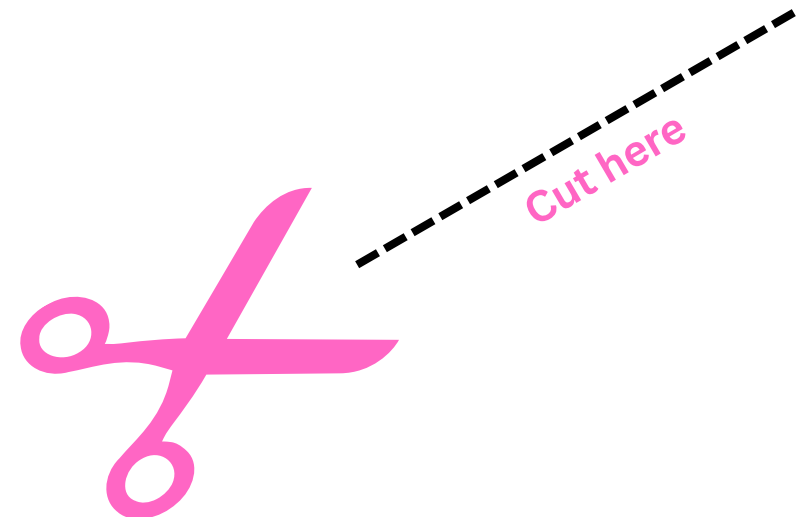


How can we make our meetings more...?

Flashcards to help make meetings of US Executives and Synagogue Councils more effective, fresh and purposeful.

Use a set number of cards per meeting to see what works; choose or allocate a priority; or commit to a change 'sight unseen' for the next meeting. Or just read them and pick an idea.

Then add your own priority and consider how to make it work...



Effective

Use breakout groups

Split into groups: each group can handle one issue only to save time; or each group can cycle through issues to get a multiplicity of views

Purposeful

Who speaks for strategy?

Quality, safety, logistics and management are vital. Ensure that there is a consistent voice advocating for long-term strategic relevance and effect. Everything should play its role in an effective strategy.

Fresh

Change venues regularly

To shift atmosphere and to disturb routine methods, meet outside the shul, in homes and elsewhere.

Fresh

Shuffle seating

For a modest disruption of atmosphere, move from one table set-up to another, sit in different chairs and sit next to new people.

Effective

Build cohort mentality

Executives should actively develop as a team, facilitating relationships between HOs. Get to know each other, find connections, and celebrate group wins.

Purposeful

How is this Jewish?

Meetings should have Jewish aims, content and tone, demonstrating good 'middot' (character traits).

Effective

Bring 'shadow' HOs to meetings

Observing confidentiality rules, 'shadow' Honorary Officers should be prepared to take over from incumbents through gradual involvement.

Fresh

Delegate by default

New projects must have a person leading the action and reporting on those projects; the default should be that the Chair is not this person unless he/she is particularly relevant to the project.

Effective

The portfolio-holder decides

Decisions such as menus, printing contractors or aircon temperature can and should by default be entrusted to relevant portfolio-holders (here, events; marketing; and facilities), reducing discussion.

Purposeful

Make experiment compulsory

At least one decision per meeting can be an obligatory 'wildcard' option, either experimental or totally different from past practice. Also known as 'George Costanza Does The Opposite'.

Fresh

Set metrics for your meetings

Set goals for meetings e.g. reaching certain outcomes, making a number of decisions made, establishing milestones or incrementally advancing the strategy. Not completing the agenda, or just filling 90 minutes.

Effective

Increase portfolio-holder autonomy

The Chair should make as few decisions as possible. The 'lower' a decision is responsibly made, with approval and a successful outcome, the better. Structures should facilitate this.

Purposeful

Only discuss 'cloud' not 'clock' items

'Cloud' problems are knotty, cultural, multi-faceted and contentious. 'Clock' problems are binary or simple, technical and non-controversial. Clock problems don't often merit discussion.

Fresh

'Don't sweat the small stuff'

Standard or managerial matters such as the scale of kiddush, *zmanim* (times) or rota'd roles, can be dealt with by email most of the time, saving time.

Purposeful

Allocate time blocks for agenda items

Some items may require substantial discussion. Even these can be allocated minutes for 'explainer', 'advocacy', 'options', 'concluding arguments' and 'voting'. Many items can be allocated three minutes only.

Fresh

Schedule fresh air, phone time, silence.

Don't let a meeting shlep on for hours without breaking the trance with relevant, short, valuable breaks.

Effective

Ask AI...

Ask anything, even during meetings.

