

Meeting Basics that Make a Difference

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By Ann Chenoweth, MBA, RHIA, FAHIMA

In July, I attended AHIMA's CSA Leadership Symposium in Chicago, IL. This is an incredible gathering of CSA leaders from across the country. I'm always energized by the willingness of every attendee to share ideas and best practices with others.

This year, I participated in a breakout session where the CSA leaders discussed how to increase the effectiveness of meetings. We had a great group discussion and the following are my 10 key takeaways. These may seem pretty fundamental, but they are common principles that are constantly violated. We can apply these to our workplace as well as our volunteer roles.

1. Be clear about the purpose of the meeting, even if it is a routine team meeting. Ask if there is a better way to achieve the objective than having a meeting. If it is a regular meeting, can you do it half as often and be just as effective?
2. Only invite those who can bring value or have a need to know, and be clear about your expectations.
3. Have a timed agenda distributed well in advance of the meeting. Indicate if the agenda item is for decision, discussion, or feedback.
4. Start and end on time. Start on time even if not everyone is present, because it is respectful to those who do arrive on time.
5. Be clear why each person attends and be clear about his or her role. Even if higher-level people are in the meeting, remember you are running the meeting.
6. Stick to the agenda, but promote discussion and debate.
7. Bring each point to conclusion, and document the conclusion. If there are follow-up actions, be sure the responsibilities are clear and accepted in the meeting.
8. Make the meeting interesting. Bring in food or show a movie clip to illustrate your concept. Break up the routine positively.
9. Send out minutes with the agreed upon action items to meeting participants. Copy those that have a need to know and were not at the meeting.
10. Send feedback from participants on how future meetings could be improved.

If you are a participant invited to a meeting, you can ask the organizer about the purpose and your role in the meeting if they have not already offered that information.

It is important to be a role model for being prepared and engaged in a meeting. Know what you want to achieve in the meeting and monitor your "talk time" to see that you are participating enough without talking too much. Continually look at the other person's point of view and be as authentically supportive of others in the meeting as possible.

Meetings have great potential to provide leadership, enroll people in a shared vision, and organize efforts to maximize the effectiveness of the group. It was great to be reminded that dramatic results can be achieved in a great meeting.

Ann Chenoweth (ann.chenoweth@ahima.org) is senior director of industry relations for 3M Health Information Systems.

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