Suggestions for Your Next Meeting

Regardless of whether your next meeting is a department meeting, a committee meeting, a board meeting, or a meeting with the students in your lab, consider putting this on the agenda:

♦ (Un)Productivity Tips for Meetings

Even if you provided no more explanation than having this on the agenda, you would end up having a productive and spirited discussion among those participating (and it wouldn’t be necessary for you to stand on your briefcase or jump up and down on the table). Whew. I know that’s a relief.

But let’s say that you would like to do more with this idea. Here are a few suggestions:

• Ask people to write their pet peeves about meetings on index cards, which you have provided. Give each person 5 or 6 cards.

• After your folks have had time to jot down some of their ideas (and believe me, this won’t take long), ask them to partner with someone else and find out if they had any duplicates. And they will.

• Now have them partner with another pair of people and again, collapse the duplicates.

• Each group should now have 4 – 6 pet peeves that have been generated by the group (this starts to remove fear of “ownership” of the idea).

• Capture the ideas on a white board or chart paper and the entire group will now have a working document – because the “not-to-do’s” are listed right there in front of them.
• A fair amount of discussion is likely to ensue. There will be individuals who want to “defend” a particular practice (e.g., having a meeting just because it is a certain day of the week even if there isn’t a reason for the meeting; reading out materials that were sent ahead of time “because a lot of people don’t read ahead of time.”)

• Allow others to respond to these points. In my experience, there will be a person who will say, “Well, the reason we don’t read the stuff ahead of time is because we know it will get read to us in the meeting, so why read it twice?”

• You will have plenty of opportunity as the leader in this meeting to bring the discussion back around so that it is positive and provides actions for people to take when scheduling, preparing for, and leading meetings.

• If you prefer, you could hand out the *Top Ten (Un)Productivity Tips for Meetings* (see following page) and allow the meeting participants to read and respond (please do not read to them!)

• Then ask, “So, if these are the unproductivity tips, what would the productivity tips be for our unit, department, committee, ______?” The group will then participate in creating smart practices for the future.

   It’s all good, as they say 😊

If you would like to purchase the complete Get a Plan! Guide® to Waayy Better Meetings, it’s right here: [http://www.getaplanguide.com/publications/waayy-better-meetings/](http://www.getaplanguide.com/publications/waayy-better-meetings/).

Note: You could also license it for your entire department or organization. Just ask us about that option!
Top Ten (Un)Productivity Tips for Meetings

1. Read from a handout or other document that has been distributed.

2. Make announcements about various events, happenings, meetings, or other occurrences coming in the future. Invite others to also make announcements.

3. Avoid having an agenda – or if you must, do not distribute it ahead of time.

4. If you are unable to completely avoid having an agenda, be sure to deviate from it.

5. Start late since not everyone is there yet (or even if they are all there). End later than was previously announced.

6. Allow one or two people to dominate the meeting, preferably each and every time the group meets.

7. Meet often and regularly, especially when the only reason you are meeting is because this is the regular time you meet.

8. Invite everyone and their brother (sister) to meetings. Be as inclusive as possible, just in case someone might have input.

9. Eschew technology that would afford a meeting without people having to travel, especially for short meetings.

10. Encourage veering off topic in meetings.

Note: There are many (MANY) more (un)productivity tips for meetings, but these are a good set to get you started on driving everyone crazy, reducing morale and overall job performance.