

What is a successful meeting?



Meetings take a great deal of time and energy. If they are very long, unfocused and badly organised, they waste time which could be used to carry out more productive tasks.

A successful meeting has characteristics that create the acronym **POSTPEC**, **preparation, objective, structure, timed, participatory, effective chaired**.

It :

- **is well prepared**

Participants should be informed well in advance of the objective, the agenda and date of the meeting. Participants are expected to read any documents circulated in advance and be ready to take an active role in the meeting without being overly dominating or disruptive.

- **Has a clear objective**

This objective must be shared with all participants well before the meeting. Lack of purpose leads participants to make irrelevant contributions and lose direction. Meetings that lack focus waste time and energy. After an effective meeting, participants should feel they have achieved the goal of the meeting and know what the next steps will be and who is responsible for them.

- **Has a clear structure**

Depending on their goal, meetings have a structure that sets all the topics that will be covered and the actions that will need to be taken. This structure, together with details regarding the time and the location of the meeting are usually provided in an agenda, a document that is circulated before the meeting.

- **makes effective use of time**

Effective meetings start and end at the agreed times. Time must also be allocated to each item in the agenda. Overextended meetings demonstrate ineffective planning and inability of the chair to manage the available time and resources.

- **is participatory**

Meetings provide an opportunity to draw on the many perspectives brought by participants. They are an opportunity to motivate employees and allow them to contribute ideas so that they play a part and feel their ideas are valued. Meetings which allow certain groups and individuals the opportunity to dominate the discussion are less successful.

- **is effectively chaired**

The role of the chair is to introduce the meeting and take participants through the stages set by the agenda within the time allowed.

(Image licensed under CC0 1.0, 1001FreeDownloads.com/ Text © The Open University)