

A clear agenda will improve the effectiveness and the efficiency of any meeting. Think of preparing an agenda in the same way as preparing for an exam - in an exam, you need to be prepared for the big day, for what's to come. In this same way, you need to be prepared for a meeting - and your manager, colleagues and employees also need to be prepared.

So let's break it down:

1. What is the goal of the meeting?

Meetings become ineffective when the goal is not clear.

Without proper communication before the meeting some participants might be wondering why they have been invited. Invitees might also have a different understanding of the purpose of the meeting; are we brainstorming about subject ABC or do we need to make a decision during the meeting?

Keep the focus of the meeting as narrow as possible, define the topics to be discussed and don't allow additional issues to interfere.

How do we do that? By being very clear in the agenda who says what when.

2. Who and When... and Where

The purpose of the meeting dictates who should participate, when and how long the meeting should last and where it should take place.

Getting the key players and decision makers involved in the discussion and decision process is very important. If you don't include the right people they will feel frustrated and bypassed and will not be motivated to properly execute the plan they had no say in.

Timing and duration are also important. Make sure participants have enough time to prepare for the meeting, including the ability to propose their own agenda items, and limit the amount of time that is spend in the meeting.

Now let's look at where: if all participants can meet in the same physical location - great! But if not, explore video conferencing possibilities.

3. The Agenda

As I noted in the video lecture, and as you can see from the attached sample agendas, there are various options for what can be included in your agenda and these are limited only by the level of formality and reporting requirements.

At the very least, the agenda should note the date, time, location and purpose of the meeting, as well as topics for discussion / decision, and any required preparation.

Your company should have a template which it uses for preparing agendas, but if not then please feel free to adapt the ones which I have included with this lecture.