoko Consulting, McLean, Virginia, USA

RIGHT FROM THE START

“The secrets of successful meetings are right people, right time and right agenda. We use the stakeholder mapping technique, then we find the common interest to the project by asking effective questions. This helps to identify and prioritize the right people and enlist them for the meeting. Finding the right time to meet is simple: Schedule the meeting around the people who are most important to achieving that particular meeting's objectives. The meeting agenda list should signal a clear message to each participant: They are going to benefit by attending this meeting. Whenever people feel an event adds value, they will be curious and eager to learn more.”

-Sherin Devassy, PMP, functional IT project manager, Thomson

SHOW OF SUPPORT

“I ensure effective meetings by tailoring my delivery to match the learning styles of people on my team. Some comprehend better by hearing information, while others are more visual. For instance, during training meetings, I might have visual aids along with verbal explanations of the same material and distribute it based on each team member's learning style.”

-Lauren Moment, PMP, senior project manager, Design to Delivery Inc., Denver, Colorado, USA

CUSTOMIZE CONTRIBUTIONS

“Having attendees play various roles such as scribe or timekeeper-helps ensure everyone stays engaged. If a team member consistently doesn't contribute, I find out why in a private meeting. For example, a team member once confided that she was terrified to speak in front of people. I was able to encourage her by explaining what I thought she could bring to the team. It was eye-opening for me because I didn't realize she was scared. I could have assumed she was just disengaged.”

-Ashaki Sorrell, project manager, Michigan First Credit Union, Detroit, Michigan, USA

Source: PM NETWORK