



TODAY IS Tuesday, January 27 , 2004

- HOME
- The News Journal
- Local
- Business
- Sports
- High School Sports
- Life & Leisure
- Opinion
- U.S./World
- Technology
- Obituaries
- Celebrations
- Traffic
- Weather
- School closings
- Government
- Births
- Lottery
- Police news
- Archive
- Delaware Info
- Forums
- Entertainment
- Homes
- Cars
- Jobs
- Classifieds
- Delaware Directory
- Help

Business News

need help?

Make efficient use of meeting time

By KRIS MAHER
The Wall Street Journal
01/26/2004

Every employee has to sit through boring meetings from time to time. In one recent survey, 50 percent of workers at big companies said they had attended a meeting where at least one participant fell asleep. At smaller companies, where there is typically less room to hide, the figure was 26 percent.

Poorly run meetings hurt productivity. From an individual perspective, the inability to run effective meetings can torpedo a career. Some ideas:

- Stay on the agenda. Meetings are frequently derailed when people who are anxious about being judged or offending others hold back ideas, says Chuck McPherson, president of Interactive Meeting Solutions LLC, a Santa Rosa, Calif., meeting-facilitation company. Other times, meeting leaders fail to assign future tasks to be completed by participants. He says he has seen people writing unrelated reports or doodling during meetings. "That is just an indicator that they just shouldn't be there, or they didn't know what their role was, or whoever called the meeting isn't holding people accountable during the meeting," he says.
- Think twice about PowerPoint. An overreliance on visual aids can detract from a meeting's effectiveness. Instead, meeting leaders should work personally to keep sessions lively and interesting.
- Be clear about the purpose of the meeting, so that everyone, including participants, shows up prepared. Do you intend to just relay information, or do you need to solve a problem? "Too often, people think of meetings as one-way streets," says John Real, president of OpenMic Co., a Littleton, Colo., Web and teleconferencing company. In many cases, meeting leaders are afraid to admit that they don't have the answer to a problem, Real says. In fact, presenting a problem during a meeting will often attract and hold the attention of participants.
- Take control. "You're dead in the water if you don't have a strong leader," says Dianna Booher, president and CEO of Booher Consultants Inc., a Dallas communications -training company. Leaders need to be skilled in the mechanics of running a meeting, as well as versed in the psychological dynamics of group interaction. Set ground rules for the meeting, including a time limit and the input you expect from participants. Know how to gather ideas, how to select the best ones for extended discussion and when to move on to the next topic. Transitions between agenda items need to be swift and clear, to hold people's attention.
- Attend to details. That includes making sure key participants will be able to attend. Rather than waste people's time with a meeting from which those participants are absent, reschedule. It is also worth trying to create an optimal setting for the meeting. Frequently, meetings are held in spaces that discourage participation, says Booher, or people who tend not to participate sit in a "drop-out zone" separate from the main group.

AP BUSINESS
Updated every 30 minutes

[Martha Stewart's Stock S](#)
[Consumer Confidence Str](#)
[Dow Industrials Off 55 or](#)
[McDonald's Shares Up or](#)
[Pharmaceutical Giant Me](#)
[Sales, Cost Cutting Spur](#)
[Microsoft Still Hoping to](#)
[MCI Examiner: Can Sue](#)
[Venture Capital Investme](#)
[Hollinger Seeks to Block](#)

SPONSORS

FINANCE

- [Savings Rates](#)
- [Loan Rates](#)
- [Mortgage Rates](#)

Advanced search

- Subscribe now
- Auctions
- Bookstore
- Coupons
- Contests
- Interact
- Feedback

- Set practical goals that people can take away from the meeting. "If you don't do what you set out to do," says McPherson, "one crummy meeting will only create another crummy meeting."

[Printer-friendly format](#)

[E-mail this article](#)

[TOP OF PAGE](#) [\[HOME\]](#) [\[NEWS JOURNAL\]](#) [\[ENTERTAINMENT\]](#) [\[HOMES\]](#) [\[CARS\]](#) [\[JOBS\]](#) [\[CLASSIFIEDS\]](#) [\[DIRECTOR SEARCH\]](#)

Copyright ©2004, The News Journal. Use of this site signifies your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#) (updated 12/19).