

## Things to Consider to Avoid a Time Vacuum for Your Meetings

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Meetings are intended to effect decisions that move you closer to achieving your objectives. There are productive meetings and there are time vacuums. Productive meetings propel your business forward. Unproductive meetings consume time, energy, and produce no positive outcome.

To run an effective meeting, there are three key success factors:

### 1. Clear agenda

An agenda sets the direction for a meeting. It needs to be focused and provides a logical sequence for discussion purposes. Identify the objectives of the meeting, gather input from the key participants and allocate time for each agenda item. Adequate time allocation is critical to ensure that there is sufficient discussion to move things forward. Lengthen the time or split the agenda into two meetings if necessary. Distribute the agenda at least two days before the meeting to allow time for preparation. Be clear on expectations so that time is not wasted at the meeting.

### 2. Disciplined facilitator

A disciplined facilitator is mindful of the meeting objectives; he or she adheres to the agenda and time allocated. The facilitator must be skillful in steering meeting participants to stay on course, has excellent listening skills and is quick on synthesizing information. For a meeting on contentious issues, it is important to have an impartial third party to be a facilitator. This helps to set an objective tone and mitigate animosity. A good facilitator encourages a healthy exchange of information.

### 3. Participative discussion

The intention of a meeting is to have interested parties table their concerns and come to a decision. Personalities could get in the way when participants are not able to speak up and be heard. The outspoken person would monopolize the time and interrupt constantly. A confrontational individual would disagree with everything while a quiet observer would remain silent throughout the meeting. An experienced facilitator is capable of reading the dynamics and actively encouraging participation from all participants.

Use these tips to avoid meetings that are time vacuums and unproductive. Otherwise, you will create frustration and are a disincentive for future participation in your meetings.