



MasterCard Working™
FOR SMALL BUSINESS

Susan-Says®:
Make Meetings Meaningful.

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How many times has this happened to you? You're sitting at your desk working diligently on a report or you're on the phone with a potential client about to close a deal when your Outlook calendar beeps at you reminding you about another meeting?

Meetings, meetings, meetings.....It seems as though we live in a world of endless meetings. Yet despite that fact, face-to-face meetings are the most popular form of business communication. In fact, 44 percent of executives surveyed by Office Team, an office staffing service, said they preferred to meet with people in person. Nothing saps time and the flow of productivity like a boring, routine meeting. But when managed correctly, meetings can be thought-provoking and productive. A well-run gathering in your office can actually reap great rewards by keeping your employees connected, informed, and feeling "in the loop."

For example, weekly staff meetings can create a competitive advantage for your company. Use them as an opportunity to brainstorm ideas, to gather information for better decision-making and to discuss client and associate issues. Make sure your employees understand they add great value by participating in the weekly roundtable update. This is their opportunity to show each other, and you, how they are contributing to the business. It also gives them the chance to be heard or ask questions. These types of group meetings are an excellent learning tool about how the company works as a whole and how they fit in.

Many businesses find it easier to call quick spur-of-the-moment meetings when needed, which can really benefit the business. Use this as a way to get everyone in the same room to bring them up-to-speed on an important issue or "late-breaking" topic. Calling a five-minute meeting can also prevent a barrage of e-mails going back and forth. When you schedule a more formal meeting, start it on time and end it on time. Set a realistic agenda and stay focused. If you've scheduled an hour meeting, but it only takes 20 minutes to get through your objectives--say goodbye. Dragging it out to fill an hour would be a waste of everyone's time.

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The time for which the meeting is scheduled is also important. Scheduling regular meetings at inconvenient times can have a very negative impact on morale. Early Monday morning or late Friday afternoon meetings won't be met with enthusiasm. Of course, emergencies are a reality for any company and may necessitate meetings at odd times, but routine meetings should be scheduled at a time that is reasonably convenient for the participants. Monday mornings at

Give your employees a reason to care about attending the meeting. If you don't get their buy-in in the first 10 minutes of the meeting, your team will simply check out, even if they're nodding their heads. As the business owner and leader of your company, your job is to explain: "Here's why we are here today. Here's what we have to get done. And here's what will happen if we don't."

As the old saying goes, time is money. Because meetings are an essential part of business today, make sure they are meaningful and productive. The result will be a better bottom line for your business.

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