

Always try to make this approach in a place where the other person can get to his/her calendar easily. Useless to get verbal agreement and then lose it to reality. By the way, as you discuss the meeting, notice the response to your request. Use it as an indicator of how he/she anticipates the meeting, and use those clues in mapping your Fore-Thought Chart.

Through a Secretary

- *Priorities and goals*

Think *first* about the secretary's priorities and goals. Her/his job is to keep the boss's schedule workable and to protect him/her from overload or uncomfortable situations. This protects the secretary from an irate boss, so it really matters.

Therefore, secretaries want some information up front; how much time, what day would you like to *start* talking about (you rarely get your first preference), and probably something of what it's about, since some bosses like their secretaries to screen such requests and/or consult with the boss before giving appointments.

These priorities and considerations are at the top of the secretary's self-interest column, and you know that her/his self-interest needs to be satisfied before she/he can be receptive to yours.

- *Personal Needs*

A secretary also needs the affirmation that her/his job is important and that you appreciate that fact—and them. Secretaries need for you to see and value their individual identities and to treat them as such.

A major turnoff to any secretary is being treated like a cipher. (Sounds obvious? Ask a secretary how often it happens!) A secretary on your side as you try to schedule can be enormously helpful; a hostile one can find many ways to block your entrance.

Through a Familiar Secretary

For those who have difficulty making small talk:

Begin by taking a moment to share pleasantries, asking about a holiday, etc. Always learn a secretary's name! Remember what you learned about her/him on your last encounter (vacation in the Bahamas, plays Softball on the company team, new baby, etc.) and ask for an update. Share something of yourself as well (comment on the season, a news or personal event, etc.) before you state your case. Then:

"I need about thirty **minutes** with X." *Before* you say when, ask