



Face-to-Face Meetings: 5 Benefits to your Bottom Line

There's no escaping the fact that technology has completely revolutionized the way people and organizations communicate. Over 205 billion emails alone are sent out daily, and once you factor in conference calls, video conferences, texts, and social networking, it's safe to say business leaders have a wide array of convenient, quick and cost efficient options for connecting with their contacts.

However, as organizations become increasingly reliant on the latest high-tech solutions, it's crucial that new platforms be used only to supplement face-to-face meetings—not to replace them. From a cost standpoint, high-tech means of communicating may initially seem attractive, saving businesses on time and travel expenses, not to mention ancillary costs such as outside catering and rented conference spaces where groups are involved. However, to succeed over time, research shows it's critical to consider face-to-face meetings not just as a cost, but far more importantly, as an investment.

While it's already widely understood that face-to-face dialogue is the best mode of communication for relationship building (certainly key to any business), it regularly provides return on investment in other ways as well. Here are five benefits of face-to-face meetings that can positively impact your bottom line:

Clearer Communication

Communication errors, incomplete direction, misinterpretations, and misunderstandings all have the potential to waste valuable resources and spiral into costly business mistakes. With nonverbal cues accounting for somewhere between 50 and 93 percent of our total communication, face-to-face meetings enable leaders to use facial expressions, hand gestures, tone of voice, and body language to ensure critical messages are clearly delivered and thoroughly understood.

Greater Creative Output

Researchers from MIT's Human Dynamics Laboratory found that face-to-face brainstorming generates about 30 percent more ideas than their virtual counterparts. Why? The close proximity enables participants to establish a deeper level of connection and engage in more seamless dialogue. Additionally, eye contact builds trust, and the

more comfortable participants become, the more willing they are to share ideas—typically resulting in a higher-quality end product.

More Effective Challenge Management

When sensitive situations aren't approached with care, they can fuel frustrated employees, disrupt productivity, and even trigger turnover. Oftentimes, the most effective way to avoid such potentially costly outcomes is to diffuse challenging situations promptly and in person. Not only do face-to-face meetings demonstrate respect to those involved, but they also eliminate the risk of prolonging or escalating a negative situation due to reliance on digital communication alone.

Expedited Consensus

In 2015, a DMR study revealed that the average office worker receives 121 emails per day. While it's certainly convenient for recipients to maintain control over the order and speed of their replies, that same flexibility can also slow productivity and halt momentum of time-sensitive projects. In situations where time is money and alignment is needed to move forward, face-to-face meetings provide the best opportunity to focus key players, accelerate dialogue, and expedite critical consensus.

Higher Rate of Close

Most successful sales professionals will tell you their best chance of closing a deal is when they are sitting face-to-face with their potential buyer. In fact, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that 85 percent of those surveyed rated meetings with prospective customers to be more productive when handled in-person. Furthermore, even if those clients reside out of town, research says face time is well worth the commute. A study by Oxford Economics found that every dollar invested in business travel results in \$12.50 in added corporate revenues and \$3.80 in new profits.

So what does this all mean?

While it can be incredibly tempting for business leaders to fall back on the convenience of email and other less personal methods of communication, the critical role of face-to-face meetings cannot be underestimated, or undervalued—especially in situations that require higher levels of persuasion, sensitivity, speed, or alignment.

CIO reports that 67 percent of senior executives and managers say their organization would be more productive if their superiors communicated more often by personal discussion, and research shows the benefits don't stop there.

Regardless of how technology continues to evolve, it's important that face-to-face communication continues to be embraced as a critical business tool not only for building strong relationships, but for building productive and profitable organizations as well.

Could your organization benefit from less reliance on digital communication and more face-to-face discussion? At RRG, we put relationships first, and that includes helping our clients develop and strengthen key relationships within and outside of their organizations. To learn more, give us a call today at #708-738-5040, or visit our website at RRGExec.com