

SECTION 13

MEETING MANAGEMENT

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Despite everything you've heard and witnessed about meetings, they don't have to be boring, needless, and too long. **You can change all that** by learning how to run meetings more efficiently.

Organize Your Meeting

1. Determine what you want to accomplish in the meeting,
2. Figure out who you need to help you.
3. Determine if the meeting should be in person or virtual.

Once you've got the "what" and "who" down, the "when" and "where" are easily completed. You may already have a monthly meeting routine established.

Schedule a Meeting When You Have a Good Reason to, Such as When You:

- Need the entire group to provide information or advice on a subject
- Want the team to participate in making a decision or solving a problem
- Need to clear up an issue that cannot be resolved in a one-on-one exchange
- Want to share information, a success, or a concern with the group, or make everyone aware of a particular situation
- Are dealing with a problem that needs input from members of different groups who have varying perspectives or agendas
- Find that responsibility for a problem issue or area needs to be clarified
- Discover that the group feels a strong need to meet
- Decide if it should be an in-person meeting or if the meeting could be arranged as a conference call or Zoom meeting*

Don't Call a Meeting When:

- The subject is a personal issue that is better handled one-on-one
- You don't have time to prepare
- Another method of communication (e.g., email or phone) would work as well or better

Tips on Running a Meeting (Virtual or In-Person)

Open the meeting with authority.

- **Begin the meeting on time.** Even if a few participants are missing, start the discussion as though they were there. When they arrive and discover they have missed some important points, they'll know not to be late next time. Don't back up and start again, or you will only reward the latecomers and punish the people who showed up on time.

- **Introduce the matters to be discussed.** Hold a brief introductory discussion to make sure the group clearly understands the agenda, objectives, and desired outcomes of the meeting, and then make any necessary adjustments.
- **Establish or review the ground rules.** Talk about the behaviors and principles group members agree upon to ensure a constructive meeting. Here's a list of some basic ground rules:
 - Commit to beginning and ending the meeting on time
 - Determine who may contribute to the agenda
 - Understand how decisions will be made
 - Set a time limit on problem-solving or decision-making. Get approval from the group before going beyond the time allotted on a particular topic.
 - Clarify constraints that exist for any issue—for example, the budget for a specific speaker
 - Ask for everyone's participation and limit interruptions

Tip: If participants don't know one another, take time for personal introductions. Include name, type of practice, location of practice, etc.

Run the meeting skillfully.

- **Make an agenda** and distribute to all attendees.
- **Follow the agenda.** Stay on track as much as possible. If you stray from the agenda path, you'll quickly lose your focus.
- **Start the agenda with the easier matters.** For example, a brief report from the Secretary or Treasurer may be a good place to start. This will smooth the path for more difficult topics to follow. When you're in the midst of a discussion, keep an eye on the issue and the time, or assign someone to be timekeeper. Decide when the group has come to an agreement on a topic, recognize it for all, and move on. Don't let things get sloppy.
- **Be aware of yourself as the leader.** The way you act as leader and facilitator creates an environment that encourages people to contribute and keep the discussion on track.

As you conduct a meeting:

- Monitor your own level of participation to make sure you're not dominating the discussion
- Make it possible for quiet people to contribute
- Control interruptions and dominators
- Be positive and encouraging about the things people say
- Praise is a simple and effective way of keeping participants engaged and wanting to contribute
- Intervene if a participant criticizes or attacks another member's input
- When you sense there's a lot of interest in discussing a point, start watching and listening for everyone who wants to contribute, then acknowledge them with eye contact and a nod, or by saying, "Let's hear from Rob first, then Sue, then Steve." (If using Zoom, assign someone the responsibility of managing the chat box and call out the names of the people in the queue to contribute.)
- Make sure all points of view are heard. As the leader, you want to hear everyone's thoughts; otherwise, you'll have members who feel left out or dissatisfied with the process. To avoid this, ask for feedback regularly.
- Don't forget to ask a general question, such as "Have we forgotten anything?"

