

Title:

How to Start Meetings on Time

Word Count:

484

Summary:

One of the most aggravating problems with meetings is people who arrive late. This either delays starting the meeting or undermines the value of work performed at the beginning. Here's how to fix it.

Keywords:

effective meetings, bad meetings, business meeting, facilitation, steve kaye, facilitator, leadership, one great meeting

Article Body:

Here's how to begin on time.

1) Make it part of the agenda.

Put the arrival time on the agenda. For example, for a meeting scheduled to start at 9:00 AM, you could put "8:50 AM - - - Arrive at the Meeting" at the top of the agenda.

An arrival time is useful because it allows everyone time to socialize, obtain coffee, or organize materials before the meeting. It also ensures everyone is present at the scheduled starting time.

2) Offer a treat.

Provide coffee, juice, or a vegetable platter before the meeting. This can be especially welcome for all-day meetings attended by people from other locations. It provides a time for socializing between visitors and it may also provide a meal for those who came from out of town.

But here's the catch: offer the treat only during the arrival time. Then put it away once the meeting starts.

And another point: serve snacks that make people more productive (such as fruit) instead of stuff that fills them up and deadens their brains (such as donuts).

3) Set an example.

Arrive at your meetings before they are scheduled to start. You can use the time to make sure that the room is set up properly. And you can greet the attendees as they arrive. This helps you appear in control of the meeting process from the beginning.

And of course, arrive at everyone else's meetings on time.

4) Make it easy.

Schedule your meetings to begin at odd times, such as 9:10 AM. This allows everyone who was in a one-hour meeting that began at 8:00 AM to travel to your meeting. Similarly, end your meetings at least ten minutes before the next hour so that the attendees have time to travel to their next meeting.

5) Sell promptness.

Send a memo or E-mail stressing the importance of arriving on time. Call key attendees to remind them about the starting time for the meeting. Give people a reason to be on time, such as ask a top executive to make an opening remark.

Bonus idea: let the executive leave after making the opening remark. These people are very busy.

6) Expect promptness.

If it is your company (or department, etc.), you can tell people that they are expected to be on time. Then enforce this by making it a performance dimension. Similarly, arrive on time to demonstrate your commitment. And when necessary, hold a private coaching session with those who need help understanding your expectations.

7) Be realistic.

Realize that some people are beyond coaching because of their attitude or relationship with you. Also, recognize that it is impossible to guarantee that everyone will always arrive on time at every meeting. There will always be emergencies, surprises, and those few who refuse to cooperate.

Bonus point: Ask that people tell you if they expect to be late. If necessary, reschedule the meeting to accommodate them.

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