



Recommendations: Effective Meetings

Meetings are an important part of work, and this is no different for animal shelters. However, if meetings are run poorly, they end up taking away time and resources that could be used for the animals. With a busy shelter, how do you make the most of your meetings and get back to your day? Here are ways to run effective meetings based on Dr. Steven Rogelberg's recent book, *The Surprising Science of Meetings*.

Best Practices

1) Don't Invite Everyone

While we want everyone to feel included, not all employees need to be at every meeting. As the number of people in a meeting increases, so does dysfunction. So, if someone doesn't need to be there, don't send them an invite. However, make sure to keep them in the loop. You can do this by letting them know you don't think it's necessary for them to come, sending them the agenda before and minutes after for their input, and welcoming them to come to the next meeting(s) if they feel like they should be there. People will thank you for saving them time that they could be doing other work.

2) Be a Steward of Others' Time

Research shows people hate when meetings start late, but that they hate it even more when meetings end late. Not only is it rude, but running over time can cut into other meetings that potentially happen afterwards, leading to a vicious cycle of lateness. There are a few easy ways to prevent this. First, try switching up the agenda. Instead of listing out objectives for the meeting, list questions. Once those questions are answered, the meeting can be adjourned (regardless if time is up). Another way to do this is by switching up the timing of meetings. Most meetings are set up to be 30 or 60 minutes long. This doesn't allow for bathroom breaks or transitions to other work/meetings. Try having 25- or 50-minute meetings. Parkinson's law states that work expands to whatever time we allot to it. So, if you schedule a meeting for 50 minutes, it will likely end in 50 minutes. Using tactics like this can help meetings end on time, allowing you to give your employees one of the best gifts you can give them: time.

3) Switch Things Up

There are more ways you can switch up meetings other than just changing their timing. Try having a meeting where everyone is standing up instead of sitting down. Research shows this speeds up meetings while still getting through all of their content, making these meetings more efficient. However, make sure to use this type of meeting sparingly. They are ideal for meetings with less people

and shorter time periods (15 minutes or so). These meetings and/or walking meetings can be ideal for busy shelter life. Another way to switch things up is by changing the location of meetings. Having the same meeting at the same time at the same location can leave people complacent. Move to a different room at a different time. Little changes like these will help people become more engaged and invested in the meeting.

4) Get Everyone Involved

Getting everyone involved will help limit people from daydreaming, working on other things, and/or having side conversations. Research shows that those who talk the most in a meeting (usually the leader) come out of the meeting feeling more satisfied with it. By getting everyone involved, it will help everyone feel more satisfied with the meeting they attended. One way to do so is by having a silent think & share. Attendees address a problem or question on their own, write down their solution, and then the group evaluates the anonymous results. Another tactic is to have a private vote on key issues discussed. These strategies limit certain people from dominating the conversation, allowing others to get involved and feel more satisfied with the meeting overall.

5) Get Feedback

Most people are unaware of how their meetings are going (again, going back to the idea that if you lead the meeting and/or talk most, you'll be more satisfied with them). After a meeting, ask your fellow employees what went well, what didn't, and how they'd change things up. This can provide insight into other ways you can change your meetings to make them more effective. Blind spots can be addressed effectively by using this strategy. Others will appreciate your willingness to give them a voice, and you can learn a lot from their thoughts.

Conclusion & Additional Resources

Making meetings more effective can help save time and resources that could be better spent on helping the animals you serve. Try out some of these tips to better run meetings at your shelter. For more tips, look into the following resources:

- ***The Surprising Science of Meetings (Book):*** <https://www.stevenrogelberg.com/books-media-etc>
- ***Talks at Google: Meetings (Video):*** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWiIZosXxCM>
- ***TedTalk: Meetings (Video):*** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oeoy3zCgTHU>