

Meetings have become one of the business world's most universal rituals. It's reported that U.S. businesses hold 15 million meetings per day and 4 billion meetings per year. Business managers spend as much as 80% of their time in meetings and sadly meetings are responsible for \$37 billion in productivity losses every year. Bad meetings can not only ruin your day they can create bad companies.

As a facilitator I suggest you incorporate the following 'Meeting Commandments' the next time you run a meeting.

Meeting Commandments

1. Thou shalt understand the rules of engagement

Clear expectations about what role people will play and how others should act help to design successful meetings. Before you start a meeting discuss the rules of engagement including; starting on time, dealing with distractions (ie. doing emails during the meeting), allowing one person to speak at a time and managing sidebar conversations.

2. Thou shalt have an agenda with timed agenda items

Each person should have a clear understanding of the meeting purpose, outcome and items to be covered during the meeting. This helps people be more prepared to participate. Adding start times to each agenda item helps keep the conversations focused and the meeting moving forward. It also ensures that you have not included more agenda items than can be covered in the time allotted.

3. Thou shalt remember- physical presence does not guarantee mental presence

Just because a person walks into a meeting room, does not mean that their mind is at the meeting. It is key to involve the whole person in your meeting by letting people express their thoughts before you get down to business. This allows people to clear their mind and focus on your meeting. During the meeting it is worth checking both a person's 'head' and 'heart' for opinions on the issues.

4. Thou shalt evaluate your meeting

People leave meetings with different views of what happened and what are the next steps. 10 minutes before the end of the meeting review the decisions made during the meeting and convert those decisions into action items (including who is responsible for the task and what date the task will be completed by). In an effort to improve the quality of your meeting ask the group, "What went well?" and "What can we improve upon for next time?" then hold people accountable for improving the situation.

Time is money and running effective meetings can help your bottom line. If you would like to track the cost of your meetings here's a site I found that allows you to download a meeting clock. It records the cost of your particular meeting based on the participants that attend.

<http://www.effectivemeetings.com/diversions/meetingclock.asp>

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