

5. Work meetings

Work meetings are one of the most traumatic obligations for job performance in general and for workflow in particular, as they consume many more man-hours than one-to-one meetings or, for example, the distribution of a circular. These problems are aggravated if some of the attendees have to come from other buildings or branches.

Therefore, one has to be very sure that the meeting is necessary and is going to make work progress or is going to be beneficial for the dynamics of work, productivity, etc.

In general terms, a meeting should NOT be convened if...

- Attendees do not know the specific objective for which they are called; participants arriving without knowing what is going to be discussed puts them at a disadvantage.
- Attendees do not know the specific, measurable tasks that are assigned to each one to achieve the goal at the meeting. The organizer has to be clear, direct and honest, must talk about operational behaviors and ask the rest of the attendees to do so as well.
- There is no deadline before which they must perform the tasks assigned at the meeting.

Some of the other things that should not be forgotten in order to conduct effective meetings are:

- Frequency. The general rule is that the higher frequency of meetings, the shorter the time of the meeting.
- Opportunity. Schedule them when you predict a decrease in the workload.
- Concentration. All participants must be focused on the meeting and only on the meeting to save time and not make others waste their time. A good way to achieve this is to ask that mobile phones be turned off or to disable the WI-FI in the room if Internet is not needed.
- Approach. The main ideas have to be discussed without allowing them to branch out.
- Agenda. An agenda must be prepared. This helps with the previous point and gives confidence to the other attendees that it is not a waste of time.
- Chairing the meeting. When it is the turn of others to speak (because... that's why a meeting was called, instead of sending a circular, right?), it must be chaired so everyone has the same amount of time and there are no conflicts.
- Objectivity. If the performance of teams or individuals is going to be mentioned, then personal preferences must be set aside, trying to avoid assumptions and perceptions. It is necessary to base assessments exclusively on measurable and measured parameters, and try to apply the same standards to all teams equally. This way you avoid fights that alienate the team and that make you waste precious time inside and outside the meeting.
- Punctuality. Care must be taken to begin and end meetings on time. This indicates that the time of others is respected and there will be less resistance to future meetings. Above all you must avoid the "we will wait for the laggards to start",

because what is suggested to those who have bothered to arrive on time is that their time is not valuable.

To conclude, two golden rules:

1. In general, a meeting should not be planned if the same objectives can be achieved by any other means.

2. A meeting must be used to answer the three following questions:

- What to do?
- Who is going to do it?
- When is it going to be done?

Attendees must be aware that the objective of the meeting is to exclusively answer those three questions.

... And a trick

Provide each attendee with a clipboard that serves as support for writing and (this is the important part) remove all seats from the meeting room.

Having to hold the meeting standing up will prevent attendees from relaxing and getting distracted and will substantially shorten the length of the meeting.