



Productive Meetings

(Adapted by Dominic Butler)

Whether you're meeting with partners, vendors or employees, **showcase** your boardroom brilliance with these meeting musts.

Determine the objective. A clear goal will **set the tone** for the meeting and determine its direction. Your goal should be specific and measurable. If you're expecting attendees to brainstorm, ask each participant to arrive with a list of ideas.

Ask yourself if a meeting is actually necessary. Meetings can be expensive. To calculate the precise cost, multiply the hourly wage of each person present by the length of the gathering. If your objective can be met through e-mail, conference call, Skype, or even a quick one-on-one discussion, skip the meeting altogether.

Invite decision-makers. The most effective meetings involve **stakeholders** to ensure decisions can be made immediately. If a key decision-maker is unavailable, ask a subordinate to attend. Ideally, this person will be able to speak for their supervisor, and--at the very least--take notes and report back.

Stand up. Routine meetings designed **to touch base** with employees and discuss status reports can usually be accomplished in 15 minutes or less. You'll be more likely to keep the meeting short and to the point if everyone remains standing.

Schedule strategically. If you want each meeting participant to be fully engaged, avoid Monday mornings, when everyone is catching up on e-mail. Also avoid Friday afternoons, when employees are trying **to wrap up** the week and looking forward to the weekend. Schedule meetings on a day and time when participants are most likely to engage.

Set a time limit and stick to it. Meetings that drag on for hours cause attendees to lose patience and focus. **Attention spans** are short, and time is valuable. The most productive meetings start on time and end on time.

Prioritize the agenda. Don't leave the most important topics for last. To ensure that the highest priority objectives are met, discuss the most **pertinent** issues first. That way, if someone needs to step away or leave the meeting early, you'll still have accomplished your main goals.

Stick to the agenda. The agenda is an outline--a framework--to keep everyone on topic and to maintain the meeting's flow. The agenda should be kept to one page and should not include anything other than main topics of conversation. Sidebar conversations waste valuable time. If participants insist on talking out of turn, step in and suggest that they talk after the meeting or schedule a separate discussion. Then segue immediately back to the topic at hand.

Deliver concepts through stories. When you present a group with key concepts or new ideas, especially models that are difficult to understand, explain why they should care. Frame the issue with a quick story and use examples.

Wrap it up clearly. At the end of the meeting, quickly **reiterate** any decisions, deadlines, and clarify any follow-up action required. All meeting participants should understand exactly what is expected of them. Schedule any follow-up meetings immediately.



Exercise 1

Match the vocabulary from the text with the synonymous words or phrases.

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1) To showcase – | A) People who own shares in the company |
| 2) To set the tone – | B) To make quick contact |
| 3) Stakeholders – | C) To Conclude |
| 4) To touch base – | D) To say again |
| 5) To wrap up – | E) To display |
| 6) Attention span – | F) Important |
| 7) Pertinent – | G) How long people can concentrate for |
| 8) Reiterate – | H) To create the atmosphere |

Exercise 2

Complete these sentences with the phrases from the text used in exercise one.

- 1) The most important people in the meeting were the
- 2) John asked an extremely question during the board meeting.
- 3) The chairman needed to the main points, as there was a lot of information.
- 4) We have a meeting every day so that we can with the other departments.
- 5) The chairman by asking us to switch off our phones and listen carefully.
- 6) John's is very short if we hold our meetings too late in the day.
- 7) The meeting was about the best way The company's new products.
- 8) I hope that we can this meeting by no later than 18.00.

Exercise 3

Match the sentence halves so that they make perfect sense.

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|--|---|
| 1) We really need to touch base... | A) if we want to leave by six. |
| 2) Nothing is more pertinent... | B) I have a very short attention span. |
| 3) The relaxed way the meeting started... | C) about the annual profit. |
| 4) We could showcase... | D) to talk about the latest product. |
| 5) If I drink coffee I have a very short attention span. | E) than resolving this problem. |
| 6) The stakeholders seemed quite worried... | F) our new line of clothing on our website. |
| 7) This is very important so | G) I will reiterate it at the end of the meeting. |
| 8) We must wrap this up soon... | H) really set the tone for the day. |



Answers

Exercise 1

1.E 2.H 3.A 4.B 5.C 6.G 7.F 8.D

Exercise 2

1) Stakeholders

2) Pertinent

3) Reiterate

4) Touch base

5) Set the tone

6) Attention span

7) Showcase

8) Wrap up

Exercise 3

1.D 2.E 3.H 4.F 5.B 6.C 7.G 8.A