



## **Efficacious Meetings**

By Chanon Collins

Have you ever been to a meeting that had no purpose, dragged on for hours, and left you with a feeling of completely wasting your time? Most likely all have experienced this type of meeting, but have felt helpless in correcting the situation. There are a few simple steps that can be taken to improve the atmosphere and efficacy of your future meetings.

The first step to having efficient and effective meetings is to decide if the meeting is necessary. If the subject can be handled by email or telephone, then it would be better suited to those means. Once it has been decided that the purpose deems a meeting, then plan the issues to be discussed and the people that need to attend. The people that should attend are only the people that have a direct influence over the issues or decisions to be made.

An effective outline and agenda are very necessary in making the meeting flow. The agenda should cover the main topic or topics for the meeting and this is all it should contain. It will allow the meeting to progress in the manner needed and it will enable people to stay on track. It is useful to send a copy of the agenda to the members attending the meeting ahead of time so they will have time to prepare. If people have time to think on a problem they are more likely to come up with more resolutions. An outline will keep you, the facilitator, on track with all of your issues and details at your fingertips.

Presentation aids will help the members at your meeting remain focused on the main points you are trying to stress. Also, the size of the meeting room and the location should be selected carefully. For informal meetings, an outside location may suffice, whereas a meeting with clients would might require a conference room.

Being on time for your meeting is essential and required if you want your meeting to be successful. Depending on the length of the meeting, refreshments should be considered. Coffee and water are two items that are requisite if the meeting is over an hour. Ninety minutes is the longest time someone should be expected to sit in one

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**ALLEN PRITCHETT & BASSETT, LLP**  
POST OFFICE BOX 349, TIFTON, GEORGIA 31793  
229.382.6960 FAX: 229.382.6992  
[WWW.APBCPA.COM](http://WWW.APBCPA.COM)

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place with a stretch. There have been time studies to enforce this fact. If a complete break is not possible, then at least allow attendees to stand up and stretch.

As the facilitator, you will be responsible for taking notes as well as directing the meeting. Some members will be hesitant to participate in discussions especially if they are lively. Encourage all members to present their ideas particularly if the discussion becomes heated. Animated discussions provide a segue for more creative solutions to happen.

One of the potential pitfalls of meetings is the failure to assign responsibility and follow through on the courses of action decided. It is essential to make sure that all assignments are completed. Make sure that all parties agree to their assigned role in the solution that has been chosen.

If these simple steps are followed, you will never have to hear these words ring through the office halls – “We are going to continue having these meetings every day until I find out why no work is getting done.”

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