

## FACE TO FACE MEETINGS – TIME WELL SPENT?

With the advancement of technology and the fast pace of business in today's world, it's easy to spurn traditional face-to-face meetings and opt for teleconferencing, email, and other informal means of communication. Many feel that sit down meetings are unproductive—either untimely, off task, boring, or expensive compared to the derived benefits—particularly when you consider meetings held off-site that require travel and lodgings. However, while they may be cost effective, computer mediated means of communication present their own disadvantages. The potential for outside distractions such as email, text messages, other work tasks and side conversations between coworkers is high.

When trying to decide how to hold a meeting, take into consideration what the objective of the meeting is. Face-to-face meetings are preferable when you are working in a group setting that requires coordination between the members, persuading people toward a particular view, or when you are dealing with issues that involve people's attitudes or values. However, if urgent results are needed, the decisions to be reached are less important, consensus among the group is not a priority, or the main objective of the meeting is simply to communicate information, then a computer mediated mode of communication might serve the company best.

From a psychological perspective, face-to-face meetings have certain positive aspects over computers:

- Members can engage in and observe verbal and nonverbal behavioral cues from others.
- Meetings occur in real time, eliminating technical problems that can disrupt computer meetings.
- Meetings provide much needed human contact that our digital lives are depriving us of.
- Face-to-face meetings allow participants to develop relationships and contacts that will help them in future business dealings.

- Members build transparency and trust among themselves in a way that is impossible over digital means due to its cold and informal nature.
- Participants have the opportunity to evaluate and judge the integrity, competency, and skills of other members.



From a business perspective, face-to-face meetings allow companies to:

- Make better decisions
- Bond teams together
- Inspire team members
- Bring out the best in employees
- Achieve breakthrough thinking
- Build stronger relationships

To make your business meeting more efficient:

Decide whether a meeting is necessary, and if so who will attend. The fewer the better when decision making is crucial. Next, define the objectives of the meeting and prepare an agenda. If there is a lot to cover, it might be more productive to distribute the agenda and any background material before the meeting so that participants are prepared. Make sure that the location is physically pleasing with good acoustics, air conditioning and a convenient location. Take care of any food requirements beforehand.