Tool: The Three Rules of Running a Meeting

1. **SET THE AGENDA**

It may seem like an obvious requirement, but a lot of meetings start with no clear sense of purpose. The meeting's agenda can be summarized on a handout, written on a whiteboard or discussed explicitly at the outset, but everyone should know why they've gathered and what they're supposed to be accomplishing. **The agenda provides a compass for the conversation,** so the meeting can get back on track if the discussion wanders off course.

2. **START ON TIME. END ON TIME.**

Nothing can drain the energy from a room quite like waiting for the person in charge to show up.

Time is money, of course, and all that sitting around and trying to guess when the boss may arrive is a waste of a precious resource. **When establishing the informal rules of an organization, employees take their cues from the person in the corner office.** If that person wants meetings to start on time, meetings will start on time.

Just as important as starting on time is ending on time. A definitive end time will help ensure that you accomplish what's on your agenda and get people back to their work promptly.

3. **END WITH AN ACTION PLAN**

Leave the last few minutes of every meeting to discuss the next steps. This discussion should include deciding who is responsible for what, and what the deadlines are. Otherwise, all the time you spent on the meeting will be for naught.

By Adam Bryant – New York Times