Hubstaff

Time Management Strategies: The Meeting Time Trap

Poorly run company meetings can be the death of a manager's already over-booked schedule. Does your office hold too many meetings throughout the workday? Do you ever feel like you could get more done if you didn't have so many meetings to attend?

If you keep track of your work hours with a <u>time tracker or online timesheet</u>, you may have more insight into the percentage of time you spend in meetings. While it's expected for managers, directors and corporate executives to spend much of their time in meetings, too much meeting time can result in reduced productivity, fewer decision-making activities, and of course, added stress.

Common Meeting Mistakes:

How can we make meetings more successful and take back the workday? Here are some common meeting errors and how to fix them for more effective overall time management:

1. **Too many meetings:** Many employees call meetings without a true purpose. Could the information in the meeting be shared a different way, such as via email, inter-company memo, or via a <u>project management application such as Basecamp</u>? Think about the best way to achieve the goal of the meeting, such as to share information, solicit opinions or engage in a group discussion, before deciding whether to call the meeting, and whom to invite. Could you have a group meeting rather than three individual meetings? By tracking your time and looking at your current meeting schedule and topics, you might be able to get away with holding fewer meetings.
2. **There's no leadership in your meeting:** Without a meeting leader, chaos will ensue every time. Your meetings must have a point person (typically the person who called the meeting) to keep things in order throughout the session. This individual must make sure ensure everyone understands the meeting goals and the material presented when the meeting begins. The meeting leader is also in charge of keeping the meeting moving along, and avoiding off-topic discussions and other time-wasters.
3. **There are too many meeting participants:** We've all heard of the phrase 'too many cooks in the kitchen" but this term applies to meetings as well. When meetings have too many participants, you can end up with endless discussions, no clear direction and too many opinions guiding the decision-making process. In the interest of time, think of the people best suited to attend the meeting, and let those people notify the others on their team of what transpired during the meeting (or offer a synopsis to share to the entire team later).

4. **There's no meeting agenda:** Having a meeting where everyone just shows up at a set time/place every week does not constitute effective time management. When you call a company meeting, make sure you include an agenda outlining all of the topics of discussion, who will be presenting the material, and whether or not you'll be having discussions or question/answer periods after each topic. Taking a few minutes to do this for each meeting will make a big difference in the outcome of your meetings.
5. **There's not a set end time to your meeting:** Creating and disseminating your meeting agenda before the meeting can help you determine the appropriate length of time for your meeting, and help you cover all topics adequately. When you set a meeting with no end time, participants have no concept of managing time during the meeting, and your meeting will inevitably run over its scheduled time. The meeting leader should solicit the help of the meeting participants to keep an eye on the time and ensure that you cover all necessary topics before the meeting time ends. If you're not tracking your meeting time, try using a time tracking tool to discover just now long your meetings currently run.
6. **You forget to wrap up and assign action items:** Throughout the meeting, make sure you are holding certain individuals accountable for action items and upcoming deadlines, and confirm that everyone is on the same page when your meeting concludes. Use the ideas and decisions developed during the meeting to create action plans for your business or department. While everyone should have been taking notes during your meeting, assign someone the task of recording all of the action items, deadlines and responsible parties, if possible. Then give the meeting summary to the team upon the meeting's conclusion.

Continue to track and refine your meetings for best results

Once you have put the above measures in place for your company meetings, continue to track your time and your employees' time, via a time tracking app like Hubstaff, for greater visibility into the time you spend in meetings. Once you have more of a time management schedule in place for your meetings, you'll make better use of your time in meetings, avoid the expense of unproductive ones, and start gaining additional time in your day to spend on activities aligned with your true competency.