

Best Meeting™ Executive Checklist

12 essentials to help ensure a memorable and productive meeting

1 Specify the desired outcomes.

Delegated Completed

Consider what you want from this meeting – the outcomes that will make it an undeniable success. Be as specific as possible, recognizing that you might want to adjust these as your planning evolves. Keep this question uppermost in your mind, *“What outcomes will cause participants to agree that the meeting was a success, and well worth the investment of time and money?”*

2 Choose a facilitator.

Delegated Completed

Whether a colleague or someone outside your organization, it pays to identify this individual early on in the planning process and involve him or her in decisions around the agenda, whom to invite and even the location and physical layout. Make a list of the skills and experience you believe the right person should have, including an ability to build consensus and to think strategically.

3 Select a theme.

Delegated Completed

A theme helps set the tone for your meeting, and encourages participants to think about how they can contribute. It might involve brainstorming a market penetration strategy, building support for a new policy, or creating an action plan for a new initiative. Regardless, the key is to have a theme that will have meaning for participants, and get their creative juices flowing before the meeting takes place.

4 Build an agenda.

Delegated Completed

The agenda is of primary importance in achieving the outcomes you have specified for the meeting. When doing so, it's wise to factor in the nature of your participant group. For example, an intact management team can normally move into specifics fairly early in a session, whereas participants drawn from a number of different organizations might require time to adjust, learn the ropes, understand the context, and so forth. Also, the work is important but so too is downtime to relax and recharge. Thoughtfully planned breaks, recreational periods, social events, dinners and receptions can all add to the overall value of the meeting. If the subject matter is contentious, it makes sense to have the group work through one or more items on which they can share different viewpoints and still reach agreement, to establish a basis for working together on the more difficult items.

5 Make a list of participants.

Delegated Completed

The answer to, *“Who needs to be there?”* might seem obvious, but it isn't always. With the sometimes conflicting goals of keeping attendance to a manageable number and ensuring that important viewpoints / positions are represented, make a list of everyone you're thinking of inviting, and then go back and check off those who absolutely have to be there, ...as a participant, a resource (an industry expert for example), or an observer. Be as selective as possible, ensuring that each attendee has a legitimate role to play.

6 Estimate the time.

Delegated Completed

How much time will be required to achieve the desired outcomes? Part of a day? A full day? Two or three days? More? If you think the conversation might benefit from giving participants time to reflect on information developed in one segment before moving on to another, consider multiple half-days held a week or two apart.

7 Decide what to document and how.Delegated Completed

Decide on the documentation you'd like and how it will be done. Will it be handled by an administrative person, a participant, someone recruited specifically for the purpose, the facilitator or some combination of these? If it's going to be someone other than the facilitator or a participant, make sure he or she has some understanding of the subject and the terminology. It is very disappointing to discover that the documenter missed the underlying ideas and failed to note many of the high points due to a lack of familiarity with the subject matter.

8 Appoint a logistics coordinator.Delegated Completed

Designate someone to handle the logistics – an executive or an administrator depending on your situation / expectations of the role / task at hand. These include scheduling interviews for the facilitator and participants, identifying a suitable location, arranging for meals, checking out things like the availability of printing, copying, a wireless network, high-speed internet access and catering, social and recreational events, ensuring the room is properly set up, and getting out invitations and briefing materials.

9 Select a location and room configuration.Delegated Completed

Will the meeting be held at your offices? Offsite in a nearby facility? Somewhere more exotic? Consider things like convenience, impact on your participants and the conversation, and cost. Would the meeting benefit from an out-of-town location? Work with the facilitator to ensure the meeting room is configured in the best way possible. Options include an open 'U', boardroom table, and rounds.

10 Assemble and distribute briefing materials.Delegated Completed

Identify the materials you'd like participants to review prior to the session – an article, book summary or extract, economic forecast, environmental assessment, industry outlook, or organization-specific material like research, subject matter brief, data analysis, divisional plans and marketing collateral. Try to get these materials into the hands of participants at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

11 Identify research requirements.Delegated Completed

If research is required (for example, a survey or key informant interviews), make sure it is spec'd, awarded and completed in time to get information into the hands of participants. Some outside facilitators will handle this for you; others will not. Make sure that the individual is qualified to take it on.

12 Plan the introductory remarks.Delegated Completed

Ensure that participants are welcomed, expectations around outcomes are reviewed and the ground rules for things like the scope and nature of the conversation are clearly set out. Be sure to include what's *not* on the table for discussion at this meeting. A little time spent clarifying these items upfront will pay off handsomely in more of the right kind of conversation.

Need help pulling it all together? Looking for an experienced facilitator who will contribute to a successful meeting? How about a friendly voice on the other end of the phone to field the odd question? Contact Bob McCulloch or Chris Ward:

Call 1.855.440.0371**Email info@StrategicRetreats.net**