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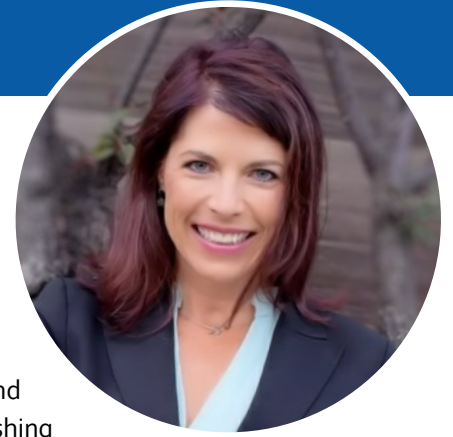
# *10 Tips for Running Meaningful and Results Oriented Meetings*

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*Helping  
executives and  
entrepreneurs  
achieve results  
through a  
people-centered  
approach*

### Who Am I and Why Can You Trust Me?

I am Sara LaForest, an entrepreneur, consultant, coach, instructor, and author with comprehensive experience in the private, nonprofit, education, and government sectors.

I am on a mission to empower entrepreneurs, executives and leaders to grow their businesses and help them create flourishing workplace environments. If you share this mission, these articles will introduce my approach. I believe you will find them helpful and pragmatic.

For more than a decade, I have grown, managed, and nurtured my own companies specializing in leadership consulting, organizational development, and executive and performance coaching. My focus is on the critical—yet often overlooked—interdependencies of strategy, branding, culture, and talent necessary to foster and propel growth. My high-touch, personalized approach helps leaders improve company performance and team functioning at all levels, while facilitating a positive and productive workplace culture.

How am I different? What new perspective do I bring? My strength is combining company growth with an emphasis on the personal growth and well-being of the people with whom I work and serve. My deep-rooted commitment to human advancement is my advantage.

This article, along with many other national and international published works, was co-written with my retired partner, Tony Kubica. Our book, *Organizational Gravity: A Guide to Strategically Growing Your Company's Brand, Culture, and Talent*, is available on [Amazon](#).

To learn more about my services, publications, and speaking engagements, please visit [LaForestConsulting.com](#). You can contact me directly at [Sara@LaForestConsulting.com](mailto:Sara@LaForestConsulting.com) or via [LinkedIn](#).

## *Improving Performance*

## *Navigating Transitions*

## *Accelerating Results*

1. Pre-plan the agenda, including: assigning the role of meeting leader (designated by position or by the group), and with an established timeframe, such as 9:00 A.M. - 10:00 A.M. or 9:00 A.M. (not to exceed 90 minutes) so people can plan accordingly. Tip: Use a template for your agenda (see sample template on our website) to promote continuity and flow and efficiency in agenda development, results tracking and record keeping. Also, be sure you have planned for necessary equipment and technology needed for delivery. Common equipment and technology items include a laptop, an LCD projector, a transportable screen, a flash drive, and flip chart with paper and markers.
2. Disseminate the agenda and necessary materials prior to the meeting so people come prepared. We suggest a minimum of two days and up to two weeks prior to the meeting for adequate materials review to ensure a decision making verses discussion-based meeting (whereas people are trying to learn and catch up on what they should already have come prepared for). Tip: Save trees and your time by disseminating electronic packets.
3. Start and end on time! This is the responsibility of the person leading the meeting. This builds trust and credibility in the group and focuses people on the agenda, which fuels results and builds confidence and momentum of the group.
4. Stay on point. Stick to items on the agenda. This again, is the job of the meeting leader/facilitator. If something urgent comes up, ask for group agreement about what is priority now (by a quick vote of hands or post-it-note-vote for sensitive issues). Make sure people are clear on the priority and what will be tabled to the next meeting. If an item is not urgent, use the "parking lot" (pending items list) to capture and track future agenda items.
5. If the meeting will be two or more hours, schedule breaks. Most adults need and appreciate a 15 minute break after 90 minutes to two hours. Tip: Breaks also promote informal networking and relationship building among participants. Networking time is commonly indicated as one of participant's highest value take-aways from meetings and events.
6. Provide adequate and comfortable meeting space, which promotes group participation. Critical elements are comfortable seating and work space, seating arrangement that promotes group participation/participant visibility, and a well lit and ventilated meeting area.
7. Assign or rotate (share) the note-taking function to ensure record keeping. Using an agenda template greatly promotes standardization and thoroughness in capture, as notes will follow agenda items, and can even be added into the template for dissemination back to the group. Make sure to capture the "parking lot" (pending items), so they can be prioritized and appropriately placed on future agendas.

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8. Always end with Next Steps/Actionables. Create a list of who, what and by when that needs to be accomplished for progress and results. Report on this as appropriate in the next agenda. Tip: You can include Next Steps on the agenda template; it focuses attention on action and results, and lends for easy monitoring.
9. If it is a long meeting (two hours or more), beverages and snacks or meals are highly recommended, as it is a natural way to encourage group comfort and relationship building (although it has a budget implication).
10. Lastly, don't forget to assess the effectiveness of your meetings based on the group's experience and results. This can be done simply by asking, "What is working?" And, "What could be done differently or better to improve efficiency and effectiveness?" Then use this information appropriately for future meetings. Lastly, evaluation also allows a group to acknowledge and celebrate your success-what is working well and what you are proud of accomplishing. This builds pride and ownership, a sense of team and builds morale. Additionally it helps to keep others apprised of progress, which is especially needed for cross-functional units and inter-departmental meetings. Progress only is best shared early on the agenda, while a brief assessment for continuous improvement purposes is best placed near the end of the agenda. For ongoing (standing) meetings, assessment should be an intermittent agenda item (i.e., quarterly or semi-annually), or as a standalone annual agenda item.