

Meetings: How to Waste Time at Work

“Meetings are indispensable when you don't want to do anything.”

- John Kenneth Galbraith

By Nancy Roman

Many people don't understand the value of wasting time at work. They're afraid of getting caught or fired for being too slack, so they work diligently through the entire workday. Now, there's a more effective way to waste your time and your team's time without getting into trouble. Call a *meeting*.

Meetings are the perfect place to waste time. They help chip away at the hours of the day. Be sure to take full advantage of this opportunity.

Following are tips to help waste time during your team meetings.

1. Meet whenever you want

Team meetings should be held whenever a team member has new information to share (or wants to catch up on the office gossip). These meetings should not have a purpose or an objective to achieve, and should not be used for decision-making and problem-solving. If you decide to use other forms of communication, such as emails or memos, remember that you will be cutting down on the time wasted during meetings

2. Include everyone in the meeting

Team meetings should follow the saying, “the more, the merrier.” All team members and anyone else who wants to participate, should

be invited to each meeting (especially those who tell great jokes and make the meetings entertaining). Try to avoid including team members who will help achieve the meeting's objective; therefore, wasting less time during the meetings.

3. Agendas are not needed

The problem with using an agenda is that it lets team members know the following:

- ◆ **The time the meeting will begin and end:** If team members know the meeting times, they will help keep the meeting on schedule.
- ◆ **The location:** If you tell team members where the meetings will be held, they will know the meeting place and will arrive early, causing the meeting to start on time.
- ◆ **The purpose of the meeting:** If team members don't know what the meeting is for, they will most likely attend out of curiosity, increasing the amount of participants and causing chaos.
- ◆ **The issues to be discussed:** If team members know what will be talked about during the meeting, they may come prepared to focus on those issues.

The lack of an agenda will lower team member's expectation for what will be accomplished during the meeting, and will ensure a relaxed pace that can waste additional time.

If you do decide to distribute an agenda, do not hand it out before the meeting or team members will come prepared. Be sure the outline is unclear, and supply a limited amount of copies so only a few participants know what's going on during the meeting.

4. Start the meeting late

Team meetings should not start on time. If you begin a meeting on time, you risk ending on time, thereby wasting less time.

Team members should not be expected to arrive prior to the start time, so it is important to wait for all members before beginning the meeting. The longer you make the prompt team members wait, the more you encourage them to arrive later and later; therefore, wasting more time during meetings. This courtesy will create positive feelings about meetings in the future.

5. Avoid meeting roles

To avoid having team meetings run effectively, stay away from assigning meeting roles and responsibilities. The following could diminish the time wasted during your meetings:

- ◆ A **team leader** would ensure the agenda and correct meeting processes were followed.
- ◆ A **timekeeper** would keep the meeting on schedule.
- ◆ A **gatekeeper** would keep the team focused on the topic at hand.

- ◆ A **scribe** would write down all agreed-upon decisions and actions, and would record target dates and who is responsible.
- ◆ A **recorder** would write out all brainstorming ideas on a flip chart.

The less you involve team members in the meeting process, the less structure there will be, thus more time will be wasted.

6. End the meeting late

Ending team meetings on time causes you to have to go back to work. The longer the meeting, the later the meeting ends, the more time you waste.

7. Do not post meeting minutes

This last step is easy. If you don't write down the action items during the meeting, you won't have minutes to publish afterwards. In addition, if you didn't have an agenda for the meeting, no one will expect minutes anyway.

Writing out and posting minutes reminds people of what they agreed to do in the meeting, which causes things to be done at work. Posting the minutes could also make team members remind and encourage each other to complete the activities.

I hope these tips help you become more productive at wasting time during your team meetings. Remember, everyone knows meetings are a huge waste of time, so use them often. With a little effort no one will ever know how little you do.