How to Facilitate a Meeting

Who Wants to Go to a Meeting?

52 minutes per day 'wasted' in meetings

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The average office worker wastes 52 minutes a day in 'pointless' meetings where they don't contribute, aren't listened to or are just making up the numbers.

That's according to research by coaching firm You Brand, who quizzed their clients, which include FTSE 50 companies, about the etiquette and mechanics of meetings.

You Brand founder Julia Goodman said: "Many people feel isolated and cut out of meetings, with the biggest complaint being shouted down by louder colleagues.

"Interestingly, more dominant characters say meetings fail because colleagues don't contribute enough.

"What people don't realise is that speaking in the first five minutes of a meeting will make sure they are listened to later.

"While the chair of a meeting needs control, everyone is responsible for ensuring discussions run smoothly," says Goodman. "People must communicate clearly, and say what they mean to make meetings more effective."

http://bdaily.info/news/business/26-10-2009/52-minutes-per-day-wasted-in-meetings/

What is a meeting?

Formal or informal deliberative assembly of individuals called to debate certain issues and problems, and to make decisions. Formal meetings are held at definite times, at a definite place, and usually for a definite duration to follow an agreed upon agenda. ... A meeting is typically headed by a chairperson, and its deliberations are recorded in a written form called minutes... (M)eetings must have a minimum number of members (called quorum) present to make the legally operative. Decisions (called resolutions) are made on the basis of number of votes the assenting and dissenting parties can muster. Under the doctrine of collective responsibility, decisions taken at … meetings bind all members whether present or not.

http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/meeting.html

Why Meetings Fail

- The facilitator puts aside the meeting agenda for his or her own personal agenda
- The facilitator allows interruptions such as telephone calls, etc.
- Loud group members are allowed to dominate the meeting
- Decisions are made based on generalizations, exaggeration, guesswork, and assumptions
- Discussions consistently wander off the topic
- Key members of the group are not present
- Overly ambitious agendas
- Meetings that exceed previously agreed-upon time limits
- Minutes that are inaccurate or biased
- Too many participants
- Waiting for latecomers to arrive
- An unclear, or inappropriate, decision-making process. For example, taking a vote when leadership and unilateral action by a company's CEO is clearly needed.

http://www.answers.com/topic/meeting - Small Business Encyclopedia

How Google Runs Meetings

1. Set a firm agenda.
Distribute the agenda ahead of time that outlines what the participants want to discuss and the best way of using the allotted time. Agendas need to have flexibility but agendas act as tools that force individuals to think about what they want to accomplish in meetings. It helps all those involved to focus on what they are really trying to achieve and how best to reach that goal.

2. Assign a note-taker.
A Google meeting features a lot of displays. On one wall, a projector displays the presentation, while right next to it, another projector shows the transcription of the meeting. (Yet another displays a 4-foot image of a ticking stopwatch.) Google executives are big believers in capturing an official set of notes, so inaccuracies and inconsistencies can be caught immediately.

Those who missed the meetings receive a copy of the notes. When people are trying to remember what decisions were made, in what direction the team is going, and what actions need to be taken, they can simply review the notes.

3. Carve out micro-meetings.
Use smaller, self-contained gatherings on a particular subject or project, generally in 5 to 10 minute segments. This method offers enough flexibility to modify the agenda just before the meeting, should anything pressing occur. It also instills discipline that keeps the meeting tightly focused.

4. Hold office hours.
Employees add their name to a board outside the office, and the manager sees them on a first-come, first-serve basis. Sometimes project managers need approval on a marketing campaign; sometimes staffers want a few minutes to pitch a design.

5. Discourage politics, use data.
This idea can and should apply to meetings in organizations in which people feel as though the boss will give the green light to a design created by the person he or she likes the best, showing favoritism for the individual instead of the idea.

This mindset can demoralize employees, so she goes out of her way to make the approval process a science. Google chooses designs on a clearly defined set of metrics and how well they perform against those metrics. Designs are chosen based on merit and evidence, not personal relationships.

Facilitators discourage using the phrase "I like" in design meetings, such as "I like the way the screen looks" but instead encourage such comments as "The experimentation on the site shows that his design performed 10% better." This works for Google, because it builds a culture driven by customer feedback data, not the internal politics that pervade so many of today's corporations.

6. Stick to the clock.
To add a little pressure to keep meetings focused, Google gatherings often feature a giant timer on the wall, counting down the minutes left for a particular meeting or topic. It's literally a downloadable timer that runs off a computer and is projected 4 feet tall.

Imagine how chaotic it must look to outsiders when the wall shows several displays at once—the presentation, transcription, and a mega-timer! And yet, at Google, it makes sense, imposing structure amidst creative chaos. The timer exerts a subtle pressure to keep meetings running on schedule. Maintain a healthy sense of humor about it.

http://www.businessweek.com/smallbiz/content/sep2006/sb20060927_259688.htm

Meetings Are Groups of People Working Together

Groups Are Teams

Teamwork – How hard can it be?

