

8 Tips for a Happy Unicorn Meeting



By Delia Jones

Resource Type: Risk eNews

Topic: General

How do you feel about meetings? Me too. A bad meeting is a gigantic waste of time. They are not a box to be checked, but a critical check-in step that propels a project forward. The best meetings happen when everyone leaves feeling energized and knows what to do next.

You might love the popular 10-15 minute **“stand-up” meeting**. This venerated creature is all about short and sweet. Progress? Challenges? Got it? Go. If there is any other reason to meet, don’t bother with a stand-up. And we all know the basics; all meetings have an agenda and action items. Right? Glad to get that out of the way. On to the sparkly rainbow stuff.



1. **In magical meeting math, an hour is really 45 minutes.** That’s 45 minutes of agenda, front loaded with 15 minutes for tech and intro. Tech: is everyone online, not muted, showing up on video and ready to contribute? Intros: Ask about weekends, hear that hysterical story about someone’s dog and do any intros. Intros are a great time to do a sound check! Get that out of the way. The meeting agenda starts after those first 15 minutes.

2. **Have tech backup.** Skype not working? Bad WiFi from Bora Bora? The meeting organizer should always provide a phone number in case of emergencies. Figure out what works in that first 15 minutes. For the love of all that is holy, everyone please use headphones. The soundtrack of your life is honestly not that interesting. If you are in a meeting room with others take 15 minutes to set up a room mic. Trying to use video and/or audio from a single laptop is meeting sadness.
3. **Invite strategically.** Don't include everyone and their boss and their boss' boss. More people does not equal a better meeting. Consider inviting both contributors and listeners. Listeners introduce themselves and then stay muted/quiet.
4. **Write stuff down.** Notes were important in World History II class and they are important now. Even better, assign a note-taker.
5. **Never back up the bus.** After the 15-minute mark, any latecomers should say hello, but the discussion continues. They follow up later with the meeting organizer to get caught up. The same applies to tech-challenged attendees.
6. **Do the homework.** If you were asked to review documents before the meeting, do it. Don't spend your intro explaining how "I didn't actually have time to read this." If you didn't read it, just listen. Offer concise thoughts on what you do know.
7. **Keep time.** This could be the organizer or note-taker. Stick to the agenda. Call out time periodically.
8. **Don't brag about your other meetings.** Reminding us about your "hard stop" is annoying. We all have stuff to do. When you reply to a meeting request you are agreeing to the meeting time and no more. The organizer is the one to figure how to keep it on track. When you step out, the earth will keep turning. I promise.

We can all follow these tips to enjoy more productive, positive meetings. I'm not getting into laptops/no laptop, devices, etc. Setting rules for that just doesn't work. These things might as well be surgically implanted in our hands. Trust your meeting attendees to behave. And good luck at your next happy unicorn meeting. Don't forget to [dress](#) for the occasion.

Resources for Meaningful, Not Mindless Meetings

- "[Level the Playing Field Through Inclusive Meetings](#)," RISK eNews
- "[Proper Planning Prevents Poor Meeting Performance](#)," RISK eNews

Delia Jones is a NRMCM guest writer and experienced Creative Director whose forte is leading teams that transform great ideas into beautiful and meaningful projects. Delia welcomes your meeting madness memories or happy unicorn tips and tales at: deliajones@gmail.com.

Photo by [Roland Tangalo](#) / [CC BY](#)