Tip: Have the Secretary or a scribe writing down the important information—major discussion points, the decisions made, the agreed-upon responsibilities after the meeting, timeline, next meeting date, etc.

- Let the quiet ones have a chance to speak up or call on them directly
- Give the group a little time to think things over, don't be in a rush to vote or make a decision.
- If all else fails, ask someone to play devil's advocate to stir up debate
- **Provide closure at the end.** Summarize the meeting by reiterating key points, decisions, and next steps and assign who is responsible for what task. This process ties up loose ends and clarifies any questions.
- **End on time or a few minutes early if possible**
 - Thank everyone for their time and participation
 - Schedule the next meeting
 - Keep everything organized by taking meeting minutes

Tip: Go around the room asking for each person's input to ensure that people feel heard. Note, remember that this can be a time-consuming activity, so use it only for important matters.

Tips on Running a Virtual Zoom Meeting

Online meetings are a great way for your group to meet virtually when in-person meetings are not possible. Zoom is a video conferencing website used for virtual meetings. For detailed Zoom training and support, visit support.zoom.us.

- **The host of the meeting is the person who set up the Zoom meeting on their account.** The host can manage the meeting controls, such as the ability to mute or unmute participants.
- **Ask everyone in the meeting to stay remain on mute unless they are speaking.** This will cut down on unwanted background noise. If there are issues with unidentified background noise, the host may want to mute all participants. For larger meetings, you may want to disable participants from being able to unmute themselves.
- **Utilize the chat feature.** For larger meetings, ask participants at the beginning of the meeting to write in the chat box and you can then read the questions/comments aloud.
- **You may want to record all or parts of the meeting.** To record, select the record button in the meeting controls. You can either record to the cloud in your Zoom account or to a local device, such as your computer.
- **If all participants of the meeting are present, lock the meeting.** This provides added security against hackers from attending your meeting.
- **Consider enabling the waiting room feature.** Enabling the virtual waiting room allows the host to admit individuals to the meeting instead of automatically entering. This feature adds security to larger meetings where you can control who and when someone enters your meeting.

* For instructions on hosting an online meeting using Zoom, please contact membership@massdental.org.

Key Points for In-person Program Management

Tip: If the group is having trouble with the last item on the agenda, this may be a sign of waning attention or energy. It is a good idea to review that item at another time.

- Be sure your venue has a 6- to 8-foot table to use for registering attendees and displaying nametags.
- Bring your attendee list printed in alphabetical order. If attendees are given name tags, print name tags ahead of time and lay them out on the table in alphabetically by last name. Keep the attendance sheet for future records.
- Bring extra name tags in case anyone pays at the door.
- Bring course evaluation survey forms** and put the course-evaluation forms out on the table with the name badges for the attendees take and to fill out at the end of the lecture. Attendees should be instructed to give the completed course-evaluation form to a specified District officer at the end of the meeting.
- Bring pre-done verification of participation forms** and lay them out while all attendees are in the lecture. Attendees may pick up their forms upon departure. Attendees should not be given a blank form. Note: if awarding continuing education credit an attendee must participate for 50 minutes per credit.
- Districts must retain Verification of Participation forms with the attendance sheet and completed course evaluations for up to six years. Each licensee shall maintain documentation of completion of the requisite CEUs for four years or two renewal cycles following renewal of the license, which shall be furnished to the Board of Registration in Dentistry (BORID) upon request. Such documentation must comply with the requirements of 234CMR 8.00. On the attendance sheet, mark who paid at the door and those who didn't show up to the course.
- Identify someone in advance to run the registration table and be sure they are familiar with those who have registered online (e.g., Ticket Leap, etc.) and those who paid by check or cash, in case there are any questions.
- Depending on the number of attendees, select one to two greeters to float around the room to welcome guests to the event and introduce guests to one another.
- If you need a Verification of Participation template, please contact Sarah Pilling, MDS Coordinator of Districts & Managed Services, at districts@massdental.org.

****To obtain a copy of all meeting forms, please see Section 15 of this Manual.**