

Resources & Tools: Ideas for Structuring an Effective Meeting

Whether scheduling regular meetings or meetings to address a specific issue, farmers may want to consider the following questions and recommendations.²

Preparing for the meeting

- ✓ Who will lead the meeting?
- ✓ Create an agenda
 - Identify topics for discussion
 - Start with the most important items
 - Handle short, urgent items first so they don't get crowded out by longer discussions
 - Identify who will be in charge of leading each item on the agenda
- ✓ Think about an appropriate meeting set-up; circle for discussion or lecture set-up if there's a presentation.
- ✓ Try to provide snacks and refreshments at the meeting for a positive atmosphere
- ✓ Make sure everyone knows about the meeting with adequate advance notice and a reminder on the day of.

Conducting the meeting

- ✓ Establish ground rules and guidelines for the meeting
- ✓ Stick to the agenda; if someone brings up an unrelated topic, thank them for the contribution and revisit it at the appropriate time in the meeting
- ✓ Monitor time for discussions; if a particular issue is going on for too long, empower someone or a group of individuals to discuss the issue in more detail and come to the next meeting ready to present ideas to the group
- ✓ Encourage everyone's participation and make sure the discussion is not dominated by just a few individuals
 - Start meeting off by commending employees on achievements since last meeting
 - Designate a time block in the meeting for employees to voice concerns and things that worked well
 - Try not to structure the meeting so the manager talks the whole time; if employee participation is wanted, try ensure that they are speaking 50% of the time
 - Never shoot down a suggestion in front of the group, and be sure to follow-up with individual employees about topics brought up in the meeting if necessary.
- ✓ Take minutes
- ✓ At the end of the meeting, summarize key decisions and actions, and make sure everyone understands what happened and what follow-up tasks are to be completed

Evaluating the meeting

- ✓ Provide a space for employees to give feedback about the meeting. Did they like how it was run? What worked well and what could have gone better? Ask them to come to you, or a communication liaison with comments and suggestions.
- ✓ See meeting evaluation form at:
http://web.ewu.edu/groups/studentlife/Effective_Meeting_Strat.pdf.

² Ideas for structuring an effective meeting is an adaptation from Chang, Richard Y. and Kevin Kehoe. *Meetings that Work! A Practical Guide to Shorter and More Productive Meetings*. Chang Assoc., 1994.