



# How To Better Manage Your Meetings This Year

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Meetings take up a lot of our time -- and let's just be frank, they aren't always the most productive events.

One [report](#) suggests that in the United States, a staggering 11 million meetings are held every day. Some of these meetings are held unnecessarily. Others end up creating more bad feelings than real results. And some are just a chance for people to catch up on their email while ignoring anyone speaking in the actual room.

Beyond the fact that meetings frequently do not yield the results they should yield, there is evidence that setting up meetings is also a time-consuming process — one that few of us know how to manage effectively. By one [estimate](#), 40% of employees spend 30 minutes a day just searching for meeting space. Factor in other meeting-related tasks (e.g., setting up media equipment, ordering fresh coffee, water and snacks and ensuring everyone knows where the meeting is taking place) and the drain of meetings on one's staff and resources is something that we simply can't afford to ignore.

In 2018, resolve to take control of your meeting management with these simple and effective meeting hacks that I sum up with a simple acronym: CLEAR.

## **Clear Outcomes**

There is nothing worse than a meeting without a clear outcome or set of outcomes. Before you call a meeting, be clear about the outcome. Share these outcomes with anyone invited in advance. If participants need to prepare (to ensure these outcomes are met), let them know and provide any materials they will need to prepare properly (e.g., reports or briefing materials).

## **Limits**

Meetings aren't like summer vacations or even romantic dinners — longer isn't better. Have a strict timeline and stick with it. If people know they only have 45 minutes, they'll be more likely to start the meeting on time, work through the agenda quickly, and wrap things up before the agitation begins.

## **Elocution**

Meetings are no time for drawn-out monologues or alienating small talk. Whether you are rambling on about the virtues of your newest product or just sharing tales about your latest triumph on the golf course or at your local squash club, meetings are not the time for either mode of speech. Monologues and small talk can eat away at precious meeting time.

Worse yet, small talk can set the wrong tone. Rolling into a meeting and chatting about your coveted wine cellar may seem appropriate, but to anyone in the meeting who doesn't drink or doesn't have the resources to collect fine wines, this small talk can also be alienating. Be clear, concise and expressive in all meetings.

## **Abstinence (The Digital Kind)**

I love gadgets and all the hacks that apps make possible, but when it comes to meetings, it is almost always better to exercise digital abstinence. If you're going to take time to meet with people in person, why spend it in a room with everyone staring at a screen? By one [estimate](#), 70% of meeting attendees admit that they sometimes bring "other work" to meetings.

Whether you ask people to log out or take a more aggressive approach (I know of one VP — ironically, at a large tech company — who asks her board members to check their phones in a basket at the door), asking people to be fully present is one way to ensure your meetings will be productive and run on time. After all, if no one is permitted to jump online, you can bet that their motivation to move through the agenda more quickly will certainly increase!

## **Restricted Access**

In an effort to be transparent, many organizations have moved to invite more participants to meetings of all kinds, but don't forget that less can be more when it comes to meetings.

Ensure that anyone invited to a meeting really needs to be there and has something substantial to contribute. If they can be briefed later, don't invite them. If you do invite them, you're likely not only wasting your time since they may have nothing to contribute, but also wasting their time.

With a truly clear sense of what meetings should happen for whom, when and why, you will save time and resources throughout the year. With a truly clear sense of what meetings should happen for whom, when and why, you will save time and resources throughout 2018.