A team has vision. Committees have agendas - often separate agendas. Ralph Strayer

Team/Group formation

- Forming – Have a reason for your team to exist and have a single shared theme and defining objective
- Storming – Getting to know your team mates
- Norming – Setting the rules for play
- Performing – Getting the job done

[***The following sections are adapted from the work of Patrick Lencioni.***]

The Five Dysfunctions of Teams

1. Inattention to results
2. Avoidance of accountability
3. Lack of commitment
4. Fear of conflict
5. Absence of trust

The Five Characteristics of Cohesive Teams

1. Trust one another
2. Engage in unfiltered conflict around ideas
3. They commit to decisions and plans of action
4. They hold one another accountable for delivery of those plans
5. They focus on achievement of collective results

Outcomes and Score Cards - Lencioni

Teams With Trust:
- Admit weaknesses and mistakes
- Ask for help
- Accept questions and input about their areas of responsibility
- Give one another the benefit of the doubt before arriving at negative conclusions.
- Look forward to meetings as opportunities to work as a group
- Take risks in offering feedback and assistance
- Appreciate and tap into each other's skills and experiences
- Focus time and energy on important issues, not politics
- Offer and accept apologies when they make mistakes

Teams That Engage In Conflict:	**Teams That Fear Conflict:**
- Have lively interesting meetings - Extract and exploit ideas of all team members - Solve real problems quickly - Minimize politics - Put critical topics on the table for discussion	- Have boring meetings - Create environments where backchannel politics and personal attacks thrive - Ignore controversial topics that are critical to team success - Fail to tap into the opinions and perspectives of team members - Waste time and energy with posturing and interpersonal risk management
Teams That Commit:	**Teams That Fail to Commit:**
- Creates clarity around direction and priorities - Aligns the entire team around common objectives - Develops an ability to learn from mistakes - Takes advantage of opportunities before competitors do - Moves forward without hesitation - Changes direction without hesitation or guilt	- Creates ambiguity among the team about direction and priorities - Watches windows of opportunity close due to excessive analysis and unnecessary delays - Breeds lack of confidence and fear of failure - Revisits discussions and decisions again and again - Encourages second guessing among team members
Teams That Embrace Accountability:	**Teams That Avoid Accountability:**
- Ensures that poor performers feel pressure to improve - Identifies potential problems quickly by questioning one another's approaches without hesitation - Establishes respect among team members who are held to the same high	- Creates resentment among team members who have different standards of performance - Encourages mediocrity - Misses deadlines and key deliverables - Places an undue burden on the team leader as the sole source of discipline

standards • Avoids excessive bureaucracy around performance management and corrective action	
Teams Focused on Collective Results: • Retains achievement oriented individuals • Minimizes individualistic behavior • Enjoys success and suffers failure acutely • Benefits from individuals who subjugate their own goals/interests for the good of the team • Avoids distractions	**Teams Not Focused on Collective Results:** • Stagnates and fails to grow • Rarely defeats competitors or meets goals • Loses achievement oriented members • Encourages team members to focus on their own agenda and individual goals • Is easily distracted

Meeting Effectiveness Rating Scale

Meeting Name: _____

Date: _____

In reviewing the effectiveness of this meeting, please rate the following areas, where marks to the left represent low levels of goal attainment and marks to the right indicate high levels of goal attainment.

Communication

(How well individuals communicated constructively)

|---|

Collaboration

(How effectively members worked together)

|---|

Focus

(How well the members stayed on task and defined outcomes)

|---|

Overall

(Overall effectiveness of meeting clearly defined goals)

|---|

Dashboard

Tracking Meeting Success

	Based on a dashboard created by the ODU School of Business	5 = Strongly Agree
Initiating		1 2 3 4 5
	We "speak up" and take risks	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Visioning		1 2 3 4 5
	We clearly understand what is brought to the COMMITTEE meetings for decision vs. information vs. input	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	We are clear on the role of the COMMITTEE	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	We demonstrate passion for our purpose	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	Before being announced publicly, "vision" stretches from the Executive Director/Chair are efficiently run by a "practical COMMITTEE litmus test", to consider budget, time lines, etc.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	Before being announced publicly, "vision" stretches from the Executive Director/Chair are efficiently run by a "philosophical litmus test" of the COMMITTEE	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	The COMMITTEE works with Executive Director/Chair to push "pseudo-visions" to greater clarity, definition and boundary decisions	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	Executive Director/Chair is transparent on his decision progress (completely decided and no input needed, partially complete and need input, etc.)	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	We work through and bring clarity and understanding around key guiding philosophy pillars (our relationship with sponsors, push toward community, budget emphasis, etc.)	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Claiming		1 2 3 4 5
	When we leave the COMMITTEE decision making process, we have clarity	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	When we finish the COMMITTEE decision process, we have alignment	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

		1 2 3 4 5
	We have the correct pace in the work we do (not overextended)	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	We have clear decided upon overarching priorities (money, etc.)	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	We develop quick, efficient cycle times on new initiatives	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	Expectations of the COMMITTEE are clear	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Letting Go		1 2 3 4 5
	We speak openly and honestly	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	We openly embrace conflict and effectively work through it	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	We confront bad news and disappointment directly	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	We feel supported taking risks	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	When we are clear on Executive Director/Chair's decision stance and if he is not fully decided, we all push back	
Celebration		1 2 3 4 5
	We effectively celebrate as a COMMITTEE/ team	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Service		1 2 3 4 5
	We are servicing well the needs of our internal customers	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	We are servicing well the needs of our external customers	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	We have clearly identified who are customers are	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Other Resources

- Effective Meetings - http://www.effectivemeetings.com/
- How to Manage Meetings (2002, 2007). Alan Barker. ISBN-10 0 7494 4547 5
- Robert's Rules of Order – Quick Summary - http://www.robertsrules.org/
- The Table Group – Patrick Lencioni's web site - http://www.tablegroup.com/