How to have
better meetings

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Are your meetings effective?

Did you know, office workers spend 17 hours a month in meetings. That's the equivalent of SMBs spending £3,000 per worker per year on meetings, yet most people find them ineffective. In fact, 9 out of 10 workers say they are more productive at their desks.

27%
regularly **catch up on emails** during meetings

78%
say most meetings follow the **same structure,** regardless of the topic

22%
of Millennials have **checked social media** during meetings

55%
find the majority of **meetings boring**

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Introduction

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Good meetings are essential for gathering information, for making decisions and for moving an organisation forward, however, too often the meetings we have just aren't effective. In fact, **85% of the people** we surveyed said they were more productive at their desks. **Over half of office workers** said that the meetings they attend do not usually result in a clear action or outcome.

Our research found that many meetings are unsuccessful because no information is shared beforehand or too many people are invited, resulting in attendees being disengaged and turning to their own work or personal messages.

It's a problem that all companies face, even the most successful companies in the world. At Amazon, Jeff Bezos asks for half an hour of silence at the start of a meeting to review notes. Elon Musk, of Tesla, advises walking out if you're bored. Unfortunately, these options aren't available to most of us!

Bad meetings are not just the result of our actions (or inactions), but also the environment that we're in and the tools that we use. Have you tried to present to a large room using just your laptop? Have you tried to have a small, informal meeting in a formal boardroom? Or squeeze too many people into a room without windows? It sets you up to fail before the meeting has even started.

This guide gives some sensible and easy-to-implement advice from workplace psychologist Dr Nigel Oseland, a checklist of what to consider when buying a meeting room display and a case study from Festo, a company who has made its meeting spaces more productive.

We hope you find it useful, and we would love to hear your tips for keeping meetings on track. Contact us **@Sharp_Europe** on Twitter **#bettermeetings** and visit us at **www.sharp.co.uk**

How to have better meetings

1. Five steps to better meetings
2. What to consider when buying a meeting room solution
3. Festo: creating meeting rooms that put people first

Five steps to better meetings

Dr Nigel Oseland
Environmental Psychologist,
Workplace Unlimited

If meetings are so unproductive, do we really need them? There is a large amount of evidence and advice in management books about why we meet, which can be summarised as: to share knowledge, to make important decisions, to come up with ideas, to deal with personal matters and to socialise. These are all crucial activities for an organisation.

So, the short answer is yes, we need meetings, we just need to get better at them. We need to prepare for them more thoughtfully. There are five deceptively simple steps to take when setting up a meeting which will lead to a much better outcome:

1. **Share information in advance**

   Always share an agenda. When Sharp asked people for the reasons for bad meetings, a third said it was because no information was shared beforehand. How do people know if they should be in the meeting if they don't know what it's about? Without an agenda people can find themselves in a meeting for an hour thinking 'why am I here, I don't need to be here.' That's when they disengage.

2. **Limit the invitations**

   Many meetings become unproductive because there are too many people invited, or the right people aren't invited. This becomes even more problematic when it's a virtual meeting and it's harder to follow who has joined and who is speaking. Limit the attendees to those who are essential to move a project forward.

   Sometimes people are invited to meetings out of courtesy, not necessity. If you are tempted to invite someone purely because of their seniority, instead ask if they would prefer to see the minutes afterwards to review. Then it's up to them.

   Some people feel they can't decline a meeting invitation, even when they suspect the meeting will be a waste of their time. Be a responsible meeting attendee as well as a responsible organiser. If you're not sure you need to be there, ask for the agenda.

3. Avoid back-to-back meetings

Consider whether you need to start on the hour, and if people will have used the room before you. In organisations that have back to back meetings in the same room, the first ten minutes of each meeting is often wasted because they are spent in a changeover. Avoid this by starting with the organiser arriving 10 minutes beforehand.

Often, if you are using AV or IT equipment, there can be a delay in set up. If you know that you might have delays with IT, make the first 10 minutes of the meeting networking time for the participants while you get organised.

