



# LEADERSHIP HEADQUARTERS

## Managing Meetings.

One of the biggest complaints about most organisations is meetings. They are perceived to waste too much of our precious time. This is bad news for the leadership team of an organisation because it's in meetings that an organisation's culture and climate maintain itself.

Meetings are one of the ways in which the organisation's leaders speak to their workers, "You are a member." When having meetings, you need to keep them interesting and efficient. Otherwise, time wasting, and boring meetings will create perceptions that this is a boring and inefficient company.

### EXERCISE 10.13 WHAT HAVE I LEARNT FROM EFFECTIVE MEETINGS?

The purpose of this exercise is to identify positive learnings from attending effective meetings. To answer the next questions, think about the authentic leaders in your organisation and meetings they have conducted.

What did these leaders demonstrate the potential for productive meetings?

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When they lead the meeting effectively, what did others say, do or feel?

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What impact did they have on the meeting outcomes?

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Describe one or more situations where you were not useful in managing meetings

I was less effective in managing meetings in the following situations:

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What prevented me from managing effective meetings?

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Knowing what I know now, what would I do differently in a similar situation?

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Now let's turn to situations where you have successfully led productive meetings.

When have I been successful in managing meetings?

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What did I do that others found to be effective? What were the outcomes?

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## WHY ARE THERE SO MANY BAD MEETINGS?

Bad meetings happen when there is poor planning by the meeting organiser and a lack of involvement by the participants.

Listed below are recommended guidelines for conducting effective meetings

(Adapted from Don Clark Leadership and Conducting Meetings <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leadmet.html>)

## PREPARE FOR THE MEETING

- Define the objectives and desired outcomes. Know what you are trying to achieve by having a meeting.
- Determine if a different activity or medium could be used besides a meeting. A lot of meetings are convened when a couple of phone calls, email, or one-on-ones would have worked better.
- Determine topics that must be covered and the best format for discussing each one. Know what you want to accomplish by the end of the meeting.
- Estimate the length of the meeting. People need to know how much time they need to allocate.
- Create a carefully scripted agenda that gives start and stop times. Time is money.
  - Identify the place of the meeting.
  - List participants and guests.
- List what the members' roles are and what is expected from them so they can gather all the relevant data and bring it to the meeting.
- Prepare a structured discussion to frame the purpose, topics, and direction of the meeting.
- Deliver the agenda in advance so that the participants have time to plan and prepare.
- Make every meeting a learning event: incorporate creative and cutting-edge education on your topic by using books, speakers, or videos. The people attending are giving up their time for you, so you need to give something back.
- Use a variety of tools and activities to make the meeting productive and fun. Get participants charged up!

## PREPARE TO ATTEND A MEETING (FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS)

- Know the purpose of the meeting. Know what your reason for attending is.
- Gather all data that you need to bring to the meeting.
- Meeting agenda.
- Know your role and the path that you are going to follow.
- Arrive on time and be prepared to stay until at least the planned stop time.
- Take the meeting seriously but do have some fun while attending.

## SET UP THE MEETING PLACE

- Select a physical setting that is comfortable, big enough, and will serve the purpose.
- Create a warm and attractive atmosphere conducive to interaction.
- Provide appropriate refreshments.
- Have any useful visual aids and learning aids on hand.
- Always do something a little different and something new. Make participants glad that they came.

## ASSIGN A NOTE TAKER (MINUTES)

- Who attended?
- What problems were discussed?
- What key decisions were reached?
- List the next steps (action items).
- Who needs to accomplish a task - list team and outside members?
- Start and end date of task.
- What is it exactly that they need to accomplish?



## **START THE MEETING**

- Communicate the purpose and desired outcomes to all participants.
- Clarify the type of participation and interaction desired.
- Set the ground rules (Norms).
- When the meeting starts and ends?
- How will each member be heard?
- How will conflicts be resolved?
- What is expected of each member?
- Confidential topics.
- Show that you value participant's ideas, opinions, and questions.

## **CONDUCT THE MEETING**

- Take time to tell and hear stories. Be creative in how you share them.
- Clarify and paraphrase key ideas.
- Ask for different points of view; protect new ideas.
- Use brainstorming techniques.
- Record ideas and notes on a flip chart.
- Use bright colours and bold shapes.
- Use pictures, as well as text.
- Use bullets to emphasise key points.
- Use no more than seven words per line and seven lines per chart.
- Keep all flip charts posted so that they can easily be referred to.
- At the end of the meeting, give them to the note taker so that they can be incorporated into the minutes.
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage participant input
- Keep the focus on ideas and objectives, not people
- Assign next steps throughout the meeting. Make all next steps specific assignments
- Stay focused on the agenda topics. Do not wander off topic or become distracted. Agendas are worth taking seriously as long as they do not become personal, stifle creativity or insult participants who stray.

## **KEEP THE MEETING FOCUSED AND MOVING**

- Get information and data from the meeting. Ensure people are heard.
- Let the people carry the content; you guide the process.
- Acknowledge and reinforce constructive contributions.
- Use the agenda to stay on track.
- Vary the pace: speed up, slow down, take breaks, and change tracks.
- Keep the group aware of where they are in the process.
- Periodically summarise key points and ask for agreement.
- Help the group reach consensus and reach conclusions.

## **CLOSING**

- Assist the group to decide on next steps
- Review assigned next steps. Ensure each person knows the duties they are expected to perform. Make sure everyone goes from "meeting" to "doing."
- Conclude by summarising the group's accomplishments.
- Thank group members sincerely for their participation and contributions.

## **FOLLOW UP (ACTION ITEMS)**

- Evaluate the meeting. What worked? What needs improvement?
- Plan post-meeting logistics
- Using the minutes and your impressions, create a document that clearly describes the meeting. Use comments, questions, criticisms, and insights to enhance the quality of the document
- Distribute the document to all participants and other key players within the organisation
- Monitor progress on next steps.

