

### Business Essentials: Increase Meeting Productivity with Four Simple Tactics

#### So, What Can We Do?

There are a few really simple meeting tactics that will not only save you time but also help you to smash the next meeting out of the park and achieve stratospheric levels of commitment from the team.

#### Tactic 1: Start with the End in Mind

**A company should define where they want to be in the future so they can plan how to get there. The same approach can be used on a daily basis too, and it's the key behind effective, productive meetings.**

**If you need to have a meeting, first define 'why'. Write down the 'objective' of the meeting. Then:**

- Distribute an agenda to the team ahead of the meeting (this can just be an email, nothing too verbose). The agenda should include the objective at the top.
- Start the meeting by stating '*The key objective of this meeting is...*'

During the meeting make a concerted effort to keep the conversation focused on achieving the objective. If your meeting starts to stray, acknowledge the point that's being raised and call for it to be discussed 'offline'.

In defining an objective and keeping the meeting focused on it, you'll have a valuable reference point against which you can pull the meeting back in line if/when the attention starts to drift off-topic.

#### Tactic 2: Obtain Verbal Commitment

**At the end of the meeting ask each and every team member to state their actions and deadlines to the room. Listen to each attendee's actions in full, and then adjust/correct if there's a misunderstanding. It's important that *they* tell *you* their actions (rather than you telling them).**

In doing so:-

- You open the door for creativity and allow the team to add value to their understanding of the task(s) in hand. Because you've not directed actions to the team, they can now think more creatively about how to solve the associated challenges.
- You're able to double check that their understanding of the issue/task/action is the same as yours, giving you an opportunity to correct it if it's not right.
- The likelihood of the action being completed has now skyrocketed. Robert Cialdini ("*Influence, New and Expanded: The Psychology of Persuasion*" - July 2021), who literally 'wrote the book' on the art of influence and persuasion, states that people are (up to) 700% more likely to keep to a commitment if they've first said it out loud themselves.

#### Tactic 3: Obtain Written Commitment

**After the team has agreed their actions verbally, ask them to email their actions to you immediately after the meeting.** Robert Cialdini has again found that commitment is further increased if a person writes down and shares what they are going to do before doing it. Furthermore, this saves an hour of your time by not having to write and distribute actions for other meeting attendees.

#### **Tactic 4: Chase**

You probably do this already, but it's now time to leverage the value you've obtained from tactics 1-3.

**As you have the entire team's actions sitting nicely in your inbox, which have been agreed upon both verbally and on paper, make sure you send a gentle reminder ahead of the deadline date.**

Something along the lines of:

*'Hey Steve, just checking to see that you're still OK to deliver {x} on Thursday'*

You're now chasing a task that an individual **has said that they will complete**, written in their own words. You're not chasing something that you've directed/inflicted upon them. You've set the team up to succeed. They are happy because they now know what is expected and are feeling motivated because they know how to do a great job.

If any of your employees are not on track with their actions, you now have a great reference point from which to start a rational conversation about 'why' it's not on track.

#### **Finally**

The great thing is that whilst you'll probably feel uncomfortable (possibly patronising) applying these four tactics on the first couple of occasions, if you're consistent you won't even need to ask by the time meeting number three comes around. Your team will close the meeting for you, without being prompted. You'll have an inbox full of new actions before you even get back to your chair.

If you adopt these 4 tactics, you'll see results after the first meeting. You'll save yourself time, increase morale and, most importantly, your team will get more stuff done.

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