

## Effective Employee Meetings



Tanning Trends Magazine  
By: Linn Haugestad Edvardsen

As a first step, let's begin where many people begin a week or month: the regular office staff meeting. Since putting eight members of your staff in the same room costs money, it is only practical to make sure the hour or two used for each meeting is valuable to both the team leader and all members of staff. This can be accomplished only if all parties are equally prepared and provided with a detailed agenda designed to keep the meeting focused and on track. Cost-effective meetings for real results occur only if conducted seriously.

The first step, according to Walt Kowalski, president of BreakThroughs, Inc., is to create a list of standards to be strictly followed at each meeting. This includes distractions, etiquette and any other behavior that's either accepted or not accepted. *"The first meeting you have is to set standards,"* said Kowalski, whose management consulting company's clients include Verizon, Hewlett Packard, Bank of America and the US Navy. *"With all the chaos of every business, this could be the one thread of continuity."*



The initial meeting needs to be an open forum, which allows every member of the team to add their input of what rules need to be in place to help establish a successful meeting culture. To symbolize the team's commitment to these standards, everyone must sign the first copy. *"It is very important that this is a living document,"* said Kowalski, *"one that is continually revisited and revised."* To ensure compliance to these standards, teams must also discuss and create a list of consequences. (Kowalski recommends asking people who break the rules to pitch in a couple of bucks for a year-end party.)

### Prime pointers:

- At the first meeting, create rules to be followed at all meetings - with input from all. Identify consequences if rules are not followed. Fairly apply those rules and consequences to all.
- Select a suitable and supportive location. Set the tone for the meeting of a specific length where serious input is expected.
- Be prepared. Provide an agenda to all.
- End each meeting with one or more decisions following suitable discussion periods.

The next step, according to Kowalski, is to find an appropriate location. *"The location facilitates the purpose of the meeting. You have to create an environment that supports the learning experience."* In other words, be sure to throw out those rotting doughnuts, clean the table, and dump the trash. Spend some time creating a meeting environment — which is as simple as putting flowers on the table — which sends a signal to your staff that everyone needs to take the next hour seriously. If

you don't think this is possible at your salon, do it at your house or splurge on renting a small space at a restaurant.

Lastly, Kowalski insists that meetings must end with decisions. There needs to be a short discussion regarding whether or not the meeting's agenda was met; as well as what needs to be done and who needs to do it to move things forward. During this process, the team leaders must reiterate what decisions were made and ask for verbal commitments from staff. Kowalski also recommends that key decisions, in addition to agreements and commitments, be written down and distributed to staff. *"This way there'll be no ambiguity about who said what."*

The leader's role, according to Kowalski, is critical to an effective meeting. *"If the leader is late, they cannot offer excuses,"* commented Kowalski. The first thing they have to do is acknowledge they broke one of the rules. *"Secondly, and most importantly, they have to apologize."* A leader cannot expect of staff what he or she isn't able to do themselves.

The most important aspect of the leader's role is to be prepared. If the leader is thumbing through a notepad visibly unsure of what the agenda is, staff will immediately lose interest. *"It's a matter of respect, if you told me to be prepared, and you aren't, how can I respect you as the leader?"* In the same sense, although Kowalski recommends using visual aids, he warns they can be a distraction. Use a few minutes before the meeting to go over the agenda and to be sure any equipment or aids are all working correctly.

Leaders will be surprised what can be accomplished in a meeting if the right steps are taken. It is a difficult and time-consuming task to bring together every member of a busy salon's staff; make sure you don't waste it. We all know the benefits of better communication and meeting goals and with these fundamental but critical tips, you may just wonder what in the world you were doing in those meetings before.