

Sales Meetings

Sales Meeting acts as a forum for conveying information and team spirit among the sales persons. Periodic meetings are very useful specially when the sales persons are on the road and the employers have little time to communicate and supervise. They help in exchanging important information and ideas.

Different types of sales meetings

The following are the different kinds of sales meetings.

National Sales Meetings: National sales meetings are appropriate in situations where changes have to be brought about in the marketing policies or any important changes, which require the attendance of various major executives. National sales meetings can bring out the changes speedily and consistently. Presence of the executives at the national sales meetings provides more encouragement and motivation when compared to written and recorded messages.

Advantages

- It results in constructive exchange of knowledge.
- It results in better coordination between the office and the field.
- It creates enthusiasm among the sales person.

Disadvantages

- Expensive
- It's very difficult to find convenient time.

Regional Sales Meetings: Here the executives instead of meeting at the central office, they attend the decentralised meetings, thus reducing the costs and saving time. Each regional meeting is planned to deal with distinctive problems of that particular region.

The main drawback in regional sales meetings is that the top management executives have no time at disposal hence they rotate attendance. Consequently it devalues the meetings significance in the eyes of the sales persons. In addition, the total cost of holding several regional meetings is much higher than holding one large national meeting.

- 1) **Local Sales Meetings:** Local sales meetings are held on weekly basis. They last for about 15 minutes to more than an hour. Local sales meetings provide an occasion for the sales persons to express their personal opinions and problems. It gives an opportunity for the sales persons to come together and build up their individuality.
- 2) **Remote control meetings:** Some forms of sales meetings are meetings conducted by closed-circuit television, meetings on the phone, meetings at home.
- 3) **Closed circuit television:** Companies having large sales force can make use of closed circuit television meetings. Companies that launch new products or introduce national sales campaign use televised meetings.
- 4) **Sales meetings by Telephone:** Telephone conference call is appropriate for small group meetings and discussions. In this meeting the sales manager starts the discussion and it is guided by two conditions that one person talks at a time and speakers identify themselves. The basic advantage is it saves time and money.
- 5) **Sales meetings conducted at home:** In this kind of sales meeting the material and the required information is sent to sales personnel's home.

Steps to plan an effective sales meetings

Sales meetings are a vital communication and motivational tools. Sales meetings act as forums for imparting information, enthusiasm and team spirit. They help in motivating individuals through group pressures. Most significant, they give opportunities for the management to encourage the group to lift up its performance standards to satisfactory and reasonable standards.

5 steps to plan sales meetings are:

- Step 1: Clearly defined objectives are essential for any sales meeting. The fundamental purpose for calling a meeting is to communicate and motivate. The person calling for a meeting should be certain about choosing the people for the meeting. People dislike being in the meetings, which have no significance for them.
- Step 2: The meeting caller should determine the meetings content. The agenda should be planned well in advance of the actual meeting. An agenda by meaning is a list of things to be considered during a meeting.

Advantage of an agenda is that it permits the person to add items and prepares them in advance to talk about the items present on the agenda. Finally it's important that the agenda should be short and precise and not lengthy and boring.

- Step 3: The method of carrying out a sales meeting relies on various factors like the objective, time, agenda and the place. In addition, it's very important that in a sales meeting the secretary records all the key points and the decisions made at the meeting. "Minutes" of the meeting are distributed to everyone present at the meeting and the absentee's should be given a copy. This enables them to know the activities, what is being adopting etc.
- Step 4: Success of a meeting depends highly on the implementation phase. Some apparently insignificant execution decisions add considerably to the success or failure of a meeting, one of which is the room arrangement. An important role for a facilitator in a meeting is to ensure that everyone present has the equal opportunity to participate in the deliberations. Some popular arrangements of rooms for sales meetings are as shown below.

Sales Meeting configurations



Board or Conference



Hollow Square



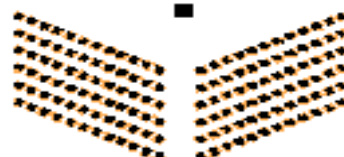
"U" Shape



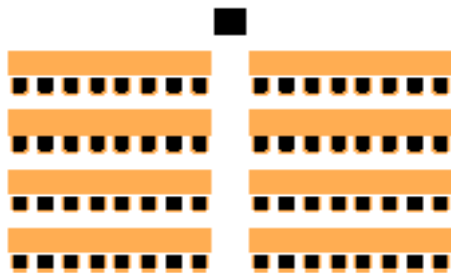
Square



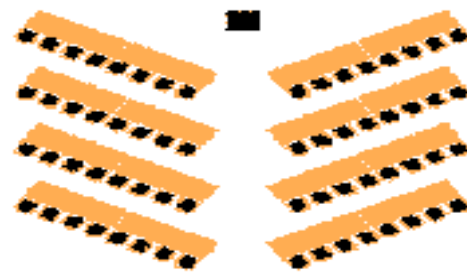
Banquet Rectangle or Round



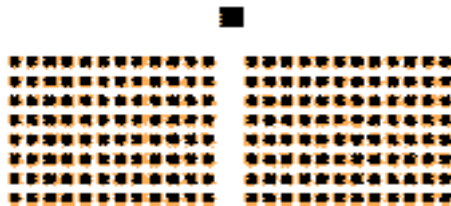
Herringbone (Chairs)



