

STREETWISE SELLING | BY KENNY SMITH

Recharge Your Store

If your store looks like a scene from *Lord Of The Flies*, you might not be having enough regular meetings. Whether you have two or 20 employees, don't rely on osmosis to communicate your messages, goals and concerns. Nothing works better than a staff meeting to speak with everyone at once, so take advantage of this time to strengthen your team and recharge the store.

Successful meetings won't magically happen. They need to be planned, organized and properly executed. This means they can't be boring, and ultimately, they need to accomplish something.

Plenty of things happen during the week, and it's easy to forget important events if you don't write them down. Keep a running list, and after a few days, you'll have ample content for a meeting outline.

Follow a time-segmented format — this will keep the meeting moving forward and from getting snagged on a particular issue. Ask attendees if they understand before you move on to the next topic. That said, remember that questions and comments can derail a meeting, so keep them to a bare minimum or explain that you'll go into greater detail later.

You'll save time prepping for meetings by using a template that you can reuse every week. Consider the following outline. (I've also included general time frames for each step.)

1. Recap the last meeting. Update everyone on any staff announcements, such as new hires. (Three minutes.)

2. Explain what will be covered in today's meeting. (Two minutes.)

3. Discuss your main topic. This could be anything from policy changes to ads to promotions to rep presentations. The clearer your message, the better it will be understood. People tend to go along with a plan when it's specific. Articles, reports and handouts are important takeaways for employees. They show you're serious and help staff remember the

facts. (Fifteen to 20 minutes.)

4. Voice concerns. Here's where your list comes in handy. Bring up what happened during the past week — the good, bad and ugly — and offer both positive feedback and constructive criticism. This helps keep the same mistakes from happening over and over again. (Five minutes.)

5. Review housekeeping. Meetings are a key opportunity to remind everyone to keep the store clean and the displays ready for business. Too many retailers lose deals because they fail to maintain and change their

displays. (Five minutes.)

6. Work on telephone skills. The telephone is still your strongest link to customers in the outside world, and many employees don't use it correctly. Review good answering techniques during every meeting. You never know who might be calling. (Five minutes.)

7. Offer ongoing sales training. Like it or not, everyone at your store is in sales. It never hurts for teachers, repair people and office staff to get some sales training. It also helps them understand how they need to interact with customers. (Five minutes.)

8. Talk about quirks. I stole this from Eric Denton, owner of Guitar Trader in San Diego. He goes around the room and asks each employee whether he or she had any quirks to bring up. "It might be a suggestion, something that's missing or a problem," Denton said. "We would put our heads together and come up with a decision, or I'd have to take action." (Ten minutes.)

9. Repeat your marching orders quickly, and thank everyone for being there.

If you're not having regular meetings, I urge you to do so. It can be the most important hour of the week. It's the only time you get to recharge the store. **MI**

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Regular staff meetings can strengthen the team and recharge a store, but they need to be done right