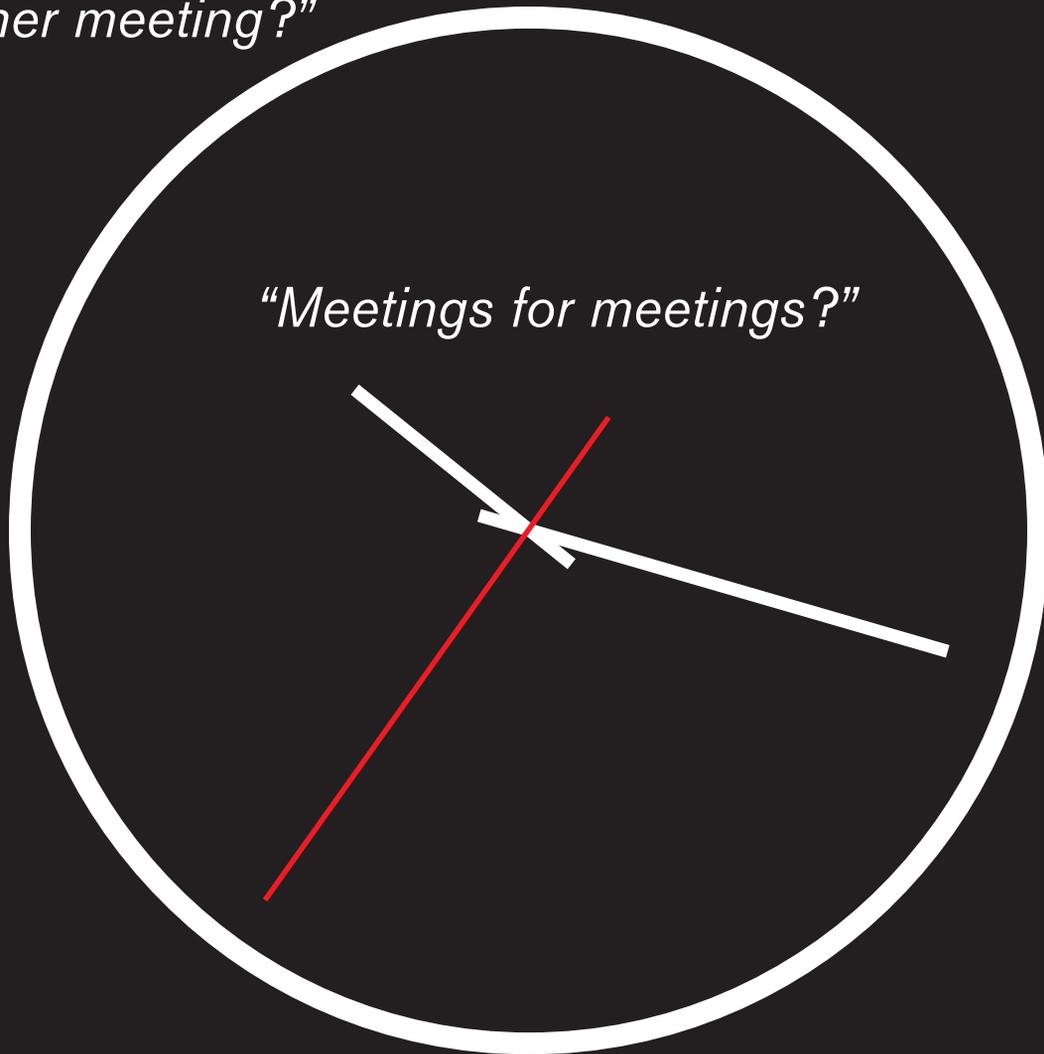


Got A Minute?

8 Tips for YOUR Successful Meetings!

By Gail Lowney Alofsin

"Another meeting?"



"Meetings for meetings?"

"Do I have to attend?"

These are the thoughts that may be going through your head as yet another meeting is requested and scheduled.

Meetings can be productive. However, if we do not manage meetings, meetings will manage us. We have all participated in endless meetings without results or clarity.

How can you make the meetings you plan and attend more impactful?

Whether you plan or attend daily, weekly, or monthly meetings; this is your opportunity to relay your message, needs, and ideas to your colleagues, board or committee members. As you prepare these ideas, work on presenting them as clear and concise as possible. Many people attending the meeting may not “live in your world,” or your head for that matter. They may require more information for clarity and productivity.

The “basic” item that you will want to forward prior to the meeting is an agenda. When you are in charge of the meeting, you want to be known as a person who brings energy, focus and motivation to the table. Your goal is to conclude with energized and engaged attendees.

One effective meeting tip for short meetings is the “10 minute standup.” Gather your team first thing in the morning for a quick review of what everyone is working on that day. In addition to being updated on what the team is focused on, it is an opportunity to ask or answer questions in an effort to avoid interruptions all day long.

