



HOW TO RUN AN EFFECTIVE RSO MEETING

Let's be honest, most people are not excited about attending a meeting. Meetings can feel repetitive, run longer than expected, or end without clear results. The good news is that meetings do not have to be that way.

A well-run meeting keeps people engaged, stays focused on the purpose, and leads to meaningful action. Whether you are planning an event, making decisions, or discussing new ideas, effective meetings help organizations make progress and keep members involved.

The following eight strategies can help your organization run meetings that are productive, organized, and worth attending.

- 1. Only meet when a meeting is needed.**
Meetings are most useful when a group needs to discuss ideas, solve a problem, or make a decision together. Avoid scheduling meetings simply because they are part of a routine. If an update can be shared through email or a message, consider doing that instead.
- 2. Start with a clear purpose.**
Before the meeting, identify what you want to accomplish. Create an agenda that outlines the topics to be discussed and the decisions that need to be made. At the beginning of the meeting, explain the goal. At the end, review what was accomplished so everyone leaves with a sense of progress and direction.
- 3. Encourage shared ownership.**
Successful meetings involve the entire group. Give members opportunities to suggest agenda items and contribute to discussions. When questions arise about how the meeting should proceed, invite the group to help determine the best path forward.
- 4. Respect everyone's time.**
Start and end on schedule whenever possible. Members are choosing to spend their time with your organization, so make that time worthwhile. Staying organized and focused demonstrates respect for everyone's commitment.
- 5. Prioritize the most important topics.**
Not every agenda item requires the same amount of discussion. Spend the most time on decisions and conversations that require input from the group. Smaller



details can often be handled by individuals, committees, or follow-up conversations.

6. **Keep discussions focused.**

Use the agenda as a guide throughout the meeting. If the conversation begins to drift away from the topic, help redirect the discussion. When new ideas emerge, decide as a group whether they should be addressed immediately or saved for a future meeting.

7. **Create opportunities for participation.**

Meetings are more engaging when everyone has a chance to contribute. Encourage quieter members to share their perspectives and be mindful of participants who may be dominating the conversation. The goal is to create space for a variety of voices and ideas.

8. **Develop strong facilitation skills.**

The facilitator helps guide the discussion, manage time, and keep the group focused on its goals. Because facilitation requires attention and leadership, it is often helpful for the facilitator to focus on managing the meeting rather than leading the discussion. Like any leadership skill, effective facilitation improves with practice and experience.

FACILITATORS ROLE

Strong meetings help organizations stay organized, make progress on goals, and keep members engaged. When meetings are planned and facilitated well, participants leave feeling informed, involved, and ready to take action.

As the meeting facilitator, you play an important role in creating that experience. Your preparation, organization, and ability to guide discussion can help the group stay focused and productive. The following tips can help you lead meetings that are efficient, engaging, and worthwhile for everyone involved.

- Create an environment where members feel comfortable sharing ideas, asking questions, and participating in discussion. A welcoming atmosphere encourages stronger engagement and collaboration.
- Bring energy and enthusiasm to the meeting. Your attitude often influences the group's energy level and willingness to participate.
- Focus on facilitating rather than participating. As the facilitator, your primary role is to guide the conversation, manage the flow of the meeting, and keep members engaged. Pay attention to who is contributing, encourage quieter members to share their perspectives, and help redirect conversations when



needed. Because facilitation requires your full attention, designate another member to take meeting notes and record action items.

- Establish expectations at the beginning of the meeting. This may include encouraging participation, maintaining respectful dialogue, following brainstorming guidelines when appropriate, and clearly communicating the meeting's end time.
- Use the agenda to keep discussions focused. Refer back to it throughout the meeting to help the group stay on topic and work toward its goals.
- Manage time thoughtfully. Allocate enough time for meaningful discussion while keeping the meeting moving forward. Balancing participation with progress helps the group cover important topics without feeling rushed or getting stuck on a single issue.

Effective facilitators understand that agendas should provide structure while still allowing flexibility. If the group feels that a topic needs additional discussion, it is appropriate to adjust the agenda and spend more time on that issue. The goal is not simply to move through the agenda as quickly as possible, but to have meaningful conversations that help the organization make progress.

It is also important to recognize when a discussion has reached a conclusion. Once the group has made a decision or reached consensus, summarize the outcome and transition to the next topic. This helps meetings maintain momentum and prevents the group from revisiting the same points repeatedly.

Part of a facilitator's role is managing participation in a way that encourages engagement from all members. When conversations drift off topic or a single individual begins to dominate the discussion, redirect the conversation respectfully and professionally. Simple statements such as, "Let's bring the conversation back to our agenda item," or "Thank you for sharing. Let's hear from a few others as well," can help keep discussions productive while making sure everyone has an opportunity to contribute.

Use members' names during discussions. This helps create a welcoming environment and encourages participation.

- Encourage a variety of perspectives. Rather than judging ideas, invite additional thoughts and viewpoints to promote creative problem-solving.
- Ask open-ended questions that begin with "how," "what," or "why" to encourage meaningful discussion and deeper thinking.



- Practice active listening. Make sure you understand what members are saying and ask for clarification when needed.
- Involve the entire group. Encourage quieter members to share their thoughts and check in with participants who seem confused or disengaged.
- Remain calm and neutral when challenges arise. Work with the group to identify solutions rather than trying to solve every problem yourself.
- Use humor appropriately to create a positive atmosphere and help members feel comfortable participating.
- Summarize key decisions, action items, and next steps before the meeting ends so everyone leaves with a clear understanding of what comes next.
- Leave time for questions and clarification to encourage engagement and avoid misunderstandings.
- Recognize contributions and accomplishments, both large and small. People are more likely to stay involved when they feel appreciated and valued.

WRAPPING UP THE MEETING

As the meeting comes to a close, take a few minutes to make sure everyone leaves with a clear understanding of next steps.

- Review any unfinished topics and determine whether they need additional discussion at a future meeting.
- Avoid rushing major decisions simply because the meeting is ending. It is often better to revisit important issues than make a hurried choice.
- Confirm the date, time, and location of the next meeting whenever possible.
- Develop a preliminary agenda for the next meeting, including any unresolved items that still need attention.
- End on a positive note by recognizing progress, thanking members for their contributions, and highlighting accomplishments.
- Review the meeting minutes after the meeting concludes. Accurate notes help track decisions, action items, and responsibilities.
- Follow up on assigned tasks and commitments. Effective meetings do not end when everyone leaves the room; success comes from turning ideas and decisions into action.

