

TIPS FOR MINIMIZING BORED BOARDS (OR COMMITTEES)

Establish targets and goals. Don't waste each other's time: If the person who called the meeting can't say, "This is what we have to achieve by the end of the hour", the gathering is not only unnecessary, it's a waste of time.

Use written reports or e-mails to convey information – meetings aren't necessary for this.

Keep the topic as narrow as possible. If the subject can't be covered in a limited time, (with some exceptions) it is probably too broad.

Avoid repetitiveness. People love to say something more than once.

Focus on solutions, not the problem. (Research shows that, on average, people in meetings make 10 statements about the problem for each statement about how to fix it) Don't dwell on the past or enshrine the problem with belabored discussion. Spend at least twice as much time creating solutions as explaining a problem's origins and consequences.

Open up possibilities – and minds - with questions, not statements. People simply either agree or disagree with assertions. Questions, because they're open-ended, invite input. Ask, don't tell.

Avoid stray talk. Make comments and suggestions that build upon both the overall subject and what's previously been said. Task specific meetings need sharp focus.

Set a time limit and stick to it. Always adjourn on time, even if that means scheduling a follow-up. Five minutes before adjournment review new tasks assigned during the meeting as well as expectations before the next meeting.

Distribute meeting minutes (including assignments) as soon as possible.