



The Surprising Science of Meetings: Key Learnings and Implications for Shelter Success and You as Someone Who May Lead Meetings

Webcast March 28, 2019

Questions from viewers:

1. *What is considered a "large" meeting? What is the optimal number of attendees?*

For decision making, over 8 can be tricky to facilitate. Some leaders can do a good job with more, but that is not the norm. I think meetings with 3-7 people are pretty ideal to get lots of engagement.

2. *Any advice on how to schedule meetings for all the staff when everyone has different schedules every day?*

Use apps like [Doodle](#) to pull it off. That helps a bunch. I also like [Calendly](#).

3. *Should meetings with employees and meetings with volunteers be treated/handled differently?*

Not really. More similarly than differently. I sometimes think we do a better job with volunteer meeting as we think about them in advance more. Let's bring that same energy to employee meetings.

4. *Each week I hold a staff meeting with about 7 people. There are a few members who are consistently 15 minutes late and they miss some important information. How can we correct this?*

Talk to them off line. Try to understand what the situation may be. Perhaps they have something going on right before your meeting. After you learn more, you will be better prepared to come up with a solution. Perhaps you can even consider starting your meeting at 15 minutes past the hour.

5. *What are some alternatives to traditional PowerPoints?*

Writing down the ideas/proposal as a document to be read. This is actually a common practice at Amazon.

6. *Given the data that shows how having one's pets with them at work can increase productivity, what do you think of bringing a (well-behaved) animal into a meeting when feasible? Would the distraction outweigh the positive effects?*

Well-behaved is key. If at all distracting, best to not allow it.

7. *How do you stop side conversations in your meetings?*

Call it out.

8. *If you aren't the meeting leader and you know you could do a better job, how do you influence their meetings?*

Be a model attendee – excellent listener, clear communicator, etc. You can even help facilitate by trying to involve and engage others.

9. *What is your opinion on lunch meetings? I'm referring to actually going somewhere for lunch to discuss.*

They can work. It depends on the agenda. I like mixing it up, so this could be quite useful if the setting is quiet.

10. *What should you do if you are expected to attend meetings that are informational in nature, the majority of which has nothing to do with you or your responsibilities?*

Sadly, you can't do much. Daydream, relax, multi-task if you can get away with it... But another good approach is to just have a notebook. Write down thoughts and ideas you might have in general to help your area and help animals. People will think you are taking notes, but you are engaging in a meaning reflection.

11. *Would biweekly interdepartmental meetings with no clear agenda be more beneficial if they are scheduled less regularly and only when there is specific agenda?*

No agenda, no meeting. That should be the rule of thumb.

12. *Any suggestions for improving a poor productivity regular meeting if the majority participants are okay with the status quo?*

Sadly, you are trapped. Just focus on you running the best meeting ever. Hopefully your example will become the norm over time.

13. *When trying to set up an agenda to the meeting, should it be allowed to be fluid, or should there be a strict structure?*

I think it can be a combo of both and it can vary over time. Mix it up. Have fun with it. But, again, don't meet unless you have a purpose.

14. *How important is it to have an agenda sent out in advance for frequent meetings, like weekly one-on-ones or team meetings?*

I still think it is important because it forces you to prepare, reflect, and think prior to any meeting. This could be just 3 minutes. With that said, one-on-ones are often owned by the subordinate, so they can come up with the agenda too – share the responsibility.