

Lack of Progress Video Transcript

- Meetings sometimes don't manage to resolve all of the items on the agenda, and it's easy to feel that you've given up a large chunk of time for not enough progress. I'd like to look into this in a bit of detail now.

Why don't meetings make progress and what can be done about it? I think **one problem is that people don't think about the subject in-between meetings. And they don't do any work on it.** They just leave it until the next meeting. So they arrive unprepared and having done nothing, even when they've had actions given to them from the last meeting. They've probably also had a load of actions given to them by their boss in the meantime as well. They probably don't see the meeting as being as important as their boss. And they're right, it isn't. So as the leader of the meeting, if people are regularly arriving unprepared for the meeting, this could perhaps be improved by giving them a gentle reminder a week before. Don't forget to bring the figures. Just wondering how you're getting on with that marketing plan, or whatever. Then at the meeting, if they still haven't done their action and it gets carried forward a second time, you can add a star. In fact, add another star to the minutes each time it gets carried forward so that everyone can see, and they know that everyone can see, that there's a performance problem. It's kind of fun but also makes the point. Once there are several stars, it might become necessary to ask them if they need help in some way.

Sometimes a meeting gets stuck on an item because the key person isn't there. The leader forgot to invite them or they haven't turned up, in which case, there's no point in limping on without them. You should drop that item, leave it for the next meeting, and move on to the next item.

But often it's not really the fault of any one individual. **It's just that the group can't make a decision.** Maybe it's easier not to make a decision or just that too many people disagree. My answer to this is to start with an agenda that says we must resolve this, and then at least push it forward one step. If we find that we don't have the right information, at least decide on what information is required and arrange for it to be brought next time so that we can move on. Or at least discuss how we will decide. For example, you might decide just to generate options and then assess them later. Or you might decide to get a list of all of the factors, agree on a weighted score for each one, and then add them all up. Once you have a planned method it feels good, because then you know the route you're going to follow. There's more information about this on my problem-solving course, by the way.

So we've looked at people not doing their share and the group not getting to a decision. Now I want to add a final thought, which is that lack of progress can come from **actions not being nailed down**, especially not assigned to one person for each action. People will tend to avoid the work or the risk of taking on an action if they can, **so the leader needs to say who will do what and to check that that person is okay with doing that action**. That they've accepted it. And in the absence of a strong and focused leader, any of the participants can say, "So who's going to do what then?" And then all of the actions need to be summarized at the end. Again, anyone can suggest that we do that if the leader doesn't do it.

So for your meetings, is it individuals that are not doing their actions or not coming prepared, or is it group avoidance of decisions? And then once you've determined this, I hope that these suggestions I've provided will help you to get things moving along faster during your next meeting. Use the notetaking tool to answer these questions.