

Help! We need topics to discuss at meetings

Question: “What would be a few good agenda items to discuss at our next administrative professionals meeting? No one really wants to say anything, and therefore, the individual departments do not share any new ideas or updates on their activities. Do you have any sample agendas to share?” — *Victoria*

Robynn Grant November 11, 2013 at 7:01 am

date/time/location of next meeting?

Karen Talley/Michelin April 2, 2010 at 11:35 am

You can also have “guest speakers” from various departments within the company come and speak at your meetings – purchasing, marketing, training, human resources, accounting, etc. You can even ask an outside speaker to come in and share information about health and wellness, stress management, or have your current vendors come in to talk about any new products they may have, any changes in the way they do business, or any new vendors the company has started using (of course check with the appropriate individuals for permission before extending the invites).

Karen Talley/Michelin April 2, 2010 at 11:29 am

Meeting suggestions: advanced computer tips (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), Recycling, Document management, Event Planning Checklist, Email/Telephone Etiquette, Workplace safety, Time Management, Partnering With Manager, Desk/Workstation Manuals, Communication/Presentation Skills, Stress Management, Continuing Education. For each meeting, assign someone to do a safety topic. Ask someone else to provide a best practice. As the meeting “keynote” have one person talk about their department and their duties within the department (10-15 minutes at most). This gives at least three people in the meeting besides the facilitator, a speaking role. At the end, have a round-table and ask people to make comments or ask questions. If you have a small enough group, you can ask each person individually.

Carmen November 13, 2009 at 8:05 pm

We had gone a couple of years without having an admin meeting and decided it was time to have another one. We got in contact with Peggy Duncan and asked if she was available to come and speak to our Admins (we had about 150 in attendance) check out her website at <http://peggyduncan.com>. You may want to add other key Smart matter expert in another department to speak (maybe an IT person or someone that has vital information they need to share with the Admins but hasn't had the opportunity). Believe me, you won't regret it!

Mary Harrington November 10, 2009 at 11:46 am

You might ask everyone to bring one best practice idea to the meeting. We can all learn from each other and this is a great way to tap into good short cuts or efficiency ideas.

Mark November 7, 2009 at 3:42 pm

Why are you having meetings if there is nothing to discuss? Rather than ask for things to talk about, perhaps the discussion should be whether these meetings are necessary anymore. Often meetings that were useful at one point in time become obsolete, but yet keep happening out of habit.

Claire November 6, 2009 at 7:41 pm

You could try sending out a survey link to the group. The survey could both ask for specific suggestions and request a ranking of interest in topics you suggest. That way, you'll know how to direct meetings going forward. Perhaps people are hesitant to bring up controversial topics i person-but want them covered (Ex: stress management, conflict resolution). Or they may have interests you didn't know about (Ex: administrative or technical certifications)

Joyce November 6, 2009 at 2:18 pm

Sometimes it's good to poll managers to see if they have something they want to have addressed, but don't know how to approach an Admin. so you can have generic problem solving on your agenda. Training like excel, Microsoft tips-I see a lot of docs that look fine printed out but what a mess when you open up soft copy. Updates from different areas should be a must if you're holding meetings; but no agenda-no meeting.

Gina Comer November 6, 2009 at 1:26 pm

Could you start by sharing a tip you learned in Administrative Professional Today and then take ideas from each dept on how they might apply the new info? Schedule one department each following meeting to bring a tip to the table for discussion. But - I agree with earlier posts, if there's no reason to meet - don't.

Amanda November 6, 2009 at 1:19 pm

I would suggest that each dept. head talk to there teams about what they believe should be communicated. Maybe there are some things they would like to suggest or seen changed.

Kathy B November 6, 2009 at 1:14 pm

If you are the one calling the meetings, you already have an idea of what your departmental goals and objectives are. Incorporate all the ideas above: List your objectives and goals on an agenda, inform each attendee they will be called on to report what they and their people are doing to meet objectives and goals AND

to share with the group any issues they can use help or advice with, and be prepared to voice your expectations for progress to report at the next meeting. When I go to a meeting I like to know the purpose, to know I have a chance to share my progress and challenges, and to know there will be follow up (accountability). All great suggestions!....oh and if you don't have a topic or an agenda, I agree, skip the meeting for another time.

Babs November 6, 2009 at 1:13 pm

Could I get a copy of that template?

Claudia November 6, 2009 at 1:06 pm

Since you mention having multiple departments, one suggestion is to pre-assign department updates. This could be done as 1 or 2 departments reporting per meeting to allow time for additional agenda items you may have. Another suggestion is a training opportunity. Ask each attendees to be prepared to discuss an on-going error they see and report the correct process. One meeting may be common spelling errors, common grammar errors, or computer short-cuts to share, etc. If in doubt as to what to put on the agenda, cancel the meeting.

Cynthia November 6, 2009 at 1:06 pm

Everyone knows before each meeting that all attendees will be called upon to give everyone an update of what she/he is working on and to share any special info./requests. That way, everyone participates in the meeting. (We just go around the table and each person takes their turn.) They are also prepared to share a WORK RELATED "word of the week" and define how it applies to our company. This has been beneficial to all employees. It's getting close to the end of the year. What are the company's goals for next year? How did your company's goals compare to your competitors? How can admins. better assist their boss as we get close to the end of the year and deadlines! It's a good time to have a lot on your agenda!

tawney112 November 6, 2009 at 1:05 pm

Why are you having meetings if you don't have anything to discuss? Seems to me like it's a case of 'having meetings to say we're having meetings'. Don't hold them if they aren't necessary.

Terri November 6, 2009 at 1:01 pm

I found a very cool template on Microsoft website that I use for our meetings. There is just me and the secretary with our boss and we meet once a month. We discuss first off where we are on what project, how much more time we may need. Then we discuss things that are on our plates in the near future, problems with other coworkers (we are clerical support) and possible solution. We also discuss cross training and what still needs to be completed.

Jim Collison, Employers of America, Inc. November 6, 2009 at 12:59 pm

Don't schedule a meeting until an agenda item or item(s) are submitted in advance. In most workplaces, most meetings waste far too much time, and many meetings should never have been called. Jim Collison, President, Employers of America, Inc.

Admin 123 November 6, 2009 at 12:57 pm

Maybe call the first meeting a brainstorming session on creating the agenda for meetings in future. This will create synergy within the group and make each person feel like they had some contribution to the structure of the template.