

# Chapter 7

## International Meeting Management

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### ABSTRACT

*Meetings are considered by many people to be a waste of time. However, many experts suggest that this is because they are not planned or organized effectively, and that, in fact, meetings can be an essential tool for the dissemination of objectives, values, culture, and other important information throughout the organization. The key is to be able to manage meetings so that they generate the maximum possible benefit. Therefore, the present chapter is presented, with the main purpose of understanding how a meeting should be managed. With this in mind, it is essential to understand the most and least common types of meeting, the roles that each participant can adopt and, among other aspects, the appropriate structure of a meeting. But, above all, this chapter offers some essential advice for meetings which take place at the international level.*

### INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 20th century, Frederick Taylor and Henry Ford revolutionized the industrial sector with the scientific organization of labor and mass production chains, respectively. This was the starting point from which the organization of work has evolved to reach what is known as the Industry 4.0 or fourth industrial revolution. A commitment to digital transformation is key to participating in a globalized market and surviving in the face of competition. As one of the business laws best known to entrepreneurs says, “you have to renew or die”. This reflects the healthy need to make changes in organizational behavior according to the circumstances of the moment.

However, it is well known that, to gain market share or survive in the long term, it is not enough to make an improvement in the production systems. This must also to be accompanied by all those processes that support this production. Broadly speaking, we refer to the non-tangible assets of a company that form, to a large extent, the scaffolding of any organization. That is, a strong business culture with a clear and well-established way of working and relating, a leadership model that supports the organiza-

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tional purpose, and, of course, work teams that have the ability to function as a coordinated whole and in which each member is committed to both the group and the organization. As Diaz & Torrent (2010) state, without intangible assets (which are difficult to imitate), there is no change. Intangible capital is the strategic key to all competition (Bueno-Campos, 1998).

The difficulty lies in ensuring that all these intangible assets are aligned in the same direction: in line with the business strategy. How is this achieved? Through direct and effective communication. The cohesion of ideas, values, strategies, and objectives and, among other factors, the dedication of the members of the organization to a common goal, are results that are achieved thanks to the application of communication tools, where there are no breaks in the chain of communication and the same information is perceived and received by all.

To carry out this communication process, many means are used by companies (Skype, Intranet, email, telephone, boards, etc.). All of them have their advantages and disadvantages; however, although over the years it has obtained a bad reputation, often being seen as a waste of time, *the meeting* is the most widely used communication tool (for ideas, climate, processes, perceptions, etc.) and is still considered, of course, to be the best.

Meetings are necessary elements in all companies, large and small. They are a very powerful decision-making, organization and control tool, because they make it possible to follow the progress of projects and complex problems, identify areas of opportunity, involve the team in the solving of problems, design action plans, and even silence rumors and address misunderstandings, provided the meetings are well managed. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to discuss how to manage meetings effectively, one of the key factors that can allow management to make meetings worthwhile and, therefore, to ensure they make a contribution to improving efficiency in companies.

With this goal in mind, firstly, a definition of a meeting will be put forward. Subsequently, the most frequent types of meetings will be discussed, along with the different functions of participants and, above all, the keys to making meetings effective and “strategic”. Finally, some tips will be offered which should not be overlooked when managing a meeting in an international context.

## **WHAT IS A MEETING?**

In its most basic form, a meeting is a forum constituted by a group of people with a common goal, which allows participants, either face-to-face, over the phone or through the Internet, to share information and opinions and express ideas. The meeting also an opportunity for social interaction for the different people who participate in it, generating, in some cases, the so-called work teams, in which participation, commitment and a sense of belonging, among other values, are fostered.

In your organization, it is more than likely that most people see meetings are one of the main thieves of their time, and that when they come to the end of a strenuous day of meetings, they return to their jobs to “work for real”. And they may not be mistaken. Companies dedicate more than 25% of their time to meetings, and the larger the company, the higher this percentage. Of that time, about one third is devoted to preparation, and the other two thirds to the meeting itself.

What does our staff think of these meetings? According to data collected by Workmeter (2015):

- 96% do not attend any meetings.
- 91% of employees are distracted during a meeting.

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