

The 10 Commandments of Meetings

1. Ask yourself: is a meeting the best way to achieve the goal? Invite only decision makers, information providers and those who need to know.
 - a. Be sure all essential participants (decision makers) can and will attend
 - b. All meetings must have a clear objective, with an understood desired outcome.
 - c. The agenda must include the objective.
2. Use a Consent Agenda*, which requires only that the chair of the meeting ask if all attendees accept it. If no attendee wants to discuss the items on the consent agenda, it is automatically accepted, and the meeting proceeds to items that need discussion.
3. Announce the meeting and agenda in advance, leaving sufficient notice for all participants to read background materials and otherwise prepare. The agenda must include:
 - a. The meeting's objective or purpose;
 - b. Time allotted to discuss each topic;
 - c. Speakers responsible for each topic; and
 - d. Background information and any preparatory material.
4. Start on time. This shows respect for those who are punctual, and encourages a culture of prompt, efficient meetings.
5. Participants must:
 - a. Arrive on time;
 - b. Be prepared - read and understand the background documents or issues;
 - c. Stay on topic;
 - d. Participate in a positive manner; and
 - e. Avoid side conversations.
6. The meeting leader must:
 - a. Keep attendees on topic (move important items not on the agenda to a "parking lot" for future action);
 - b. Encourage participation from all attendees;
 - c. Discourage dominators;
 - d. Keep to the schedule; and
 - e. Direct conversations that apply only to a small subgroup of attendees to be handled outside the meeting.
7. End with action points based on decisions made at the meeting. Each action point must have:
 - a. A clear description of the goal;
 - b. A specific person(s) who are accountable for accomplishing it; and
 - c. A specific completion date.
8. Ask for an evaluation of the meeting:
 - a. What went well; and
 - b. What needs to be changed for future meetings.
9. End on time.

10. The meeting's leader is responsible for follow-up on the action points generated.

A **consent agenda contains issues that need only a perfunctory acceptance, and thus can be handled in advance of the meeting. These include minutes of the last meeting and reports previously circulated for comment and requiring only an acceptance vote. Any attendee may ask to have an item removed from the consent agenda. It is then placed in the regular agenda for discussion and vote. If no attendee requests removal the consent agenda, items are automatically accepted.*