

Making Meetings Efficient

Meetings are a valuable management tool for improving work productivity and increasing networking between nursery workers. Like everything, however, you can have too much of a good thing, and meetings must be managed or they can quickly get out of hand. Kehoe (1993) states that meetings are "the most abused form of company communications".

Here are a few tips from the pros:

✍️ **Scheduling**—Keep meetings as short as possible. Weekly staff meetings should take only 15-30 minutes, and single topics at decision-making meetings can be solved in less than an hour. In general, meetings are most effective when they are no more than 1.5 hours in length.

✍️ **Purpose**—Every meeting should have a well-stated purpose, or maybe you don't need one. There are many good reasons for meetings, such as information exchange, plans for the next crop, assignment of responsibilities, so just make sure that the purpose is stated and understood.

✍️ **Attendance**—A general rule is "the smaller the better". The experts say that meetings of more than 10 people become difficult to manage. Not everybody has to attend every meeting. Use the meeting objectives to make up a list of who really has to be there.

✍️ **Structure**—Good meetings require preparation and so an outline with a list of objectives is a good idea. Use a facilitator if appropriate, and document the results in writing.

✍️ **Accountability**—There are forms that are designed to improve the efficiency and document the cost: benefit ratio of meetings. They have listings for the purpose of the meeting, the starting and stopping time, and the total time expended.

Berry's World



"What's this about your refusing to attend another meeting today because you want to "get some work done" ??

You can list everyone who attends, their hourly salary, and management code that their time is going to be charged to. By multiplying the total personnel cost of the meeting by the time of the meeting, you can calculate the true cost of the meeting. Comparing the costs to the tangible benefits of the meeting is an easy and quick way to measure their true value and charge the costs to the appropriate cost center.

Meetings are powerful tools and a necessary part of nursery management, but they must be properly planned and executed.

Sources:

- Hosey, T.; Percival, B. 1984. Motivate employees for effective staff meetings. *American Nurseryman* 160(9): 51-54.
- Kehoe, K.R. 1993. Maximize your meetings. *American Nurseryman* 178(10): 64-66, 68-69.