

effective team meetings

A meeting is designed to save time and ensure consistent communication by getting people together, instead of meeting one by one. Meetings should have a specific purpose, but sometimes, somehow, that specific purpose gets a bit blurred.

In many ways, meetings with a volunteer team should run in exactly the same way as a meeting would be run in someone's workplace (providing that meetings are run effectively!).

Here are a few thoughts to help in your planning:

Be really clear about the purpose of the meeting

Hopefully it goes without saying that you should only hold a meeting if a meeting is necessary. However, don't shy away from asking people to meet as good communication and a shared understanding amongst leaders is vital for the well-being of our groups.

Before the meeting, set clear goals and decide upon the particular objectives for that meeting. Know clearly what decisions need to have been made by the time you've finished.

Watch the time

Holding meetings is probably our most important single way of achieving our objectives; yet it is probably one that is most commonly abused. No meeting should be more than two hours long, unless you are having a

special day-long planning meeting. In which case break the time up well with breaks and fun activities.

To use time well, think ahead about what needs to be discussed rather than just thinking on your feet during the meeting.

Also be careful about the use of AOB (Any Other Business). It's at this point that many meetings get hijacked and a meeting that was planned to finish within the agreed timeframe can overshoot by quite a long way. If you do want to have AOB as an agenda item, ask for other items to be listed at the beginning of the

meeting so they can be accommodated within the time given. Better still, ask people to submit their items before the meeting so that they can be built into the agenda.

Disorganised and unexpectedly long meetings demoralise people. Your team are more likely to be willing to meet again if you honour the start and end times.

Create an effective agenda

One of the greatest gifts you can give to your team is a well-prepared, realistic agenda. The agenda should be sent out in advance of the meeting and should communicate the items for



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discussion, the presenters for each item and the time allotment for each. Also include the time and location of the meeting as a reminder.

The agenda will then provide the outline for the meeting and can be used as a checklist to make sure that nothing is forgotten.

Get everyone involved

Give people a chance to prepare for the meeting – if they have to do their thinking during the meeting then vital meeting time is wasted. This links in to making sure the agenda is ready well in advance of the meeting.

Make sure that the more quiet team members are asked for their opinions and don't allow the more vocal to monopolise a discussion.

Throughout the discussions it's helpful to summarise what's happening to make sure everyone is on board with what's going on.

Get as many people as possible to lead different parts of the meeting. Making an effort to get people involved prevents people from becoming too passive.

List action points

If an action point arises from a



Ensure that everyone is able to contribute their thoughts and ideas

discussion, assign it to someone immediately. Also agree a due date for the action to be completed.

End with summary of decisions and actions

Five minutes before the end of the meeting, take time to review each agenda item and reiterate the decisions made and actions to be taken. This gives a sense of purpose and accomplishment to the meeting and reminds people of what they have agreed to.

Pray

Team meetings are great

opportunities to pray together for your group. Encourage people to pray before, during and after the meetings, that you would be open to God's leading and able to receive his wisdom and insight.

Please don't relegate prayer to the end of the meeting in a kind of 'God please bless all we've talked about 'way. As leaders we are dependent on him and need to be alert to his promptings as we discuss the matters that concern our groups. Starting your meeting with a reflection on a Bible passage is often a good way to focus people's thinking and praying.

Think development

You might like to think about introducing an element of training into your team meetings, whether that's looking at how to communicate the Bible effectively or looking at issues to do with youth culture. Team members might like to suggest areas that they would like to look at together.

Have fun

Believe it or not, meetings can be fun! They are a great time to get to know each other better as individuals, and to grow in friendship. The stronger you are as a team, the better your leadership together will be. If you enjoy each other's company your group will pick up on that and enter into the enjoyment themselves.

Choose a location that is conducive to meeting

