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Inspiring professionals & business owners to get results

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How to Prepare for a Productive Meeting

What is the best way to make sure you have a productive meeting? Hands down, the key is preparation. There are five key elements that contribute to the success or failure of a meeting. They are: Point, Result, People, Concerns, and Process.

Point – Before you ever convene a meeting, ask yourself, “What is the point?” and “Why do we need this meeting?” Then determine the purpose, which is basically a statement of intent. The person conducting the meeting needs to be clear about the purpose and to share it with those who attend. If this is not done, the meeting will probably go off track and the goal will not be accomplished.

Once you know why you will meet, then focus on the details. How soon does the meeting need to be scheduled? Who should attend? When and where will you meet? Then reserve the room and any needed equipment. Finally, prepare and distribute the agenda before the meeting date.

Result – What will you have produced by the end of the meeting? It depends on your purpose. The product may be ideas from a brainstorming session. It may be a decision. Or perhaps it is the assignment of particular tasks to individuals in the group.

Your result(s) may be tangible or intangible. Do you need to demonstrate a concrete deliverable, such as a document? Is the product intellectual, as with information or knowledge? Is it relational, as in improved team communication?

People – Who should attend? To determine who should be involved, ask yourself which individuals will be impacted by decisions made at the meeting? What perspectives will those who attend bring to the meeting? Whose buy-in is so important that they should be represented?

Based on the purpose, what is the best size for your group? Wilkinson makes specific recommendations about size. When attempting to resolve an issue, the group should be small (3-9 people) so everyone is heard and perspectives are explored. When creating a new solution or method, he suggests 7-16 people. For strategic planning, he recommends 12-24, and for a status review, the limitations are determined by logistics.

Concerns – Good preparation means considering concerns and issues that could have an impact on the success of the meeting. What could hinder the group from achieving the results? By identifying these concerns before the meeting, you can plan adjustments to the process to accomplish your purpose. Anticipating such issues, attendees can gather information and be ready to contribute.

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In larger organizations, sometimes a briefing is held before the scheduled meeting. There are advantages to this, such as increased buy-in and commitment. Additionally, attendees can have a heads-up, so they are more prepared. They may even agree in advance to certain agenda items.

Process – The process depends on the point, results, people, and concerns. Process produces results. It is about the agenda and the methods the group will use to achieve its purpose.

An agenda is an important tool that aids the process. Because it puts order to the business to be conducted, it can reduce the amount of meeting time needed. The agenda also keeps everyone on track.

By carefully considering the 5 elements of meeting preparation, you can increase the likelihood that your meeting will be a productive one. Start using these tips today and see what a difference it makes.

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About the Author

Patricia Beaugard, M.S., is an Executive Coach and Trainer and a Certified Professional Behavioral Analyst. She works with managers and business owners who want to communicate more effectively with peers, employees and customers. Pat teaches them proven techniques to identify and adapt to different communication styles, so they can be more effective. She has managed staff and operations in for-profit and non-profit organizations.

Pat offers one-to-one coaching, corporate training, workshops, and teleclasses and is available to speak at your organization. Visit her website at: www.patbeaugard.com . To contact her, call 360-929-5633 or email pat@patbeaugard.com .

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