

Welcome back! Here's an article for you to read and consider. You can answer the questions, below, and engage in a discussion (via the Discussion Board).

If you think that agendas, minutes, and chairpeople in meetings are out, think again. As companies seek to make more effective use of their staff's time, 'old-fashioned' and formal features are making a big comeback in the meeting room, reports Janine Adler.

In the past, companies tried to encourage the creativity of their staff through flexible, informal meeting formats. You know the kind of thing: no agendas, no chair people, and people entered and left meetings as it suited them. This trend was probably most popular back in the late 1990s. But when the global slowdown in economic performance came, most companies had to start thinking more about their costs.

"It was really quite common for meetings to go on for hours and then for everyone to get up and leave without really knowing what had been decided", says Aaron Blumfeld, a lecturer in business administration.

A company's staff is one of its major costs, and staff meetings are very expensive for a company. There is now a trend among large companies to reintroduce structure into meetings to make better use of time, adds Blumfeld.

Some CEOs see the task of making meetings more efficient as so important that they are taking personal responsibility for making sure that the job gets done.

Lynn Rossmann is CEO of Luxes AG, a subsidiary of Hamilton-Luxes Corp. She spent time looking at ways of making meetings more focused. In the end, she decided that the good old-fashioned meeting format with a chairperson and an agenda was the right one for her company.

"If you want to hold a meeting at Luxes, you have to have a chairperson and an agenda. It's not that I like bureaucracy - I'm just getting people to use their time more effectively", states Rossmann.

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- Are the meetings you attend formal or informal?
- Can you think of other ways to make meetings more effective? What are the norms in your company?
- In addition to the advantages and disadvantages of formal and informal meetings mentioned in the article, what can you think of?

New Vocabulary / Notes