Note: I wrote this article with a focus on eLearning projects, but its concepts really apply to all project management.

Introduction

When you are a contract developer, regular contact with your client during the development process is mandatory. A major form of contact is meetings, both in person and by phone (or Live Meeting, Webex etc). As the eLearning contract developer, it is your responsibility to manage those meetings so they are productive. Poorly managed meetings result in miscommunication, wasted time, and lost productivity.   You don't need to be an expert in meetings; a few simple concepts can pay huge dividends. One such concept is Agendas.

Agendas

Any meeting you ask for should have a specific purpose even if that purpose is nothing more than a regular status update. If possible give several days notice to the client. Create and forward an agenda that clearly outlines the items to be discussed or decided upon. Here is a high level sample agenda:

- Review of previous deliverables
- Discuss items of interest, concern, or in need of a decision
- Possible client sign offs on major decisions
- Action Items and Deliverables
- What is the action item or deliverable?
- Who is responsible for it?
- When must it be accomplished or delivered (and to whom)?
- Additional notes

- Discuss Project Timelines and Next Meeting Date
- Meeting Review
- Summarize for comprehension
- Ensure everyone understands the action items and deliverables

Take copies of the agenda to in person meetings, and guide the discussion through agenda items, taking notes as appropriate.

After the meeting summarize it, particularly action items and deliverables, and send a copy to each meeting participant. Ask if everything has been stated properly; if changes are received, update the summary and re-send it to everyone.

Keep the summaries with your project documents for easy review.

If you are asked to participate in a meeting regarding the project, find out from the client the items to be discussed. Some indication is most likely in the initial request, but try to get more detail. Draft an agenda and take it with you. Many clients will not have created an agenda, and will appreciate the forethought on your part. During the meeting take notes and if deliverables and action items are discussed, verify specifics and deadlines.

After, write as summary of the meeting for your point of view. Forward it to meeting participants and ask for verification. Those who organized the meeting may send out minutes, so you can judge whether sending your summary would be redundant.

Always have a goal when going into a meeting. Having a proper agenda better enables you to obtain the goal, and is another opportunity to showcase your professionalism.