

Conducting Effective Meetings

Effective Meeting

- Achieve its Objectives*
- Minimum Amount of Time*
- Participants Satisfied in Relation to the Time and the Objectives Expended*

* - Marion E. Haynes, Meeting Skills for Leaders,
(Fourth Edition - Axzo Press, 2009)

Two General Types of Meetings

- Informational Meeting
- Decision Making Meeting

Change room setup to reflect purpose of meeting.

Some things to consider before scheduling a meeting

- Do we need a meeting?
 - Can an email discussion or brief telephone call resolve the need to meeting?
 - Consensus that a meeting is necessary between interested parties is a great way to obtain initial buy in.

Prepare an Agenda (Plan)

- Consider starting with the objective.
 - Clear objectives make developing steps to address them easier.

An agenda should establish the following:

- Date, time, length and place
- Objective(s)
- Potential Issues/Problems
- Potential Alternatives
- Select Alternative
- Assign Tasks
- Establish Follow Up
- Summarize
- Feedback and Adjourn

Who should attend ?

- Limit it to only interested parties and/or necessary decision makers
 - better participation if those attending are limited to those affected by the meeting outcome.
- Optional versus Required attendance

Participant Preparation and Notification

- Invite should include agenda
- Identify if participants should prepare anything ahead of time
- Request additions to agenda items or participants to the meeting
- Invite should clearly distinguish whether meeting is internal or will include external parties

Teleconference Preparation

- Arrange for call in (WisLine)
- Quality of speaker phone
- Quiet room
- Distribute agenda ahead of time
- Be aware of time differences
 - time zone
- Does the meeting need to be recorded?

Teleconference Participation

- Need a leader
 - Dial in early
 - Check attendance for late comers
 - Manage participation
 - Summarize action items
- Introduce yourself when you join the call and before you speak
- Let the group know upfront if you have to leave the call early

Teleconference Participation

- **Replace non-verbal communication with verbal communication**
- **Use the mute button when there is distracting background noise.**
 - Be careful what you say, even when using the mute button.
- **Don't be afraid to interrupt.**
 - No body language to help cue someone that you want to speak.
- **Let people have time to process**
 - Get comfortable with silence

Virtual Technology Definitions

■ Asynchronous Technologies

- Have delays between sending and receiving.
- Best suited when instant feedback/response is not needed.

■ Synchronous Technologies

- Provides real-time communication that is most similar to face-to-face communications.
- Allows for immediate communications between team members/participants.

Asynchronous Technology Tools

- E-mail
- Electronic Group Calendars
- Electronic Group Schedules
- Bulletin Boards
- Discussion Boards or Wiki Sites
- Web Pages
- Disconnected Data Sharing or FTP Sites
- Text Message Communication
- Collaboration Sites

Synchronous Technology Tools

- Electronic White Boards, Meetings, Chat or Instant Messaging
- Desktop Real-Time Data Conferencing
- Desktop Audio or Video Links
- Desktop Video Conferencing
- Specialized Video Conferencing Rooms
- Audio Conferencing using standard telephone, teleconference/spider phone, teleconference service provider and/or dedicated teleconference lines
- Audio conferencing using real-time data conferencing software
- Web Conferencing Sites or Applications

Asynchronous Tools

Best Uses & Benefits

- Scheduling meetings or posting schedules/calendars.
- Transferring files or storing information in a shared location.
- If real-time communication, participation or immediate feedback is not needed.
- Working on projects across multiple organizations or locations.
- Designed for longer term efforts or projects.
- Many organizations already own many of these tools.
- Allows team members to receive information on their own schedule, process and understand the information presented, gather additional information if needed and then provide a response if desired/needed.

Synchronous Tools

Best Uses & Benefits

- Real-time communications and feedback is needed.
- Brainstorming and sharing of ideas.
- Prioritization, debating, reaching consensus and voting
- Presenting diagrams and listing ideas to participants.
- Audio and/or Video presentations where immediate feedback is needed.
- Wide range of tools to draw or make notes.
- Presentations to a large number of participants with controlled/limited feedback or interruptions from participants.
- Most similar to face-to-face communications/meetings.

Challenges

■ Technical

- Network bandwidth/speed may impact function and performance.
- Computer configuration/installation of technology tool.
- Firewall rules may prevent access to Internet locations.
- Individual user computer security may cause problems.

■ Non-Technical

- Knowledge/Education on use of tool/technology
- Workplace computer use rules & policies – restrictions on what can/may be used and not used.
- Disruptions to others in nearby vicinity when technology is in use/progress. (cube city).