Classroom (Tables)



Herringbone (Tables)



Theater / Lecture



Chevron Set-Up

Some room arrangements facilitate communication and interaction more than others. For small groups, a “U” shape table or chair arrangement is ideal as everyone can see everyone else and the shape by itself suggests interaction and equal participation. The same “U” shape that creates such a warm atmosphere for small groups becomes counterproductive for larger groups of more than 25 people. Each side of the “U” becomes so long that people are actually quite far from each other leaving a huge empty space in the middle, thus making it difficult to hear and see others. The “closed square” arrangement offers similar benefits and limitations. For groups over 25, the herringbone arrangement of tables and chairs with 5 or 6 people at each may be considered. These enable people to easily see and interact with others, not only at their own table, but at the tables around them as well.

Planning meetings often require participants to work together in small groups. Hence, the meeting planners must consider in advance whether separate breakout rooms are needed. If the room is large, participants can spread out by moving their chairs to various corners. If there is no room to spread out, the noise level can make it almost impossible for the groups to accomplish their work. This noise level is particularly uncomfortable for participants with hearing aids. Breakout space does not necessarily need to be another formal meeting room. There may be lounge areas or a lobby to which small groups could meet or they may consider of going outside provided weather being conducive.

- Step 5: Finally rules have to be created and should be followed. It’s very annoying if people are coming late to the meetings, having side conversations and people are doing other things. Hence certain rules have to be followed.
 - Commence and conclude as per the schedule.
 - One person talks at a time.
 - One’s privacy should be respected.
 - Everyone’s ideas should be considered because no idea is a bad idea.
 - Contribute and be a part of the team.

The secrets of successful meeting

Sales management must adopt the following ten skills that would make a meeting successful, which eventually enhances the quality of job.

1. Planning and organising:

The most common reason why a sales meeting is ineffective lies in the simple fact that not enough time is devoted to adequate planning and preparation. Successful meetings have both strategic and tactical marketing plan of action. Following basic questions form the foundation of any meeting before making any arrangements:

- Where does this meeting fit into corporate marketing strategy?
- Why the meeting and not some other means?
- What is the purpose of the meeting?
- Who should attend the meeting?
- What is the budget for organising meeting?

2. Taking care of details:

Putting so much in a meeting together means taking care of the details. For doing this, creating checklists of activities and requirements is the most useful method.

3. Practicing savvy marketing:

A significant part of a successful meeting planner's role involves developing a pre-, at- and post-event plan. Most meeting planners fail to have a plan that encompasses all three areas. Budget is naturally going to play a major role in deciding what and how much promotional activity is possible. Successful meeting planners know the importance of developing a meaningful theme or message that ties into their strategic marketing plan and that will guide their promotional decisions. They know and understand their target audience and plan different promotional programmes aimed at the different groups they are interested in attracting.

4. Being a team player:

Successful meeting planners know exactly how to work together as a team, helping each other out whenever and wherever necessary. They help everyone get acquainted, develop a level of trust, and familiarize and understand each other's strengths.

5. Knowing how to manage time:

Successful meeting planners have mastered the art of managing their time. They are well organised and have essential information at their fingertips, which means that their work environment is orderly and efficient. They know their priorities, don't over commit themselves, and can differentiate between important and urgent tasks.

6. Negotiating skilfully:

Skilful and savvy negotiators know exactly what they want. They spend time doing their research so that they know as much as possible about their opponent. They are prepared with strategies and tactics, questions and possible concessions. They are masters at finding alternative ways of talking about, reacting to and solving problems. They use their talents of intuition, flexibility and concern for others to reach an agreement where both sides win. They look to create a feeling of cooperation to build a mutually beneficial working environment.

7. Applying a positive attitude:

For a successful sales meeting, the positive, "can do" attitude among the salespeople must be prevalent. They must change the vocabulary to reflect the optimistic thoughts and feelings so that others find them more attractive and want to be around them especially when they focus and direct the conversation onto the outcomes they want.

8. Evaluating results:

The successful meeting planners create a system to continuously evaluate the results to improve the performance. They must ask for feedbacks from other people who have attended the meeting to find out what they have liked and what they would like to see improved. In addition, the planners must ask themselves what they thought went well and what they would do differently if they again have to organise the meeting. They then must chronicle all the feedback and observation so that they can refer to them at the time of next meeting.

9. Being a perpetual learner:

Successful salespeople know the pitfalls of relying on what worked in the past as a guide to what will work in the future. Hence they constantly look for new and improved ways of doing things, learning from other successful people and staying open and willing to try different approaches.

10. Keeping a sense of humour:

Keeping a sense of humour will definitely help the participants of a meeting to get rid of conflict, animosity, anger and frustration. The salespeople must remember that laughing is good for health and will help reduce stress and blood pressure levels.