

Walking Meetings 101

“Walking is good for solving problems; it’s like the feet are little psychiatrists.”

— PEPPER GIARDINO

Many people assume that serious conversations must take place within the office. In reality, the most creative moments take place outside them. You’ll feel as good as you ever have about using a walking meeting as a business tool. And this is a business tool – a lot of work can get done while moving.

Ted Eytan, a Director at the Kaiser Foundation who regularly takes walking meetings challenges: “if it’s felt that there’s a need to “sit in front of a computer,” ask yourself if it is needed for 100% of the meeting time. Usually (92.5% of my experience) it is not.”

Why have a walking meeting?

Improve productivity:

- A shift in group dynamics.
- Different environments often inspire new ideas and stimulate creativity.
- Walking allows the mind to become more flexible and better able to solve problems.
- Increased confidentiality and privacy, allowing you to work without interruptions.

Improve health:

- A chance to incorporate movement into your day.
- Physical activity energizes you and makes you feel more alert.
- Time outdoors with fresh air and light, improves physical and mental well-being.

Preparation/Considerations:

You’ll quickly work out what types of people and meetings can turn into walking meetings. Here are some things to consider for a successful walking meeting:

A walking meeting is a meeting. It should have the same elements as other meetings: a start, an agenda, a purpose, discussion, and an end.

When you are scheduled to meet with someone, ask permission to try doing it on foot.

You can have a destination in mind, like the nearest coffee place, or not.

Other considerations:

- **Size.** Keep meeting size small; two to four people is ideal.
- **Pace.** Make sure the walking pace is comfortable for everyone. A walking meeting should move at the pace of the slowest person. Set the length of the meeting and route with consideration to participants' ability levels.
- **Clothing.** Give advance notice for walking meetings so that participants can wear appropriate shoes and clothes. A day before the meeting, send a reminder to participants to wear comfortable shoes.
- **Safety.** Pay attention to safety and mobility issues. You can manage mobility issues for different people by shortening the walk, such as a walk around the block. Pay attention while walking to avoid tripping and falling.
- **Agenda.** Set an agenda beforehand and distribute prior to the meeting so everyone can arrive prepared.
- **Roles.** Assign roles for the walking meeting in advance.
 - **Facilitator:** leads the meeting and follows the agenda
 - **Tour guide:** determines the route and lets the group know when turns and stops are going to happen. This person should consider traffic, noise, hazards, restrooms, shade, safety and mobility issues of participants, and alternative routes in case of unforeseen changes.
 - **Note taker:** capture ideas and distribute minutes. The group can stop periodically or take advantage of natural pauses at cross-walks or stop lights to capture important thoughts. For safety reasons, notes should not be taken while moving.
- **Evaluate.** After the first few walking meetings, it might be a good idea to ask participants for feedback on what can be improved for your next walking meeting.

Ready to walk the walk with a walking meeting?

Incorporate moving meetings into your regular meeting schedule. Make sure to wear comfortable shoes and bring along some water and sunscreen!

