

VIA3 Whitepapers
Streamlining Everyday Business Meetings With VIA3

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Everyday Business Meetings:

A software development team comes together to discuss how to solve interoperability issues. The staff of a public relations agency meets to discuss the status of various client campaigns. A new product roll-out plan is presented to the sales force of a paper products company. A manager quickly forms a committee to address the issue of salaries. What do all of these scenarios have in common? They're all meetings.

Most professionals, regardless of their occupation or industry, participate in one meeting each day. In fact, according to the "*Meetings in America*" series from MCI, thirty-seven percent of employee time is spent in meetings, and approximately eleven *million* meetings occur in the U.S. each day. Research also indicates more than fifty percent of this meeting time is wasted. The meetings may be conducted with a client or colleague in your office, in the office of your boss or co-worker or across town, the country or even the globe. While meetings have traditionally been conducted by telephone or in person—either around a table or around an individual's desk—the increase in remote offices and the emergence of real-time, Internet-related technologies such as secure online-collaboration services have changed the very nature of meetings by bringing many online.

There are several things that remain constant, however:

- Meetings in the workplace typically boil down into one of five meeting types: staff meetings, project meetings, presentations, spur of the moment or impromptu meetings, and collaborative meetings.
- With the exception of presentations, which are mainly one sided, the most effective meetings are those with active participation and a lot of give and take (as long the agenda is followed).

Many of these meetings can be conducted online, which decreases travel time and costs while increasing meeting productivity through a streamlined work process.

Meeting Types:

Let's define the five meetings conducted in the workplace and highlight how they can be conducted online more efficiently by being able to see, hear and share information inside one desktop application.

Staff Meetings:

Staff meetings are designed to transmit or clarify ideas, problems or decisions within an organization. These meetings get participation in problem solving, and they motivate staff to behave as a cohesive group. Take the following example: A government agency holds a weekly staff meeting to discuss the status of various ongoing projects. Traditionally, the organizer of the meeting would solicit items for the meeting agenda a few days before, asking everyone to e-mail what they wanted to discuss. This organizer would then bring copies of the agenda to the meeting or e-mail them to remote attendees. During the meeting, someone would be required to take notes and action items and then distribute this information to attendees afterwards. In lieu of this approach, in an online meeting environment such as that made possible with VIA3, the agenda can be completed online and stored in a secure workspace, with team members able to add their own items to the list. During the meeting, notes can be taken in a visible text-chat window, and these notes can be saved to a workspace, along with meeting data such as meeting participants, associated files, start and end times. And not one person has to leave his/her own desk or office in order to attend this meeting.

Project Meetings:

Project meetings are designed to bring together team members responsible for different components of a particular task so that they can discuss progress and decide upon next actions. In other words, every meeting attendee is working on the same goal, but each has different responsibilities to achieve that goal. A marketing department could come together to plan a new product release. In a face-to-face meeting, the team members would bring status reports to pass out at the meeting. Any notes, suggestions or edits would be taken by hand or on a whiteboard, and these notes would have to be typed up and sent out to the entire team. With VIA3, the individual members of the marketing department can save their status



reports and any other pertinent project information, regardless of file type, into a workspace that can be viewed, discussed and edited in real time during the online meeting.

Presentation Meetings:

A presentation is generally conducted for an audience, such as a new product roll-out plan presented to a sales force, a sales person providing information on a product to a potential customer or a CEO briefing an editor or investor on a new acquisition, partnership or product. While presentations are generally one-sided and offer limited audience interaction, attendees are sometimes given the opportunity to ask questions. In addition, there is typically something to show, such as a PowerPoint presentation. In an in-person presentation, such as a sales demo, attendees or the presenter are usually invited—and required—to travel from dispersed locations to see the presentation on a screen; or they might call into an audio conference to discuss a presentation they've received beforehand. Using VIA3, presentations can be given to attendees at their desktop in real time with no travel required. And attendees can either ask questions directly of the presenter with the live audio feature or use the chat features to type questions.

Impromptu meetings:

Often referred to as “water cooler” meetings, impromptu meetings are typically improvised gatherings formed for a specific purpose or situation of immediate interest. A Vice President interviews a candidate and wants his regional manager to meet the person. Or a support services team member has been asked a question he/she is unable to answer, and a colleague is brought into the discussion to provide needed information. VIA3's instant messaging capabilities make impromptu meetings over the Internet extremely easy. Directly from an instant messaging session, participants can begin a meeting and then use all of the additional VIA3 capabilities such as audio, video, application viewing and sharing.

Collaborative Meetings:

This type of meeting is defined as one in which the outcome is usually a goal. Working together on a contract, marketing plan, presentation or financial report would comprise a collaborative meeting. The individuals in attendance contribute specifically to the result. Another example of a collaborative meeting would be to draft a response to a RFP. Typically, this involves multiple people, often geographically dispersed, each contributing to various sections of the document. An online meeting would be an appropriate starting point to determine who had responsibilities for each area of the response. During the time leading up to the final submission, documents would be created and saved to a secure workspace with access granted to only those team members on the proposal team. Documents would be edited in real-time during these collaborative VIA3 meetings. Throughout the time leading to the final document, instant messaging could be used for answers to quick questions. And the result would be a dramatically reduced time from the initial proposal arriving from a client to final submission.

In Closing:

By taking meetings online, you can reduce travel, accelerate work processes and bring teams together to make your meetings more productive than ever before. Shouldn't you try VIA3 free for fifteen days? Your competition certainly will.