4. Go shorter

There is a lot of research - for example from Tony Schwartz and the Energy Project – which found that we can only maintain peak performance for 90 minutes. In Sharp's survey, most people said they couldn't concentrate for more than 45 minutes. If you need to have a longer meeting organise a variety of activities and meeting leaders and build in breaks for people to digest what has been said. No-one wants to be in one of those two-hour meetings where by the end of it we've forgotten what was said at the start.

5. Use different areas

In Sharp's survey two thirds of people said they do not have different types of meeting room for different types of meeting. Meetings that have different purposes have different requirements and will benefit from a different layout. For example, a creative meeting requires a space with more colour and stimulation. We know from biophilic research that daylight, plants and natural materials can help the creative process. Personal meetings require a more domestic-type environment which sets a friendlier tone. This is obviously inappropriate for a board meeting, which will require a more formal arrangement of furniture.

Think about the subconscious messages that people receive from a space. For a creative meeting, do you really want people to sit down at a table and chairs? If you want a short meeting, a standing area makes it clear to everyone that this is a quick active meeting. People in an informal space are more likely to make a quick decision and move on.

What to consider when buying a meeting room solution

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A meeting room is an expensive space in a company. Not because of the cost of the equipment, but because of the cost of having people sat together for a long time – at least **17 hours per month** according to our research. That's about **£3,000 per employee per year** for those earning an average salary. However, those who attend the most meetings tend to be higher wage earners and when they are in a meeting they are not generating revenue. There's an opportunity cost to consider too.

Meeting areas need to be set up to make people as productive as possible, with the right AV tools. When people are buying a commercial display from Sharp they are usually replacing a consumer display or a projector which doesn't have the connections or interactivity that they now need, and they want to upgrade to a professional solution that will support them properly.

If you are considering purchasing a new meeting room display, these are the questions to consider and discuss with a sales person.

1. Do you need an <u>interactive display</u> or a 'standard' or <u>non-interactive display</u>? Will you be using the display to visualise information, or to interact with it?

2. How big is your meeting area? What's the viewing distance? What size display will work best?

3. Is the display easy-to-use? Is it positioned where everyone can view or access it?

4. Do you need more than one display, and a solution to mirror your content?

5. How will you get information on to the digital display? Will people bring their own devices (BYOD) into a meeting and need to connect to the display? Do you work on USB sticks?

6. What file formats will be displayed?

7. What information will be displayed? Do you need ultra-high 4K resolution to see a great amount of detail?

8. What is your IT environment? Will the display fit into it? Is your display recommended by any solutions providers you are using?

Different meeting areas also have specific requirements

The boardroom

For some organisations the boardroom might be the only meeting room available, so it will be used by a variety of people. This means that a display needs to be intuitive and easy to use, especially if it's interactive. Many of our displays come with an Active Pen which you can simply pick up and start using. This gives people a lot of confidence, particularly workers who are reluctant to use this type of technology because they think it will be complicated or won't do what they want it to do.

A boardroom is likely to need a video conferencing solution for remote meetings, so in addition to a display you will need a camera, a PC and video conferencing software. Some of our customers choose, for example, a Crestron Room Lync (RL2 Room System) solution with a Sharp display. This has compatibility with Skype for Business and Microsoft apps so you can be confident that the solution will fit into your IT system and the applications that you use.

60% of people said their office did not have small informal meeting spaces.

The huddle space

In our research, almost 60% of people said their office did not have small informal meeting spaces. This is a shame because most work meetings are with two or three people. These meetings don't require a big room, but it is useful to have them away from desks in a separate area, so you can focus on the meeting rather than what's happening at your desk.

We are seeing many of our customers turn informal areas like canteens, receptions and open plan areas into meeting areas using furniture and technology. Furniture solutions like cubicles and pods are attractive because you can move them, even taking them with you if you move office.

Sharp's huddle displays are included in a range of furniture options, from a semi-enclosed Cocoon with integrated table and seating, to the Plug-and-Meet, a mobile solution that can be easily moved to different rooms or areas in the office. It has the benefits of being mobile, but also the benefits of a fixed installation with neat cabling and a professional look.

