

Tools and templates



Making town hall meetings engaging

Town hall meetings, where you bring all employees together for an open discussion, are valuable ways for management to connect with staff – but making them engaging is tough.

Complete this step-by-step checklist for each meeting to help re-energise your events and make sure they're worthwhile investments of everyone's time.

1. Set out the purpose of the meeting

Letting employees know why they're needed for a meeting, what will be covered and what value they'll get out of it will help set expectations. Having a pre-agreed agenda is also a great way to make sure your content and presenters stay focused.

- Ask yourself why this meeting is necessary
- Define the desired outcomes – what are the goals of the meeting and what value does it have for you and your employees?
- Predetermine the audience's key takeaways to make sure content is hyper-focused
- Set out an agenda that is informative but not constrictive
- Share these points with attendees before the meeting
- Make sure everyone knows that they can be there to participate or observe

2. Consider your attendee list

While a town hall meeting typically involves everyone who wants to attend, the smaller the group the more potential there is for audience participation and to cultivate dialogue – which improves engagement. It also allows for better social interaction – so let people warm up with a quick chat or casual group discussion before hand. Ask yourself:

- Does everyone on the attendee list definitely need to be there?
- Can I make the group smaller?
- Are all relevant departments represented by at least one person?
- Can I effectively disseminate information to people who aren't there?

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3. Add variety

Habitual meetings, held in the same place at the same time, aren't going to encourage engagement. Instead, keep things fresh to maintain interest. Perhaps offer a couple of different sessions too, letting staff pick the slot that works best for them. Try changing up:

- The lead – don't feel that a leader or manager needs to always open up the meeting. This can skew where conversation ultimately goes
- The venue – can you go to an external venue for the meeting or use a social area in your building, as opposed to sitting in the same old meeting room?
- The format – mix up the structure of your meetings, perhaps adding a break in the middle or changing up the running order
- Speakers – invite different people from across the business to talk at each meeting
- Audio and visual tools – try adding music or video into presentations

4. Assess your success

Take some time after each meeting to reflect on what went well and what could be improved. It's a good idea to gather feedback from employees too – perhaps with a short anonymous survey. This will all help you to tweak your meetings to improve them over time. Some questions to ask include:

- How well did we stick to the agenda?
- Did people who wanted to say something have a chance to?
- Did a few people dominate the conversation too much?
- What were the most important takeaways?
- Was there a two-way dialogue?
- Were there clear, actionable next steps?