

## 8.5 tips for better meetings

Meetings. Do you love or loathe them?

Whatever your answer, you know that sooner or later you'll be attending one! According to a survey, 45% of us are blighted by "having a meeting for the sake of having a meeting".

Ring any bells? I've attended a few meetings in my time. Some excellent. Some not so!

I thought I'd jot down some random thoughts on how to have better meetings!

And I'd love to know what you think too!

Here goes...

### **Is the meeting necessary?**

If you're thinking of calling a meeting, ask yourself if the meeting is absolutely necessary. Common sense? Of course it is but...well you probably know the rest of that sentence.

### **Is it essential that YOU attend?**

The meeting might be justified, but is it really essential for you to be there? I spoke to someone a few days ago from a very sizeable corporate brand who told me of internal meetings he'd attended where he didn't know several people around the table. Even by the end of the meeting, he still wasn't sure why they were there! If your attendance is crucial, then maybe you could leave as soon as 'your bit' has been concluded?

### **But...**

A quick meeting can be much more appropriate than hiding behind a stream of emails. Sometimes there's no substitute for face to face communication, so calling a colleague or two for a quick group chat can be the very best way to exchange views - and make decisions.

### **Preparation**



How well prepared will you be? Do you need to check a website? LinkedIn profiles? Read a report? Read some previous email threads? Avoid 'winging it' – never a good plan!

### **Your mindset**

To get the best from any meeting, anywhere, you must ensure you're in the right mindset. Firstly, know 100% what you want to get out of the meeting. Then, visualise having a great meeting! Run through it in your mind. Visualise where you will be sitting, what you will be saying – and the positive responses from others. Visualise a fabulous outcome. You'll be training your brain to make it happen.

Secondly, think about your demeanour before and during the meeting. As my industry colleague Simon Buzza commented recently, cynics and pessimists suck the energy out of situations and people. They can drag down group morale and make a challenging situation lots worse. Optimists on the other hand can raise morale and lift spirits. How will you act at your next meeting?

### **Get there early**

I'm not one for those late 'power entrances' that used to be suggested by some gurus a few years back. My view is to get there early, sit where you're most comfortable, build rapport as others arrive - and notice...

### **Notice the others**

Remember how you know the exact mood of your partner, child or best friend when they walk into the room, before they've uttered a word? Their expression tells all. So it is in business. You'll get useful clues by noticing the demeanour of others as they join the meeting. Enthusiastic? Lethargic? Remember you'll give clues too.

### **Get things done**

This tip is particularly dependent on the type of meeting, but in general a good meeting should be around 60% -70% forward looking and only 30%-40% 'rear view'. This might mean circulating information beforehand to cut down the time spent 'rear viewing' at the meeting itself. The overall tone of the meeting should be "OK, that's what's happened, now what actions can we take..."

### **At ease**

Do you manage a team? How comfortable are they in giving you their input at meetings? Are they at ease? Are they saying what they're really thinking? That's the aim. If you think you're not getting the full story and they're NOT at ease, you'll need to ask the reasons behind that, individually later perhaps rather than at the meeting itself!

I'd be delighted to hear your additional thoughts and tips around meetings.

Until then

# Leigh

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