



Make Meetings Effective

Communication not only helps ensure your workers are following instructions effectively and safely, but also helps create an environment where they feel comfortable to speak out about an unsafe situation or other issue that requires resolution.

When run efficiently, meetings can be a great way to communicate relevant information to your employees. The National Safety Council recommends not calling meetings for issues that can be discussed or resolved by a conversation with just a couple of individuals.

Being a Leader

A meeting must have a clearly defined leader. Running a meeting in front of a large group can be difficult or intimidating the first few times.

The National Safety Council offers the following advice:

- Invite only people whose attendance is necessary.
- Determine the purpose of the meeting. If you intend to have a meaningful discussion, a meeting involving more than 10 employees could make that difficult. If the meeting's intent is simply to disseminate information, the group could be significantly larger.
- Prepare an agenda with a timeline and stick to it. Give meeting participants a copy of the agenda in advance of the meeting.
- Make it clear at the onset whether debate or discussion is intended.
- If it is a problem-solving meeting, state the problem and all relevant background information – do not assume everyone is well-versed on the issue.
- Be sure the meeting maintains its focus. If issues outside the area of the meeting's purpose are brought up, acknowledge them, but make it clear those issues will be addressed in another discussion at a later time.
- Sum up the meeting verbally when it concludes, and prepare written minutes afterward, outlining decisions reached, responsibilities assigned and expected time frames. These should be distributed to participants as soon as possible.

Dealing with Difficulties

Occasionally you will encounter an employee who, for various reasons, is difficult to deal with in meetings. How you deal with such individuals can determine the success of your meeting. The council offers the following suggestions:

- Remember that you are in control of the meeting.
- If people get off topic or begin to have side conversations, bring the focus back to the center by restating the meeting's intended purpose.
- If one person is dominating a discussion, draw out other meeting participants by asking them for their opinion.
- Never belittle a participant in front of the group.
- If someone in the group is disruptive or acts in an inappropriate manner, speak to him or her privately afterward, stating your expectations for future meetings.

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