

Meeting Types: Planning Successful Knowledge-Generating Activities

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PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

Successful professional meetings result from good planning. To plan a successful meeting one must first define the type of meeting or event clearly and then communicate to participants, in advance, the meeting agenda and desired outcomes.

MEETING TYPES

The following definitions of meeting types will help planners communicate to participants what is expected of them:

Committee meeting. A gathering of select experts to consider, analyze, and synthesize information for a defined product.

Conference. A professional gathering consisting of multiple sessions organized around a theme or group of themes and addressing multiple topics.

Forum. A setting in which a panel of experts provide their perspectives on a specific subject or issue, usually before a live audience in a large venue.

Roundtable. A small-group meeting of qualified experts convened to explore a specific issue.

Seminar. A single session of specified duration in which an expert or experts disseminate or coordinate the dissemination of knowledge to a group of participants.

Summit. A large-group meeting to discuss proposals, share knowledge, or develop action plans on a specific subject or issue.

White-paper session. A single session, usually part of a larger conference or meeting, in which a scholar, researcher, or recognized professional presents a thesis to provoke discussion on a particular topic.

FIVE STEPS TO PRODUCTIVE MEETINGS

By following these basic steps outlined below, planners will be better prepared to run successful meetings and events.

Plan. Identify the precise objective of the meeting. Identify the information and participants needed for success. Make certain these resources are available.

- What is the desired outcome or result?
- Why is the meeting necessary?
- What are the topics or issues to be addressed?
- Which topics do you most wish to address?
- Which topics do others most wish to address?
- Who should attend?
- What data are needed for the meeting to be productive?

Set the agenda. Develop an agenda that includes complete, precise descriptions of each subject to minimize the likelihood of confusion or misinterpretation. Group agenda items together in a logical sequence. Allocate sufficient time and arrange the sequence to ensure that the most important items receive the desired level of attention.

Inform. Advise participants, in advance, of the purpose of the meeting, the topics to be discussed, their expected contribution, the desired outcome, and the roles and responsibilities of the other participants.

Provide structure. Diplomatically keep participants focused on the agenda. Arrange discussions and problem-solving exercises systematically, in stages.

Summarize and record. Prepare minutes or some other appropriate summary to document the outcome of the meeting, and distribute the summary to all participants within two days of the meeting. At a minimum, be sure to document the following:

- Decisions made
- Action items to be addressed
- Individuals assigned to address action items
- Date by which actions should be completed

RESOURCES

More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic

- 23.01.03 An Architect By Any other Name
- 22.01.03 Elements of Successful Newsletters
- 21.01.01 Effective AIA Component Websites

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Key Words

- Leadership
- Associations
- Design Associations