Purposeful

Ask 'Why?' five times

Interrogate everything five times with 'Why?' to reveal whether the agenda item is in line with your Vision and is therefore worth the time and effort. After a few goes, divining the value of an item will become muscle-memory.

Fresh

No phones

Unless phones are being used for word-clouds, AI assistance or other meeting-related functions, they should be off the table and out of people's hands. Otherwise, attention and efficiency may drift.

Fresh

No papers, no talk

Lessen the likelihood of getting bogged-down in 'A.O.B.' by insisting on papers being submitted for any discussion. For increased efficiency, set a standard structure for these papers.

Purposeful

Compulsory portfolio updates

Each portfolio-holder must report on their progress towards the Vision and Mission, however incremental. This will highlight areas of progress at different speeds.

Purposeful

Portfolios can be obligatory

Everyone on Synagogue Councils should have a portfolio. Council members without a defined role can unwittingly serve as a commentariat or critics circle.

Effective

Give hard choices an 'off-ramp'

Reduce time and anguish sometimes spent on high-spend or risky decision-making, by agreeing beforehand events or thresholds which will automatically lead to plans changing without further meetings or talk.

Purposeful

Silo out-of-scope ideas

Not everything is relevant or urgent, even if it is important. Agree 'silo' agendas to store points raised for later discussion or decision-making by others or a sub-group.

Effective

“Yes, but...”

Sometimes decision-making is hindered by negativity. Consider requiring as standard practice that anyone making an objection, suggest an alternative or problem-saving way past their own objection.

Purposeful

Which goal is being met?

Discussing a partnership with an opera company, a visit to a gallery opening, or raising money for the local fox sanctuary, may all be worthwhile, but almost certainly not for your community.

Fresh

Put outcomes on the agenda, not items

‘Chanukah’ as an agenda item may cause unfocused discussion. *‘How can we best achieve this year’s Goals for families and children?’* might be shorter and more effective and get more ‘out’ of the relevant festival.

Effective

Actively include online attendees

Make sure your tech is working before starting, and check in regularly with people online.

Fresh

Sweet/caffeinated no-dough snacks,

Serving Danishes and cake is generous, but may induce sluggishness.

Fresh

No-debate items

Not everything on the agenda needs comment. Save blushes by marking or cordoning off such items on the meeting papers beforehand.

Purposeful

Where does it fit in the strategy?

Everything must have a strategic reason, especially programming. Brisk rejection should be the default option unless an official community goal is clearly discernible and the ideal outcome measurable.

Fresh

Pre-reading required

Commercial contracts, job descriptions and detailed programming or strategic proposals, must be circulated and read before meetings. Time together is for structured discussion and decisions, not reading.

Effective

‘Shout out’ for recent successes

Time spent briefly but publicly and detailedly appreciating the efforts of those involved even in standard operations, is time well spent.

Purposeful

Tell a story that speaks to Vision

An occurrence in community life which reflects the Vision and Mission, is a valuable addition to meeting content.

Fresh

Prune the agenda regularly

Anything which is ignored should not be on the agenda.

Fresh

Three-minute contributions

Consider a reasonable limit for contributions to each discussion. Time limits and second or third contributions, might vary by subject. Try and balance officiousness and efficiency with derech erez!

Purposeful

Cite Vision/Mission every meeting

Reminding meeting attendees of the purpose of the community gives focus to the ensuing discussion.

Effective

Have AI transcribe and summarise

AI shines at transcribing and summarising meetings and can add its own recommendations. (Ask permission of those present beforehand.)

Effective

Set short ‘micro-homework’ for all

To help generate a shared body of knowledge and understanding, or to spark relevant discussion, it can be relevant to set reading or viewing ‘homework’.

Fresh

Use a visual timer (not just a clock)

Time is sacred. Avoid having to point out its passing and potentially creating awkwardness.

Effective

Wear 'Edward de Bono's hats'

Ensure full analysis by donning different hats in turn, the whole team concentrating in turn on 'big picture', 'facts', 'feelings', 'negative', 'positive' and 'new ideas'.

Purposeful

Goals not roles

Lay-leaders may serve only so long as a project. Goal-related portfolios are shorter (and perhaps less intimidating) than roles with no end date. Meetings of project-focused lay-leaders often have greater momentum and direction.

Fresh

Early bird special

Create motivation for attendees to arrive on time, perhaps a quick (quorate) discussion and decision on a significant or valued matter.

Purposeful

Dvar Torah

It doesn't have to be the Rabbi or Rebbetzen who gives an opening *dvar Torah*. Our heritage and texts belong to all of us and directly address through their content and the act of using them, of why we do what we do.



Your priority.



Your priority.



Your priority.



Your priority.

