

# EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT MEETINGS: THE DISCIPLINE OF LEADERSHIP

By Jeffrey Remsik, President/CEO  
Bottom Line Marketing & Public Relations

Productive management meetings are a basic fundamental step in developing a management team that works well together and produces results.

Management meetings are crucial, regardless of company size. Without effective meetings, companies:

- Waste precious time and energy with daily "hallway meetings."
- Struggle with misinformed or uninformed co-workers.
- Fail to develop and cultivate a positive, company-wide culture.
- Miss opportunities to execute on good ideas.
- Provide an opportunity for attendees to share a recent company success story early in the meeting.
- Work to make sure everyone is heard. If the facilitator does all the talking, it's not a meeting, it's a lecture.
- Help everyone recognize that "alignment is more important than total agreement." Debates can be healthy.
- Summarize the sessions, delegate assignments and confirm the date and time of the next meeting.
- Ask the attendees periodically to critique the meeting. "Was this meeting meaningful and what can we do to make the meetings even more meaningful?"

## Leadership Discipline

Effective management meetings require the discipline of leadership, as well as an efficient process to organize, conduct and follow-up. For example:

- Pick a specific day with firm starting and ending times. Begin and end the meeting on time, without exception and regardless of whether someone is late or absent.
- Identify a person who will facilitate the meeting, usually the owner or general manager.
- Create an agenda by asking each attendee to bring a short list of what they wish to present and hand it to the facilitator prior to the start of the meeting.
- Seat all attendees so they can see one another. Everyone should be prepared to discuss the agenda items they submitted.
- Be firm in handling the meeting process. Set the tone by keeping initial comments positive. Stay on task and avoid rambling discussions that related to the agenda items.

## Limit Attendees

It's important to limit the attendees to only those who should really be there. Each person you add significantly increases the amount of time you'll need. We can demonstrate this by the formula  $(n = \text{number of attendees}) \times (n - 1) = \text{potential conversation interchanges}$ . For example, say you have three attendees: A, B, and C. Person A can initiate an exchange with B; B with A; A with C; C with A; B with C; and C with B. This calculates as  $3 \times 2 = 6$ .

If you add a fourth, the formula changes to  $4 \times 3 = 12$ . By adding just one more person, you might double the required time for the meeting. Add a fifth, and you're looking at 20 potential conversation interchanges. Add a sixth, and it goes up to 30. It's easy to see how meetings can last so long.

## Communicate Decisions Promptly

Remember that while your management team is in a meeting, employees are wondering what is

**BOTTOM LINE**  
Marketing & Public Relations  
600 W. Virginia St., Suite 100  
Milwaukee, WI 53204-1551  
414-270-3000 414-270-3015 fax  
[www.blmpr.com](http://www.blmpr.com)

going on behind closed doors. Don't allow these sessions to become a big mystery. Promptly communicate any changes and/or decisions made during a meeting to the rest of the organization.

These tested techniques will help to make meetings that are meaningful and advance your company's success. Your meetings will become even more productive. Stay the course, and the results will pay off.

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