

STRATEGIES

HELP DESK

# Use meetings to your advantage



Harvey Mackay

I wish I had a dollar for every time I've called someone and the response I received is that they are in a meeting. I often wonder if they are in a meeting

to see if they should have a meeting.

According to the MeetingKing website, in the United States alone we "enjoy" 11 million formal business meetings each day and we waste \$37 billion in unnecessary meetings every year. The researchers found that the more meetings employees attended, the more exhausted they felt and the higher they perceived their workload to be.

Meetings are a fact of life for every employee. Instead of just enduring them, learn to use meetings to your advantage. Meetings can actually be very productive if you manage them effectively. With that in mind, whoever calls the meeting must first decide what needs to be accomplished.

Even if those are typically on the schedule, it's still necessary to define the purpose of the meeting in one or two sentences. That way people know why they're present, what needs to be done and how to know if the meeting is successful.

Here is what I do:

► **Set an agenda.** List the issues to discuss, review or decide. Your agenda

should include firm starting and ending times, as well as estimates of time for each item under discussion.

► **Start on time.** Don't wait for latecomers. If someone is late, don't go back and review what has been covered. Show that you value the time of the people who showed up promptly. In the same vein, end the meeting as soon as you have achieved what you set out to do

► **Appoint a "referee."** The referee's job is to keep the discussion on track and interrupt whenever the talk strays. New topics that arise should either be tabled until later or scheduled for their own meetings.

► **Keep and send minutes.** Someone other than the meeting organizer should take notes on the meeting. These minutes should record who attended, what was discussed, any agreements that were reached and all time and action items that were assigned – and who is responsible for them. That insures that those who attended all have the same information.

Those are the meeting planner's duties. Those who attend have some responsibilities too. Instead of whining about yet another meeting, approach it with an attitude that this is an opportunity to shine.

► **Be prepared.** Study the agenda or talk to the meeting leader to find out what will be covered. Spend time getting up to speed so you can anticipate where the discussion will

lead, and get some ideas of your own ready to present.

► **Keep things simple.** Don't try to impress people with your vocabulary, or bore people to tears with long-winded sentences. Make your points quickly and succinctly, backing them up with evidence as necessary.

► **Ask questions.** Look for opportunities to ask pertinent questions that demonstrate your expertise: "Have you considered this approach?" Don't overdo it, though. You don't want to be seen as a pest who has to talk to be noticed.

► **Collaborate.** Don't obsess about your own ideas. Listen to what other people have to say and build on their thoughts. Acknowledge that you're leapfrogging off someone else's contribution so no one thinks you're trying to hog the spotlight or steal the credit. If the meeting time doesn't allow for serious brainstorming, ask if another session might be scheduled.

► **Volunteer.** Be willing to implement the ideas and solutions that come out of the meeting, even if they're not your own. You'll get a reputation as someone people can depend on to get things done.

**Mackay's Moral:** Don't waste your time in meetings – make it matter!

Harvey Mackay is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller "Swim With The Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive." Reach him at [harvey@mackay.com](mailto:harvey@mackay.com).

BEST BETS



BBJ'S ENTERPRISING WOMEN

Baltimore businesswomen share stories of growth both inside and outside the workplace.

**Time:** 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

**Location:** Martin's West, 6817 Dogwood Road, Baltimore

**Cost:** \$85

**Information:** [bit.ly/2KNNLTy](http://bit.ly/2KNNLTy)



MULTI-CHAMBER NETWORKING BREAKFAST

Join chambers from around the region for this event, which features speed networking, door prizes and breakfast.

**Time:** 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

**Location:** Maritime Conference Center, 692 Maritime Blvd., Linthicum

**Cost:** \$30 in advance for members; \$35 for members at the door; \$45 for non-members

**Information:** [bit.ly/2IWAayt](http://bit.ly/2IWAayt)



OUT NETWORKING DINNER CRUISE

Join the Maryland LGBT Chamber of Commerce for this networking event on the Spirit Cruise ship.

**Time:** 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

**Location:** Royal Sonesta Hotel, 30 E. Lee St., Baltimore

**Cost:** \$55 for members; \$65 for non-members

**Information:** [bit.ly/2KvXVMi](http://bit.ly/2KvXVMi)

OUT & ABOUT

## LORIEN HEALTH OPENS HIGH-TECH SKILLED NURSING UNIT

Lorien Health Services celebrated the grand opening of its iPerformance unit at the Encore at Turf Valley skilled nursing facility on May 1 with a ribbon cutting ceremony. The new unit offers private suites that will use the latest technology to care for its residents. It will also allow the company to expand its services to an additional 750 Howard County residents a year and offer a student training partnership with the Howard County Office of Workforce Development. The new suites were named for Nancy Butler, Encore's former director of nursing.



COURTESY OF LORIEN HEALTH SERVICES

1. Cynthia Chaconas, admissions director for Lorien Health Services' Encore at Turf Valley and Louis Grimmel, Jr., administrator for Lorien Health Services' Encore at Turf Valley, dedicate the new suites to Nancy Butler. 2. Debbie Gallagher, executive director of Lorien Health Services' Harmony Hall; Louis Grimmel, Jr., administrator of Lorien Health Services' Encore at Turf Valley; Julia Schneider, sales director for Lorien Health Services' Harmony Hall; Elizabeth Canarte, customer transitional specialist for Lorien Health Services. 3. Ronny Nadv, director of membership for the Howard County Chamber of Commerce; JoAnn Presbitero, director of strategic initiatives for Lorien Health Services; Troy Kirk, vice president of Customer Transitions for Lorien Health Services.