



The Manager's Guide to Effective Meetings

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McGraw-Hill

New York Chicago San Francisco Lisbon London
Madrid Mexico City Milan New Delhi San Juan
Seoul Singapore Sydney Toronto

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 AGM/AGM 0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

ISBN 0-07-139134-7

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data applied for.

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Preface

Nobody knows when the first meeting took place or why, but it's a safe bet that the meeting seemed too long to some participants, poorly organized to others, boring to at least a few, and it's likely that some were disappointed with the results.

Every meeting you hold costs time and money—sometimes a lot. Consider this book an investment to improve the return on the time you and your team spend in meetings. Properly planned and conducted meetings can help you and all your employees work together in a more efficient and coordinated fashion.

I believe that if you follow the basic principles and guidelines presented in this book, you'll find it easy to improve your meetings, and you and your people will find them not time-wasters but performance enhancers.

As we use the term “meeting” in this book, it's an event consisting of people, content, and process designed for a purpose. There are many types of meetings that you as a manager might organize and/or facilitate, involving primarily your employees, but perhaps including other employees and managers and even people from outside the organization. With this reality in mind, we frame our discussions in general terms, focusing on what all or most meetings have in common. We also use the word “participants” to refer generally to the people who take part in a meeting. This word suggests an active participation, because we believe that people should be involved in a meeting, not just be there in attendance.

This book will take you step by step through the meeting process. Chapter 1 reviews the factors that cause meetings to be

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bad, the impact of bad meetings, and the characteristics of good meetings. Chapter 2 outlines and discusses the details of preparing for a meeting. Chapter 3 explains how to start a meeting, including setting rules and assigning roles and responsibilities. Chapter 4 offers suggestions for conducting a meeting. Chapter 5 explains how to close a meeting and follow up on the results. Chapter 6 describes a selection of techniques and tools for helping meeting participants work together more effectively and efficiently. Chapter 7 presents common problems with meetings and ways to deal with them. Chapter 8 discusses the use of technological tools and the issues involved in meeting virtually.

Special Features

The idea behind the books in the Briefcase Series is to give you practical information written in a friendly, person-to-person style. The chapters are short, deal with tactical issues, and include lots of examples. They also feature numerous boxes designed to give you different types of specific information. Here's a description of the boxes you'll find in this book.



These boxes are designed to give you tips and tactics that will help you more effectively implement the methods described in this book.






These boxes provide warnings for where things could go wrong when you're planning and conducting a meeting.



These boxes highlight insider tips for taking advantage of the practices you'll learn about in this book.



Every subject has its special jargon and terms. These boxes provide definitions of these concepts.

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|  | It's always important to have examples of what others have done, either well or not so well. Find such stories in these boxes. |
|  | This identifies boxes where you'll find specific procedures you can follow to take advantage of the book's advice. |
|  | How can you make sure you won't make a mistake when dealing with a problem? You can't, but these boxes will give you practical advice on how to minimize the possibility. |

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank first my colleagues at Oriel Incorporated for their help as I have worked on this book, especially Christine Jersild who managed the project in-house and Patricia Klossner, President, who championed the project initially. I also want to thank Bob Magnan of CWL Publishing Enterprises for his great help in developing the manuscript for the book. John Woods of CWL Publishing Enterprises approached us with the idea for this book, and we appreciate the opportunity to create this title for the Briefcase Books series. Thanks also to Nancy Woods for her work in proofreading and helping in the final stages of completion.

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Barbara J. Streibel is a consultant and manager of intellectual capital at Oriel Incorporated, a consulting and training firm located in Madison, Wisconsin. She is an expert coach of executives, managers, black belts, and teams in decision making, teamwork, Six Sigma problem solving, process management, and process improvement. She is a specialist in guiding devel-

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opment of infrastructures, systems, and processes to support teams and organizational initiatives. She was team leader in the development of the meeting skills training program offered by Oriel, which served as the source of this book. She is co-author of *The Team Handbook, Second Edition* and *Building United Judgment: A Handbook for Consensus Decision Making*. She received her Ph.D. from Pennsylvania State University. Contact her at streibel@orielinc.com and visit Oriel's Web site at www.orielinc.com.