

Making Meetings More Productive

One of the most underutilized management skills is the ability to run a productive meeting. There are about ten million meetings held each day in corporations across America. We estimate that at least half of the person-hours spent in those meetings are wasted. Many meetings, at best, are just exchanges of information and are not productive.

Leaders tend to take meetings for granted, and don't spend enough time planning or developing the leadership skills that are needed to run a meeting effectively. We have found that senior managers rarely take a critical look at their own performance at meetings. Consequently, most never spend the effort to improve as "meeting leaders."

The Physician's Analogy to Meetings

The learning of meeting management skills can be compared to the general training of a physician. The doctor studies both the anatomy, or structure of the body, and the physical process - the physiology. In looking at the meeting, the anatomy includes such elements as the agenda, the meeting room, who will participate, meeting objectives, action items, etc. But just as important is the physiology, or processes - the group dynamics, and the flow of interactions which actually allow for the attainment of the objectives.

Meeting Management Absolutes

Here are ten guidelines to make your meetings a more productive tool:

1. Stick to the subject and be cautious of tangents and war stories.
2. Distribute an agenda in advance so that everyone may prepare.
3. Make meetings short, crisp and to the point.
4. All participants must come prepared with data needed to finalize decisions.
5. Leadership must be non-manipulative; coercion is never the answer.
6. Start on time and end on time; punctuality should be part of your culture.
7. Stay focused; reach the decisions the meeting was called to make.
8. Don't allow interruptions from within or without.
9. Don't allow one or two individuals to dominate the meeting.
10. Distribute meeting minutes to give the participants adequate feedback.

One additional thought. Forget all-day marathon meetings. Remember, a meeting is productive when it achieves its objectives - in a minimum of time-to the satisfaction of the participants. Almost any meeting, if there has been adequate planning, can be over and done with in an hour and a half. This leaves more time for the participants to get their work done.

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About the Author



Stanley Cherkasky is the Managing Partner of Change Management Consulting, Inc. Founder of the firm, Stan is the principal architect of the *Performance Improvement Breakthrough*[™] methodology, and the *Six Sigma Lean Advantage*[™]—innovative and proven strategies that accelerate ROI and net income improvement, build customer loyalty, and create world-class recognition.

Stan has more than three decades of business and consulting experience, in both the private and public sectors, in the United States and abroad. Stan specializes in building high-performance teams, and working closely with senior leaders to achieve breakthrough financial, organizational, and operating improvement. He has been quoted in many business publications, including Fortune, Business Week and the Wall Street Journal.

About Change Management Consulting, Inc. (CMC)

Founded in 1993, Change Management Consulting is a global management consulting and training company, dedicated to helping organizations of all sizes improve performance, achieve goals and advance leadership capability. As a full-service organizational improvement firm, CMC focuses on organizational and leadership development, compliance management (ISO 9001 and its derivatives), strategic planning and Lean Six Sigma initiatives.

Headquartered in Wayne, NJ with offices in San Diego, Dallas and Detroit, CMC has a proven track record in helping public and private sector clients implement pragmatic continual improvement initiatives that drive financially measurable results. CMC also has extensive experience in obtaining grants and funding assistance for its clients. Learn more at www.cmc-changemanagement.com or contact CMC at (877) 268-2440 or (973) 696-7878.