

# 5 steps to making meetings work

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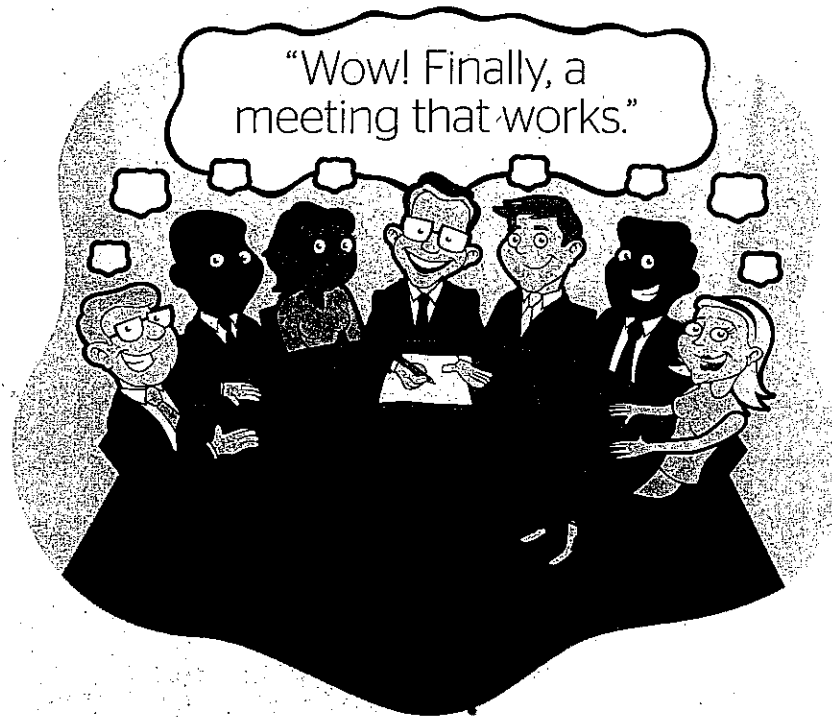


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Worried that you and your staff are wasting time in unproductive meetings? Attorney Elizabeth Kent of the Hawaii Judiciary's Center for Alternative Dispute Resolution offers five ways to get the most out of your meetings.

## 1 PLAN AHEAD TO BE EFFECTIVE

- Ask if you really need to have a meeting or if you can achieve your objectives with phone calls, e-mails or other methods.
- Be clear about the purpose of the meeting and what you want to achieve: Do you want to meet to share information, discuss and analyze information, or make decisions?
- Consider meeting logistics to make it easy for attendees. For instance, have the meeting in as central a location for everyone as possible.

## 2 HELP OTHERS PLAN AHEAD

- Send attendees agendas ahead of time so they know what to expect and what is expected of them, what "homework" they should do beforehand, and how much time to budget for the meeting.
- Be very specific about each agenda item and the expected outcome ("old business," "new business" or "budget" doesn't help someone prepare).

## 3 START ON TIME

- Honor those people who are present at the designated time by starting when you say you will. Soon others will realize that your meetings always start promptly and they will make a point of being there.

## 4 FOLLOW GROUND RULES

- Each group is different, so ground rules should be tailored to your group.
- Decide ahead of time how you will make decisions and make sure everyone knows. A favorite is consensus. Other options are majority, super majority and the boss decides.

## 5 END ON TIME AND FOLLOW UP

- No one minds if a meeting ends early because everything is achieved in less than the allotted time.
- Be sure to send out a meeting summary so attendees are clear about decisions, next steps and individual responsibilities. If important decisions are made, but there's no follow up, nothing is achieved.

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