

## How Much Is Your Firm Costing You?

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In an age where in-house meetings almost cease to exist, we must begin to ask ourselves how much our Firm Meetings are costing and what is the ROI. Staff Meetings *can* be highly beneficial but only if they are facilitated by the right person and offer the proper forum for the proper discussion.

Let's first throw out those age-old myths. **Read these... then immediately FORGET them.**

### THE DON'TS:

1. The only person who should talk is a top Exec and/or a Managing Partner.
2. Firm meetings should last longer than an hour to make it worth it, there's a lot to cover!
3. An agenda should be relevant and only discuss 'now' issues which can be immediately resolved.
4. To make any progress as a firm, these meetings should take place every two weeks.

**So, now that you've forgotten everything you thought you knew – let's relearn how to get an ROI on an otherwise potentially worthless hour:**

### THE DO'S:

- **Make them mandatory for staff to attend**

*The absence of one employee can be quite costly to the firm. When one attorney is missing from the meeting, it requires the time of a second attorney or paralegal to recap the meeting's notes & important information. Even if you send out Firm Meeting Minutes – they'll surely find another employee and request a play-play breakdown. Set the meeting at a time that is advantageous to everyone and accommodates court hearings. Utilize the calendar features available to you to set reminders via email that are recurring each month.*

- **Begin with 1 meeting per month**

*No need to begin meeting weekly, even bi-weekly for that matter. With technology today, using e-mail chain discussions and/or online forums to supplement meetings as follow up has never been so efficient. Best part? It doesn't require your entire team to observe in a conference room while good ideas develop.*

- **Begin each meeting w/a recap of the cost**

*Your time is valuable – the time of your team is valuable. Remember that and then remind your staff that. Set the tone at each meeting by first acknowledging how much the meeting is costing the firm in 'billable hours' from the managing partner to the legal assistant who answers the phone. This will get everyone on the same page and encourage your staff to focus on the issues*

*at hand. This tactic is especially useful when one staff member is running late, as each passing minute is costing the firm a substantial amount of money when considering the combined salaries in the room. Our clients rarely experience this problem again.*

- **Disseminate information – but involve all team members in the discussion**

*It's important to have an employee who carries authority and respect facilitate the firm meeting, but it doesn't have to be the Managing Partner. Perhaps you have an incredible Supervising Attorney or a well articulated Firm Manager?!? The objective of the facilitator should be to disseminate information without question but do so in a way that prompts group discussions, allowing your team to invest in the outcome and work towards a common goal in unison.*

*It is important to remember to pace yourself and not aim to change too much too soon. Choose one and/or two of the questions below to start a discussion – and watch as your employees come alive, morale increases, and teamwork ensues. If you set goals, remember follow up is the absolute secret to ensuring those goals are met – not offering a reward, but offering someone on staff to encourage & set benchmarks accordingly.*

*Try asking these types of questions:*

1. What are some of the biggest challenges we are facing?
2. Are we doing everything we can to overcome those challenges?
3. As a company, what should we be talking about right now?
4. What should be our primary area of focus right now?
5. What is the weakest link in our chain right now?
6. Are we spending enough time strengthening our weakest link?
7. What action are we taking to strengthen our weakest link?
8. Is there anything else we could be doing to strengthen our weakest link?
9. How can we improve teamwork?

- **Cut the meeting off at 1 hour**

*If your staff sees consistency in ending staff meetings on time at the one-hour mark, they'll be more likely to engage and attend with enthusiasm. Remember in addition to starting the meetings on time; also give a 5-minute warning before you wrap up for last thoughts. This does not mean the discussions and brainstorming have to end – as stated, these can continue via email discussion groups and/or sub committees w/a specific focus. Simply solicit the assistance from a Team Lead and delegate the topic out.*

Put these tips into practice at your next firm meeting and you will see a return promptly. For more game changing tips visit us on [facebook](#) and [twitter](#).