Best Practices

- Ask questions --What does your agency support and have available for use? What does it cost?
 - Some widely advertised technologies are not available or supported for various reasons.
 - Some technologies require additional setup and configuration before they can be used.
 - Understand your workplace computer use rules and policies.

Best Practices

- Plan well ahead of when you need to use the technology to reduce the chances of issues arising when you need to use the tool.
 - Reserve equipment.
 - Test equipment / communications before their intended use.
 - Make sure you know how to operate all specialty equipment.
 - Make sure you know how to connect to and operate computer based technology solutions.
 - Practice using the technology before its first use.

Best Practices

- Make sure your computer is prepared for using any desktop tools.
 - Adequate computer security to use the technology.
 - Install applications before their intended use.

Constructive Team Behaviors

Cooperating

- Interested in the views and perspectives of other team members. Works toward achieving consensus.

Clarifying/Summarizing

- Clarifies issues for the team by listening, summarizing key points and decisions, and focusing discussions.

Inspiring

- Enlivens the team, encourages participation, maintains a positive focus, identifies team progress.

Risk-Taking

- Willing to take personal risks for team success. Willing to bring up an unpopular point of view, difficult issues, and team problems.

“Interventions” That Reinforce Desirable Behaviors

Model the behavior.

“Reflect” and Comment on the behavior.

Reward the behavior.

Discuss the behavior.

Undesirable Team Behaviors

Prevent the behavior – **anticipate** the behavior.

Avoid blaming the individual – the Team owns it.

Ignore the behavior – let it work itself out.

Low-key intervention – use subtle approaches.

Confront the behavior – be direct and specific.

Problematic Behaviors

1. Dominating

Takes much of meeting time expressing self-views and opinions. Tries to take control by use of power and time.

Interventions

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Problematic Behaviors

2. Rushing

Encourages team to move on before task completion. Gets “tired” of listening to others, working as a team.

Interventions

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Problematic Behaviors

3. **Withdrawing**

Removes self from discussions or decision-making. May want to control the team by withdrawing.

Interventions

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One-Liners You Can Use

- Are we ready to make a decision?
- What data/information do you have? Is this enough information? Is additional information necessary/available?
- Are we ready to move on?
- I'd like to hear from everyone on this point. Let's do a round robin.
- Have I correctly captured your idea on the flip chart?
- I'd like to check for consensus on this point before we move on. Let's go around the table.

Tips for All Team Members

- Pay attention to what is said AND how it is said.
- Pay attention to body language, moods, energy levels and interest.
- Model the behavior you want.
- Do not suppress conflict, but keep it focused on the problem – not the personalities.
- Recognize and celebrate achievements.
- Enjoy the process.

Feedback: Evaluating Meetings

What is it?

- A questionnaire and scale to learn opinions of participants:

What is the purpose?

- Helps keep members engaged
- Quality improvement mechanism
- Helps members feel their time has been worthwhile

Wrap Up

- A brief, structured evaluation at the end of each meeting gives participants an opportunity to recognize their accomplishments and take note of what could be improved.
- How to evaluate a meeting depends on who wants to know, why they want to know and what action they'll take as a result of knowing it.

How to Use It

- Informal evaluation -- the meeting leader asks each attendee for his/her opinion -- gets rankings from each attendee.
- Formal evaluation -- distribute copies with meeting materials.

Numerical

- State objective.
- How well was this objective met?
 - Please circle the relevant number.

	Low				High
Relevance of Content	1	2	3	4	5
Clarity of Presentation	1	2	3	4	5
Relevance to your learning	1	2	3	4	5

Specific

- How did you hear about this meeting?
 - (You may want to make suggestions – email list, posters, word of mouth.)
- Was the timing of this meeting convenient for you?
 - Yes / No (Please circle)
- When would you prefer meetings to be held?

Open-ended

- Which aspects of the meeting did you find particularly helpful?
- Please suggest what we could do differently to improve our meetings?
- Can you suggest any particular topics or speakers?

- Review the ratings received.
 - Look for items that everyone ranked low; and
 - Whether there are wide discrepancies between rankings
- Determine appropriate action items and follow up on problem areas.
- Monitor progress on problem areas.

Tips

- Let attendees know what changes are made as a result of their feedback.
- Don't over-survey. Be concise and make use of your findings
- Include "Evaluation" as an agenda item near the end of every meeting.
- Plan realistic agendas that leave time for closing items such as evaluations, thanks etc.

Summary

- Make meetings more effective by:
 - Planning and using objectives
 - Including an agenda
 - Using appropriate technology
 - Managing participation
 - Evaluating meeting effectiveness
 - Including feedback to participants