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FOUR WAYS TO MAKE MEETINGS WORK



Alexander Tuff is a Principal and the President of Winged Keel Group in New York City. Connect: [linkedin.com/in/alexandertuff](https://www.linkedin.com/in/alexandertuff)



We’ve all suffered the malaise—death by a million meaningless internal meetings.

Internal meetings can be directionless, leaderless, time-wasters that kill productivity and cause dread and fear among employees.

Or, they can be highly functioning productive meetings—if you plan carefully.

These four steps will turn your meetings into must-haves.

1. Prepare for the Meeting

Select one leader to call for the meeting, prepare an agenda—with any special notes or presentations attached—and oversee the proceedings. Everyone else attending, meanwhile, should review these materials. A meeting coordinator can help with logistics.

2. Start the Meeting

On time! Like it or not, the clock tick-tocks success. If your train is five minutes late, it sets you back. Same with meetings. Encourage punctuality by placing a “fine bucket” in the meeting room and requiring latecomers to deposit \$5. Record their rudeness next to the name on the notes distributed to everyone after the meeting—I guarantee they will get it. Next, before you get into the meat of the meeting, state the purpose, goals, and allocated time for the meeting. Why are you all in a room together?

3. Manage the Meeting

Clarity should prevail, from point A to point B. If someone presents something ambiguous, speak up! “When you said, ‘Conquer the world,’ do you really mean, ‘Sell 100,000 units by year-end?’” Strict time checks every 10 to 15 minutes will keep the meeting aligned and on schedule. Watch closely for digressions and move the fluffy stuff off the table in favor of relevant topics. A “parking lot” can hold important, but irrelevant points, while a note on follow-up meetings optimize everyone’s time. Appoint a scribe to capture all key points made.

4. Close the Meeting

Do. Not. Look. At. The. Door. Instead, use the last burst of energy to review the Next Steps. What needs to be done? Who is responsible? And when will it be completed by? Allow yourself a buffer zone of 5 to 10 minutes, ending the meeting early so that loose threads can be tied up and everyone can get back to their desks. Within 24 hours, send meeting notes, copying all necessary parties.

The Prep, Start, Manage, and Close format will make your meetings more productive and could begin to bend the company’s culture away from death by a million meaningless internal meetings. Good luck!

Four Stages of Running an Effective Meeting

PREPARE for the Meeting	START the Meeting	MANAGE the Meeting	CLOSE the Meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AGENDA: Always have an agenda with topics and allocated times Bring in PRIOR MEETING NOTES ASSIGN ROLES: Meeting coordinator and meeting scribe MATERIAL: Meeting materials should be sent before the meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start the meeting ON TIME At the start of each meeting, define: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PURPOSE and goals of the meeting Total TIME SCHEDULED for the meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CLARIFY, CLARIFY, CLARIFY: Meeting coordinator is expected to get full clarity from the group TIME CHECK: Meeting coordinator to perform “time checks” every 10–15 minutes TABLE OFF-TOPIC DISCUSSION: Manage digressions and table off-topic conversation for later 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify NEXT STEPS and “to-dos” Get meeting FEEDBACK END EARLY: Shoot to end the meeting ten minutes early SEND MEETING MINUTES to all participants and absentees