



Lawpsided Seminars

Ten Ways to Add Fun to Any Meeting

By Sean Carter

For many people, meetings represent an imposition into an otherwise productive day. They complain that meetings are unproductive and boring. Well, here are ten ways to make meetings more fun. Please note that not *all* of these ideas will be applicable to your situation but using just a few them will greatly increase the enjoyment (and dare I even say “productivity”) of your next meeting.

- 1. Use Catchy Titles in Meeting Announcements.** Obviously, the first prerequisite for any meeting is that enough people attend in the first place. A catchy title not only builds interest in the subject matter of the meeting but lets people know that *your* meeting won't be another dry, boring talk-a-thon. For instance, if you are holding an information meeting on your company's new health benefit plan, you could announce it in a memo with the subject line: “An Apple a Day Keeps the HR Manager Away – Your New Options Under the Company's Health Care Plan.”
- 2. Dress Up in Character.** Dress up in the style of well-known television and movie characters whenever the subject matter of your meeting lends itself to be “acted out.” For instance, let's suppose you are scheduling a meeting to announce the terrific (and unexpected) third-quarter results of the company. Why not dress up as Jed Clampett from *The Beverly Hillbillies* to make your presentation?
- 3. Put it to Music.** Sometimes, the perfect words for your presentation have already been penned by a musician. Why not benefit from their talents and the meantime, show off a few of your own? Sometimes, all that is required is changing a few key words (and a few shots of tequila before the meeting). For instance, if you are a lawyer announcing that your firm will appeal an adverse ruling, you could belt out this announcement by singing your own version of Gloria Gaynor's “I Will Survive” (in this case, “I Will Appeal”). Your audience will absolutely LOVE it. Of course, if you sing as badly as I do, then you may want to choose a rap song instead.
- 4. Give Away Door Prizes.** You can use prizes to encourage people to come to the meeting in the right frame of mind. For instance, let's suppose you are holding the kick-off meeting for your Holiday Party Planning Committee in early July. With the holidays five months away, no one is going to be in the “spirit of the season.” To help them, you may want to announce that everyone who wears holiday apparel to the meeting will win a door prize. This will stimulate everyone's creative juices if for no other reason than having to explain wearing a Christmas sweater in July to

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their co-workers. Also, please note that the door prize need not be expensive. It can be as simple as a coupon for a free latte at the coffee place in the lobby.

5. **Fine Late Comers and No Shows.** Now, I understand that the prospect of standing at the front of a room handing out fines doesn't seem like a lot of fun for *anyone* but it can be fun. For instance, social service clubs like the Lions, Kiwanis and Rotary Club, regularly fine their members for missing meetings and other minor "offenses" and they have a great time laughing and joking while these "penalties" are being assessed. The key is to make the amounts small and have the money used for fun. For instance, let's suppose you regularly have meetings to check the status of a major project. In this case, you could fine all late comers and no shows \$1. At the end of the project, the fine pot would be used to buy pizza or dinner for the project members. This type of fine keeps your meetings shorter and more productive (as people have an incentive to show up on time) and provides a source of "fun money."
6. **Use Cartoons and Funny Pictures in Presentations.** Whenever appropriate, try to find a funny cartoon or picture to place in overheads, PowerPoint presentations or handouts. This is particularly true when presenting information that is complicated or technical.
7. **Give Funny Awards.** Start and end each meeting with a funny award given to a person in the audience. For instance, you can give a "Cookie Monster" award to the person who ate the most cookies at the last luncheon. Or you can give an "Early Bird" award to the first person to the meeting. Once again, the prize can be as small as a free latte voucher.
8. **Play Office Pictionary.** We often say that a picture is worth a thousand words. Well, the picture of you trying to act out part of your message will be worth ten thousand words. This is particularly true if you are in a position of authority. Your subordinates will appreciate your willingness to play with them. In any event, it gives the audience a chance to play an active part in the presentation.
9. **Play Trivia Games.** Reserve some time at the end of training sessions to allow audience members to play trivia games based on the training material. You can play the game in *Jeopardy* format or even create your own version of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* or *The Weakest Link*. Try to involve as many people as possible in the game so that everyone feels included.
10. **Create Friendly Competition.** For some reason, we all seem to become more involved in an event when there is an opportunity to win (or lose). In some cases, you may want to split the audience into two or more

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groups and have them compete collectively. For instance, if you are leading a brainstorming session, then split the group into teams and create a competition to come up with the most ideas in three minutes. You will be amazed at how willingly people will supply new ideas. In addition, you will have the added benefit of allowing people to interact with each other and, in some cases, establish new friendships.

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