**Improve your meetings**

People don’t like meetings, so can be done about it?

According to Forbes® magazine, a recent survey reported that a whopping 85% of executives said they were unsatisfied with the efficiency and effectiveness of meetings at their companies. Yet many of these management-level men and women spend more than half of their time in meetings.

Consider some of these alarming statistics about meetings:

* There are estimated to be more than 11 million business meetings in the US every day.
* Most executives attend about 62 meetings every month.
* An average of 5.6 hours per week is spent in meetings.
* Research has found that over 50% of meeting time is wasted, equating to about one day per week of lost time per employee.

**Make Meetings More Efficient and Effective**

Certain chapter meetings are necessary. Plans must be made, chapter activities must be managed, decisions must be made, and people need to be apprised of important information. If only 15% of business meetings are effective, how do you make sure your chapter emulates that 15%?

Once good way is by using visuals such as flowcharts, graphs, pictures, etc., to improve the efficiency and productivity of your meetings. A key tenant of Lean Six Sigma is “Make It Visual”. Visual communication has been shown to reduce meeting times by as much as 25%. Effective meetings use a visual agenda that allows you to build action items in real time. This process is known as live information capture and will produce results that are up to six times more effective than communicating with words alone.

Here are some simple tips that will help make your meetings more effective and efficient.

1. To communicate effectively - *visually* - use a conference room projector or connect attendees via computer using an online meeting platform such as WebExTM or GoToMeetingTM.
2. Have an agenda prepared ahead of time. According to a survey conducted by Microsoft®, 63% of meetings in the US don't have a prepared agenda! Make sure that the agenda is structured around what you want to accomplish, rather than following a rote format. Make the agenda interactive through the use of visuals.
3. Send out the agenda to other attendees in advance. Elicit feedback and make sure everyone is clear on the purpose and goal of the meeting, with the discussion items clearly defined. Those attending are made aware - *in advance* - that decisions will be made, responsibilities will be assigned, and completion dates will be set.
4. Document decisions, tasks and assignments during the meeting. Assign action items to each person right on the visual agenda in real time. Everyone in the meeting sees the action item assigned. There is no room for different interpretations of action taken and the person assigned the task is publicly accountable for completing it.
5. As you add dates for the start and completion of each task, build a timeline for the project, with accountability that everyone in the meeting can see. The meeting will have then produced a measurable outcome with assignments and due dates.
6. Create an Action Item list during the meeting, review it before adjourning, and use it to track progress between meetings.
7. Try to keep meetings brief, but don't sacrifice quality. The goal is to eliminate unnecessary meetings but make sure the ones you have are highly productive.

**Make Sure that the Right People Attend**

If decisions, particularly critical decisions, must be made, then be sure that the decision-makers will be there. If they can't, then the meeting will be a waste of everyone else's time and needs to be canceled or rescheduled.

Sometimes meetings involve people who have no stake in the outcome. Those in attendance should be crucial to the decisions that need to be made or the assignments that will be given.