

It's Not Over till It's Over: Five Strategies to Improve Your Meetings

The end of your meeting may be the most important part of all.

By Erika Oliver



We tend to put great thought into meetings before they happen but less so while they're winding up. If you want to reap true benefits from your meetings, though, don't adjourn too quickly. Do these five things at the end of every meeting to give the team the energy to move forward and set the tone for what happens next.

1. Ask participants to share one thing they'll do before the next meeting.

The most high-energy meeting is doomed if people leave without knowing precisely what's expected of them. Eliminate the "what now?" problem by assuring that each person chooses a task to move the project forward.

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2. Ask each person what tools are needed for the next steps.

This question helps people think more deeply about what they plan to do before the next meeting. If they're stalled by missing information or needed support, they'll stop before they even begin. It's also important to share how and when the tools and information will be available. Tools

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3. Revisit the vision with a picture.

Show the completed building, the project timeline, the face of the client who will be served. Team members are more likely to follow through on tasks and stay the course if they clearly understand the "why" of a project and, most important, their specific role. Not only is a picture worth a thousand words but it also motivates people and connects them to the larger goal.

4. Have people share what they consider the most meaningful part of the meeting.

This strategy accomplishes four important things: (1) It gives the facilitator feedback about what resonated with the group. (2) It summarizes meeting content for greater information retention. (3) It ends the meeting on a positive note. (4) When people communicate a valuable learning experience, they become more bonded to the group.

5. Invoke a team cheer or ceremony.

Fun is often a missing component in meetings and projects. Providing opportunities to let off steam, celebrate small successes, and just play

will go further in motivating people than you might think. Put your hands together and shout, "Go Team!" or share a round of applause for each other. Don't worry if someone holds back and acts as if it's "silly" to celebrate. Once they feel the group's energy, they'll be first in line for the next team cheer. If nobody's enjoying the process, what's the point? ■

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