Ah, interruptions. Ask your colleagues to keep a running document of ideas they have for you. This way, they can bring their thoughts to the appropriate meeting versus walking into your office all day peppering you with questions or ideas that do not require immediate attention. This will allow for more productivity versus a day of interruptions – be it ever exciting! Avoid a day full of “Got a minute’s?”

Practice productivity every step of the way. Create “best practice” outlines and keep them in one place. Create “SOP’s” (Standard Operating Procedures) so that everyone leaves a meeting where a decision has been made with a clear understanding of the expectations. We all interpret and process information differently. These SOP’s will serve to ensure that everyone is on the same page.

Productive and energetic meetings become meetings that the team respects and looks forward to – internally and externally. Designate a note taker to ensure there is a record of the discussions. As you design action plans with deadline dates, designate the person responsible for each action item. The most productive meetings become “same page” meetings where everyone leaves on the same page with an understanding of what needs to be accomplished that day, week, month or year.

Your challenges, goals and projects

deserve time to be thought out, reviewed and shared.

8 MEETING MANAGEMENT SUCCESS TIPS:

1. Schedule the Meeting.

Send an invitation to all of the people included in the meeting. Use Outlook or another online calendar and include the meeting time, location and discussion points. Ask attendees to include additional items they would like to discuss.

2. Arrive Early.

Be on time. In fact, arrive to the meeting 10 to 15 minutes early. If your meeting is with a client, or a prospective client, there is a great deal you can learn and observe by sitting in the lobby, waiting for the meeting. If it is an internal meeting, you will have time to talk with the other “early” attendees, catch up on correspondence, or clear your head to get focused for the meeting. It is disrespectful to arrive late to any meeting.

3. Take Charge.

If you are in charge of the meeting, make sure you have an agenda prepared. Your agenda can be simple, comprised of the names of the attendees, a blank area for answers to questions, and a list of items you would like to cover. When possible, distribute the agenda in advance to ensure that meeting attendees come prepared to participate.

4. Not So “Smart.”

Put your smartphone away. If you focus on where you are, topic on hand and the people you are with, your meetings will be more effective and efficient. While there are exceptions to this rule in every field, you will be more focused and depart with clear information and action steps when you are “present” in the presence of others.

5. Park It.

When people gather for a meeting, there is often a great deal of excitement and creativity. Put unrelated ideas and topics in the “Parking Lot.” Many of the best ideas for another project, product, event or procedure come from meetings where a different topic is discussed. Use the white board, flip chart and a note taker to put those ideas on a list for a future meeting or discussion. Stay focused on the topic everyone has gathered to discuss.

6. Watch the Clock!

If a meeting has been scheduled for an hour, be conscious of time and work within that time block. Before you start a meeting, especially with a new client, confirm that they have planned for ten, twenty or

thirty minutes, whatever you had agreed upon when arranging the meeting.

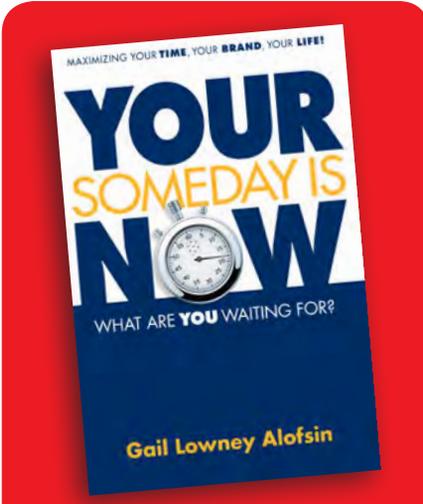
7. Respect Opinions.

When you run a meeting, make sure attendees have time to offer their input or opinion. A gregarious, opinionated person at the table may intimidate a quiet, insightful person. Do your best to ensure everyone at the table has a voice. The more ideas shared by the people in attendance, the better the outcome.

8. Follow-up.

On your meeting notes, list the action plan with the person responsible and date that action must be completed. These dates can also be added to tasks on your computer. Follow up on the actions delegated.

Effective, efficient meetings serve to build and enhance your personal brand. Your reputation? The “go to,” “make it happen,” professional who gets things done efficiently, effectively and enjoyably. Create meetings that your clients and colleagues look forward to attending. Got a minute?



As the Director of Corporate Partnership for Newport Harbor Corporation, Adjunct Professor at the Harrington School of Communications & Digital Literacy at the University of Rhode Island, active volunteer and board member, author and international keynote speaker (gailspeaks.com), Gail Lowney Alofsin does her best to “manage meetings” on a daily basis! Her book, Your “Someday” is NOW! What are you Waiting for? focused on Work/Life Integration, Communication and Personal Branding, was launched in March 2014. Between meetings, Gail can be reached at 401-640-4418 or gailalofsin@yahoo.com. Follow Gail on Twitter - @gailspeaks or @gailalofsin.