The training room

Training rooms in a corporate environment have the same requirements as a classroom: a display large enough for everyone to see, easy-to-use for the trainer and the participants, compatibility with all devices that the trainer wants to use and reliability. Sharp displays also include some features specially designed for teachers like a freeze-frame button that lets you freeze the content on the display while you work on content on your device.

We have a public-sector customer with a logistical planning room which is used to brief large groups of people. They use a large Sharp BIG PAD with Touch Display Connect technology which lets people connect their own devices to the display. This means they can follow the training on their own device, clearly see all the information and make their own annotations.

During these sessions many specialists need to contribute to the discussion. When you are 20 people it's difficult to all work in front of the screen and explain things, but using Touch Display Connect the leader can easily manage the meeting from BIG PAD by giving rights to people to share from their devices to the display. People are more engaged, they pay more attention.

The creative area

An interactive display is a great tool for a brainstorm. It combines all the benefits of a flipchart with the benefits of being a digital device that can connect to all your other digital devices and get information immediately into the apps you use. You don't need to take a photo of the notes and email them to yourself for example.

For creative areas, consider the size of the display and allow enough space for people to gather around it. You also want a display with multi-touch so that more than one person can work on it at once. Also think about location as, the creative area might not be a room, it could be in the corner of the office where people can get to it quickly when they're inspired. If you have a display that is portable, people can use it more spontaneously.

If you are a creative organisation, an interactive display is also a great way to present your work to clients and customers. You can impress your audience and let them interact with the content too, demonstrating that you have the tools to quickly translate ideas into action.

FESTO

Creating meeting rooms that put people first

Festo, the German automation technology company, has updated its meeting rooms and common areas with BIG PADs so people can present more effectively and hold video conferences more easily.

They are using 32 BIG PADs in a mix of sizes and have found that, as well as being popular with employees for presentations, they are being used informally too, with people using BIG PADs to exchange ideas and brainstorm with colleagues.

BIG PAD is part of the 'Festo Room System,' which the company designed for its new Automation Centre at its German head office. Here, Festo works with its customers to develop their ideas and projects in one-on-one meetings and produce prototypes. For the Room System, Festo needed high quality displays that would integrate with their IT systems and software, are highly reliable and would wow customers.

Tobias Reiter, Information Management, IT Contracts at Festo, explains: "We were impressed by Sharp's flexibility in addressing our special requirements regarding the equipment and the design of the monitors. Sharp provided us with a solution that was exactly tailored to our needs."

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The main need from users was simplicity: "During their meetings, our colleagues must be able to concentrate on the actual issue at hand and their ideas. Complicated technology that is not easy to use takes up a lot of time and tends to be avoided by many employees. We removed this obstacle by providing an intuitive technology that can be used by everyone, regardless of their IT knowledge."

In fact, BIG PAD has been so easy to use that although training was offered, it wasn't considered necessary. People have been using the displays beyond what was expected, with informal meetings in common areas supporting communication between employees in different departments, changing the way they engage with information. Festo is so pleased with BIG PAD they plan to buy more.

Tobias Reiter, "The feedback has been consistently positive. This only strengthens our resolve to make the Festo Room System gradually available across the company. The touch displays from Sharp are an essential part of this concept."
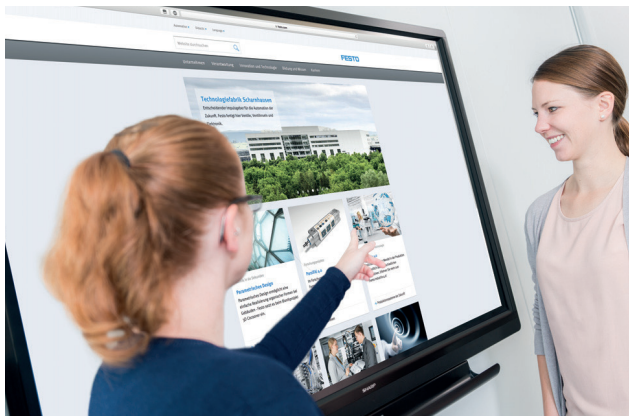
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We want to hear your tips
for keeping meetings on track.

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