How to Conduct Successful Meetings

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Did you know that Professor Smith died?

No, what happened?
They found him brain dead after a three hour faculty meeting.
Discussion

As you’ve experienced various meetings, what would you like to see done differently?
Purpose

- To help develop the skills to facilitate a variety of meetings that generate productive results by drawing on the knowledge, ability, and creativity of individual group members.
At the completion of this session, you will be able to:

- Plan for a focused meeting
- Start a meeting by reviewing
  - The purpose
  - The desired outcomes
  - The ground rules
  - The agenda
Desired Outcomes

- Use facilitation techniques to encourage a wide range of views on discussion topics
- Keep the discussion on track
- Assign action items and make follow-up plans to conclude a meeting
Prepare the Group for a Focused Meeting

- Define the purpose and desired outcome(s)
  - The purpose is the reason for holding it
  - Desired outcome(s) are the tangible results you expect to achieve by the end of the meeting
  - Specific tangible outcomes serve as a guide to keeping the meeting on course
Prepare the Group for a Focused Meeting

- Determine if a meeting is necessary: ask yourself three questions
  - Is a meeting the best way to accomplish the desired outcomes
  - Is this a complex topic for which no one person has all the information
  - Is the timing right to accomplish the desired outcome(s) in a meeting
Prepare the Group for a Focused Meeting

- Determine topics to cover and the best format for discussing each
  - List the specific topics you will need to address to achieve the desired outcome(s)
  - Decide on a format that will work best for each topic
  - Determine the best person to cover each agenda item
  - Determine the best order for the agenda items
  - Plan how you’ll handle additional topics that arise during the meeting
Preparation at the Start of the Meeting

- Estimate the length of the meeting
  - Estimate how long each agenda item will take
  - Allow extra time for controversial topics
  - Overestimate when in doubt
- Restate the purpose and desired outcomes
- Review the agenda to focus their attention on the meeting’s issues
Preparation at the Start of the Meeting

- Develop or review ground rules
  - Ground rules establish the facilitator’s role and deliver the message that the meeting will be managed
  - Ground rules give the facilitator and participants a way to confront unacceptable behavior
  - Ground rules provide a structure and climate that make it easier to manage the flow of the meeting
Ground rules fall into several categories:

- Participation guidelines
  - i.e. open expression of opinions and ideas without regard of rank
- Behavioral guidelines
  - i.e. no putting down others, monopolizing the discussion, or interrupting
- Non-negotiable
  - i.e. time limits, confidentiality
Preparation at the Start of the Meeting

- With a newly formed group do the following:
  - Before the meeting, make a list of ground rules you think would be helpful
  - At the start of the meeting, ask group members what ground rules they would like
  - If necessary, suggest additional ground rules from your list
  - Get the group’s agreement on all ground rules

- With an established group, take this approach:
  - Consider reviewing the group’s ground rules at the beginning of each meeting
  - Add new ground rules as needed
Keep the Group Focused

- Manage content and the process
- Pay attention to the flow of the meeting. As the meeting progresses, ask yourself:
  - Are we losing focus on the agenda item?
  - Are we introducing related but irrelevant information?
  - Is the discussion moving from point to point without resolution?
  - Are we spending too much time on the early parts of the agenda?
  - Is the need to deal with an issue blocking us from moving forward?
  - Does the whole group need to deal with the problem or could a subgroup work on it outside of the meeting?
Keeping the Group Focused

- Use the agenda, desired outcomes, ground rules, and structured discussions to stay on track
- Keep the group aware of where they are in the process
- Periodically summarize key points and ask for agreement
  - To involve the group, consider asking a group member to summarize
Handling Disruptive Behavior

- Making negative or cynical comments
  - Ask for other people’s opinions on the comment

- Dominating
  - Thank the person for the comment. Ask for others’ views. Tell the person you want to hear from everyone in the group

- Interrupting
  - Ask the person who was interrupted to continue

- Getting off the topic
  - Ask the person how the comments relate to the discussion
Handling Disruptive Behavior

- **Attacking**
  - Ask the person to argue the viewpoint he or she is opposing
  - Ask how many in the group share this view

- **Holding side conversations**
  - Pause and wait; ask a question of the person who is talking; make a direct comment about the ground rules

- **Telling war stories**
  - Ask people to focus on the discussion at hand
Make Sure Action Items are Planned

- Assign action items throughout the meeting, and review at the end of the meeting.
- Help the group decide on next steps
- Make specific assignments
- Conclude by summarizing the group’s accomplishments
- Evaluate the meeting
  - Review the desired outcomes and check to be sure everything was accomplished. If not, ask the group what got in the way and how things could be done differently next time.
Leading Successful Meetings

The key to leading successful meetings can be summarized into the following points:

- Understand your responsibility as facilitator
- Adequately prepare for each meeting
- Use appropriate techniques for handling difficult situations
- Ask open ended questions to help draw out participants’ ideas and experiences
- Be honest about what you know and don’t know
Leading Successful Meetings

- Reinforce participation
- When appropriate, defer questions to the group
- Don’t feel you have to be right. Don’t be defensive.
- As appropriate, summarize, clarify, or rephrase key points brought up by the group
Leading Successful Meetings

- Give and receive feedback effectively
- Get the group involved in discussion
- Keep the sessions on track
- End up doing a maximum of 40% of the talking
- Begin and end on time without leaving anything out
- Respond to group cues of dissatisfaction, boredom, or confusion. Find out the problem and adjust the pacing.
Questions and Action Steps
Thank You!