
RECIPE FOR EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Select the appropriate vessel

Find a comfortable and accessible place for your meeting. Set it up so that everyone can see and hear each other and can see the flip chart.

Gather the utensils

Flip-chart paper and easel, markers, tape, handouts.

Assemble the ingredients

Contact all the members to be sure they know about the meeting and remind them of any tasks they agreed to do, particularly if they are responsible for part of the meeting. Make sure the meeting will have a recorder to take and distribute minutes.

Blend until smooth

Allow time for introductions, particularly with new groups or if new people join existing groups. Even if everyone knows each other, allow for “check-ins” to help people feel connected, leave behind their preoccupations and get ready to work.

Mix equal parts of each

Be sure everyone gets to participate so there is shared ownership of the group’s work.

Stir vigorously

Keep the meeting lively and interactive. Avoid long presentations. When possible, distribute written reports ahead of time so they can be discussed (not read) during the meeting.

Add spices

Use specific techniques like brainstorming, small group discussion, straw polls, and “round-robin” reporting as needed. This helps to assure participation and helps keep the energy flowing. Consider these as alternatives to general discussions that may lack clear direction.

Don’t overcook

If the meeting is going to run over ninety minutes or so, consider a brief break, perhaps with refreshments. Set a time to adjourn and stick to it.

Divide into equal portions

Delegate responsibilities and share work evenly. Make sure people understand their tasks. Pair people up on difficult assignments. Try to give everyone something to do.

Clean up the kitchen

Wrap up the meeting with a quick evaluation. This gives you immediate feedback on how things went and reduces griping outside the meeting.

Season to taste and serve

Use the evaluations to adjust how you plan the next meeting. If you pay attention and adjust your facilitation style to the needs of the group, your meetings can be efficient, effective and enjoyable.

*From the kitchen of Peter Hille, Director,
Brushy Fork Institute of Berea College.
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