

FIVE WAYS TO HAVE MORE PRODUCTIVE TEAM MEETINGS

LIFE LESSONS FOR BUSINESS OWNERS



You've heard all of the advice about meetings – hold stand up meetings in the hall, invite only essential personnel, invite everyone, have snacks, nix snacks, use technology, don't use technology, but only one

thing holds true – with more productivity surrounding your company's meeting process, there is more doing and less meeting. Period.

While some people reference Steve Jobs or Donald Trump as the inspiration for their meeting style, there is so much more context than simply a single quote from each as to how they run their own meetings. And their process wasn't born overnight, it was through trial and error, just as yours should be. If you're a florist in Nashville, having a *Boiler Room* style environment won't have the same impact as at a financial firm on Wall Street. And if you're a fast paced public relations team in D.C., a touchy feely 30 minute team building meeting every morning will hurt your business.

So how do you decide what to do for more productive team meetings? Andy Bailey, serial entrepreneur who is the CEO and Founder of Petra Coach, an entrepreneurial coaching firm offers some pointers.

Bailey affirms that Steve Jobs had a unique meeting management style, wherein only the brightest minds who are directly involved with the project or topic of discussion are invited to attend; anyone else will be asked to leave.

“Do I agree with Steve Jobs's meeting management philosophy?” Bailey asks. “50 percent of the time, yes.”

Bailey outlines the two primary types of meetings, with Jobs' philosophy applying to the second:

- **Update or rhythm “huddle.”** These are short (typically 15 minutes at the most) meetings, we call them huddles, where everyone meets to discuss four primary check-in topics: 1. What's up, 2. Stucks or needs, 3. Goal or project fulfillment reports, and 4. Daily top priorities. These to-the-point meetings keep everyone on the same page, establish routine and create accountability. It's key that everyone from the janitor to the CEO attend a huddle.
- **Strategic challenge-solution meeting.** These are more in-depth meetings that require the brightest and most in-tuned team members who can directly affect the mechanics of the business. This is Steve's type of meeting.

Five ways to have more productive strategic challenge-solution meetings



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With that in mind, Bailey offers the following five guidelines in his own words, to ensure your strategic challenge-solution meetings are purposeful and effective, “the way Steve would want them.”

1. Start on time. So often, meeting times end up being more of a suggestion than a rule. I see it all the time. Focused members arrive as scheduled and then wait for everyone else to show up. Subsequently, as if their time wasn't already wasted enough, those punctual people are then forced to round up the troops. How stupid is that. Further, by continuing this cycle of accepting late arrivals you enable the slackers and perpetuate the faulty system. After all, why would people show up on time if they know someone will come get them and be their personal calendar alert? “It's ok. Andy will come get me when it's time to actually start the meeting...”

2. End on time. If you say you will end a meeting at 11 a.m., do everything in your power to end the meeting at 11 a.m. If you abuse the privilege of taking up other's valuable time too often, you will consequently lose it FOREVER. If you must run over, you must get a consensus from the group that the subject matter you're discussing is important enough to yield additional time. If it's not—shut up and end the meeting.

3. Present an agenda. Don't waste meeting time thinking about why you're holding the meeting in the first place.

Know what the meeting is about before you start it. Have a set agenda that describes the orders of business and follow it. *Remember: No agenda. No attenda.*

4. Delineate an expected result. Share your desired outcome at your meeting's commencement—Put it in writing if you have to. “We are here today to XYZ.” By doing this you give those in attendance a true reason to be there and a purpose to work toward.

5. Set them free. Often times, meetings have subtopics that are only relevant to a handful of attendees. Schedule those discussions later on the agenda so those not involved may leave. Makes sense, right? Right.

The takeaway

To emulate the Steve Jobs method, don't go into it blindly. Follow Andy Bailey's advice, and be mindful of the details, because the truth is that Jobs was extremely detail oriented, practicing for an upcoming speech over 100 times before hitting that stage – put the work in so that your meetings look effortless, and create more opportunities for your team to be productive.

Tara Steele is the News Director at AgentGenius, covering real estate news, technology news and everything in between. If you'd like to reach Tara with a question, comment, press release or hot news tip, feel free to email her at agstaffwriter@gmail.com



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