

Ron Rosenhead

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Always in meetings.....

I was trying to get hold of the project manager. Or rather he was trying to get hold of me. However, I had tried 3 times already so I sent him an email knowing it would sink to the bottom of the pile.

I got to thinking that it wasn't just this project manager who always seemed to be in meetings. Several people I have been trying to get hold of always seem to be in back to back meetings.

Project Agency has been collecting statistics for several years. One of the questions is quite revealing:

'Project meetings are collaborative events which look at achievements not past failures'. The percentages are shown below:

Strongly agree:	1.3%
Agree:	25.6%
Disagree:	57.3%
Strongly Disagree	12.6%
Don't know	3.2%

Not very good stats are they? Interesting that just over 3% do not know how effective their meetings are!!

So, what can be done? Well, here are some golden rules for project management meetings (and meetings in general):

Rule 1: Ensure you have the right people there. May seem obvious but how many meetings go ahead with the wrong people there and the right people 'on the way' or a key stakeholder not even invited?

Rule 2: Have an agenda for each meeting and against each item put a time (the length of time the item **will** take). Ensure you stick to the stated time.

Rule 3: Have a clear objective. Is it to receive a highlight report, or to prepare a highlight report. Is it to review project progress based on milestones, or develop part of your plan, or all of these! If you go off agenda / objective here is a quick tip. Everyone is given a coloured card (any colour as long as they are the same). If a person goes off the agenda or is rambling on you put up your card. It works.... try it!

Rule 4: Summarise before moving on to the next point. This ensures everyone is clear about what has been agreed or said

Rule 5: Have a stand up meeting! Yes, stand up meetings i.e. **NO** chairs - speeds up the meeting & really does focus attention.

Rule 6: Papers....we are supposedly in the era of a paperless office! Ensure the meeting is not bogged down with papers. Use **highlight reports** to cut down paper & speed up the meeting.

Rule 7: Rules....what rules have you agreed? I know of one person who said that if the start time for a meeting was 3pm then no one was allowed in after this time! What are your rules for your meetings and does everyone know about them. Useful to use your cards here (rule 3)

Rule 8: Train....yes you can train people to be better in meetings. Chairing a meeting, contributing via appropriate questions, listening, preparing an agenda, these are all areas a person can be trained and developed. Call us or e mail events@projectagency.com for more information!

And finally (**Rule 9**) - review how successful your meetings have been. If you set out an hour and a half for a meeting and it has only lasted an hour then you should be saying well done (provided the meeting met its objective). If it lasted 2 hours then you should review why to stop it happening again.

Help make sure your meetings go well AND help make the scores above better, much better!!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Ron Rosenhead helps professional staff deliver projects. He works with solicitors, accountants, social workers, managers etc helping them deliver projects on time and to budget. He is a professional speaker, trainer, coach and author all in the field of project management. He can be contacted at +44(0) 208 446 7766 or www.ronrosenhead.co.uk/contact