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# PRODUCTIVE MEETINGS



## The Meeting Makeover: How to Facilitate Meetings that are *Actually* Productive

Meetings are where innovative strategies are born and decisions take flight – or, at least, they should be. Too often, however, they become time-consuming weekly routines with little payoff. We're here to change that. We design meetings that truly move the needle, while being an engaging experience for your team.

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# Our Philosophy

At MacPhie, we believe meetings should drive action. When done right, meetings fuel progress, keeping everyone on track and moving toward clear goals. This is why our approach is rooted in intentional design and purpose-driven participation. We focus on establishing the purpose of the meeting, defining clear objectives, and ensuring the right participants are in the room. Effective meetings start with clarity – a clear articulation of why we're meeting and what success looks like. If the purpose isn't clear, it's time to reconsider whether the meeting is even necessary.

## Our Process

### A Facilitator's Secret Weapon

Effective meetings don't just happen – they're crafted. We've seen firsthand the power of intentional meeting design. We believe that every meeting, whether in-person or virtual, follows a rhythm: Before, During, and After. Let's break down how to design and execute meetings, from start to finish, that actually move the needle.

#### **Before: Set the Stage for Success**

Every successful meeting begins before the calendar invite is even sent. Ask yourself: Why are we meeting? Ensure the purpose is crystal clear. This will shape the agenda, define objectives, and determine who needs to be there. Only invite those whose participation directly contributes to achieving the meeting's goals, or who need to be directly informed. Build an agenda with a clear direction, including well-defined time limits for each topic – this prevents aimless discussions and sets expectations for all.





## During: Drive Engagement and Focus

The meeting itself is where the magic happens – or doesn't. Stay focused on the agenda, ensuring the facilitator is prepared to keep the discussion on track. Keep participants engaged, integrating interactive tools when necessary (e.g., [Mural](#) for virtual whiteboarding or [Menti](#) for anonymous polling), and ensure every voice is heard. Designate a note-taker to capture key points and action items clearly. Structure notes so that they are easy to follow, making it obvious what decisions were made and what needs to happen next.



## After: Action and Accountability

The meeting may be over, but the work is just beginning. Ensure action items are captured and communicated clearly – ideally, shared in a document accessible to all participants within 24 hours. This follow-up allows teams to hold each other accountable and ensures nothing slips through the cracks.

*The result? Meetings that take less time but deliver more value. By giving attention to each phase, you're intentionally designing a meeting that will energize participants and make everyone feel that their time has been well spent.*



# Tips for Leaders

Before you dive into your next meeting, take a moment to reflect on the following questions to set the foundation for a more purposeful, focused, and impactful meeting:

- ✔ **What is the purpose of the meeting?** Establish a succinct, clear purpose for meeting. If the purpose is unclear, rethink the necessity of the meeting.
- ✔ **What do you want to achieve?** Align objectives with the purpose. Objectives should focus on what you want to achieve coming out of the meeting. Each meeting objective should be specific, results-driven, and clearly communicated to meeting participants.
- ✔ **What's on the agenda?** Create a sequenced list of discussion topics, estimating how much time each item will need. Our tip is to always start with a brief introduction and finish with clear next steps. Avoid cramming too much into one meeting – too much information can overwhelm participants.
- ✔ **Would a pre-read or pre-work be helpful?** High-performing teams are [39%](#) more likely to require pre-work. Pre-work allows for deeper, more focused discussions and helps avoid the intellectual overload that can come from reviewing information and making decisions in the same meeting.
- ✔ **Should this be a synchronous or asynchronous conversation?** In the ever-evolving hybrid context, be mindful of communication mediums. Use synchronous models for urgent, sensitive, lengthy, or collaborative discussions and asynchronous for reflective or iterative work. Choosing the right medium helps maintain clarity and engagement, especially in a remote or hybrid setting.

- ✔ **How do I strengthen accountability and participation?** Establish norms around facilitation, participation, and documentation for team meetings. The facilitator should keep the meeting focused, ensuring that all voices are heard, while the scribe should ensure action items and key takeaways are documented accurately. If it's a virtual meeting, who's monitoring the chat?
- ✔ **What's your final act?** Every meeting should end with a clear summary of action items and responsible parties. This ensures accountability and clarity about what needs to happen next. Consider using collaborative tools like Mural or Google Jamboard, or even a simple shared document, to record these action items in real-time. Ensure action items are circulated promptly to meeting participants.

## Final Thoughts

With the right preparation and structure, meetings can become powerful tools for action, problem-solving, and team alignment. A clear purpose, defined objectives, and thoughtful preparation are the keys to unlocking meeting potential. So, go forth and change the way you meet.





# Thank you for thinking with us.

Ready to take your meetings to the next level? Reach out to us via **email** or visit our Strategic Facilitation **webpage** for more insights.

