

## Why

Research and experience shows that managers of big companies spend up to 75% of their time in meetings and 50% of these meetings are seen as a waste of time!

## What

Tips for turning “dull and dreaded meetings” into “energizing and effective meetings.”

## How

- ▶ Ask for the worst idea in the room: when creativity is at a standstill or a project is particularly difficult challenge your team members to come up with the WORST idea possible. Make it a competition. Get people to try and one-up each other with even more ridiculous and off-the-wall ideas.
- ▶ Play “yes...and...” For a given problem each team member provides a solution that is not to be judged by anyone. Instead, others say, “yes, I like this idea because...and we can also...”
- ▶ Take a walk. When you want to get the creative juices flowing on our team go for a walk. Walk for 15 minutes and talk about life. Generally, the conversation always goes back to work. There is something about nature that inspires a person to be more creative. It will help you see the world in a different way.
- ▶ Bring wine and demand results, e.g. every Friday the team gets together for a so-called “Eatin’ Meetin!” This is time to relax, throw around ideas and talk about deliverables for the week. Everyone eats cheese, drinks wine and brainstorms.
- ▶ Instruct participants to respond only with “yes, and” and never “no, but.” Keep things positive and ideas flowing by not shouting down initial proposals.
- ▶ If your meeting must last longer than half an hour take a break every 30 minutes. Make sure attendees can get up, walk out of the room and put their brain on pause.
- ▶ Think and dream without limitations. Those come later. Make a clear distinction between dreaming, planning and evaluating (this is the Walt Disney creative business technique, research it on the net).
- ▶ The meeting should have an end time. Constraints breed creativity. By not defining an end time we encourage rambling, off-topic and useless conversation.
- ▶ Invite as few people as possible. There should be no more than ten people at a meeting. Attending meetings isn’t a badge of honor.
- ▶ Keep it moving: Change some aspect of your meeting every 20 minutes: change presentation style, insert a Q&A, start a panel discussion, encourage small group breakaways, play videos or institute mini-breaks, team presentations, exercises, games, quizzes, feedback, voting etc.
- ▶ Social time: start the meeting 10 minutes earlier than usual (e.g. 8:50 am instead of 9:00 am). Design the first 10 minutes as a social mixer.
- ▶ Breadwinner: bring different kinds of breakfast breads to morning meetings; rotate “catering” responsibilities around each member of the group and challenge people to bring a new and different kind of bread each time. Each month the group votes on the “breadwinner” of the month.
- ▶ Ideas to go: line the walls of the room with different problems for group members to solve posed as “how can we...” statements, e.g. how can we improve service in XYZ? Give group members a stack of post-its and invite them to roam the room, write ideas on their post-its and stick them on the problem to which they apply.
- ▶ Give it a chance! Put children’s soft toys in the room (foam balls, stuffed toys etc.). Any time someone crushes another person’s idea (e.g., “that won’t work...we tried that before...it’ll cost too much...” etc.) group members are invited to pick up the nearest toy and throw it at the offender shouting “give it a chance!”
- ▶ Standing meeting: remove all the chairs in the meeting room, and hold the meeting standing up. It will make the meeting shorter.
- ▶ Exercise break: rotate responsibility around group members to lead the group in some kind of physical exercise to start the meeting or during breaks. If desired, award prizes for the best exercises of the week/month. Bring a boom box with upbeat music to accompany the activity.
- ▶ Pet pictures: ask everyone to bring in pictures of their pet(s) or of a friend’s pet if they don’t have one. Alternative: ask everyone to draw a picture of their pet. Go around the room and share stories about the pets. This can be done before meetings, during meetings or during breaks. Optional extra: ask everyone what qualities they share with their pets.

## Skills and necessary training

Dare to experiment and do something different.

## Critical success factors

Humor.

## Possible workshop exercise

Practice some of the most promising ideas.