STARCLUB NT

Conducting an Effective Meeting

Information on implementing meetings is vast, yet there are too few effective meetings. Why? There are at least 4 reasons:

1. Creating effective meetings requires preparation and discipline

2. The abundance of poorly run meetings makes people think they are normal

3. Too few people understand that effective meetings are critical to reaching goals and energising teammates

4. Almost unconsciously, participants keep the status quo in place by complaining and offering no solutions.

How do you achieve an effective meeting?   You Plan it.

You can increase your chances of having an effective meeting by reviewing this checklist that reminds you to pay attention to important elements of successful meeting preparation.

Before the meeting:

• Whoever calls the meeting is or assigns a meeting facilitator & declares the main objective of the meeting as communication, decision-making or other (then specify)

• Meeting facilitator ensures distribution of written &/or verbal invitations, including time & place, objectives, agenda items & length of time for each item

• Each invitee responds to meeting facilitator by specified date (for example, within 2 days)

• If invitee cannot attend or stay for the entire meeting, he/she notifies the facilitator & sends a representative or written and/or verbal communication of his/her contributions to the meeting.

• Participants prepare themselves for the meeting (for example, read relevant materials prior to the meeting and/or bring relevant information to the meeting)

• Meeting facilitator ensures all required materials are in the room – projector, overhead, flip charts, pens, refreshments, etc.

• Participants arrive to the meeting before the start time

NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

- Meeting facilitator identifies who are the timekeeper and scribe and defines their roles

During the meeting:

- If possible, the meeting facilitator takes some time to 'warm the group up' with a light-hearted introduction (appropriate joke or quote or story)

- Meeting facilitator reviews aloud objectives & agenda topics & time allotments, & gets agreement or revisions

- Each participant treats colleagues respectfully, and offers constructive & positive comments

- Each participant is responsible to keep the discussion on track ("one minute rule" = if anyone is off the topic for more than 1 minute, a participant calls for a "time-out" and ask to re-focus on the agenda topic)

- Meeting facilitator manages the time for each topic

- If non-constructive arguments occur, the meeting facilitator mediates the disagreement or tables it for follow-up outside the meeting

- All participants are responsible for creating a collaborative environment, ensuring input from all participants, and discouraging non-constructive dominance by any attendee

- Where appropriate, any participant should make proposals & call for votes or consensus

- Spend 5 to 15 minutes to commit to future action plan written clearly in view of all participants. Each person reads aloud their action and delivery date. State when and how the action plan will be reviewed

- When appropriate, have an exit survey that covers topics such as the overall effectiveness of the meeting, what was most valuable, and what needs improvement. Commit to when the action plan will be reviewed, how it will be reviewed & who will review it

After the Meeting:

- Distribute the written action plan distributed to attendees and others if appropriate, with a goal of within 1 working day

- Distribute the written summary of survey within 3 working days

- Review the action plan per the commitment made in meeting

How do you spread the behaviours of effective meetings?

•Exercise authority: You can use authority and/or influence to increase effective meeting behaviours. With authority, the superior can declare how to run meetings in the company, and train colleagues on the companies' endorsed methods.

•Lead by visible example: With influence, people lead by example and spreading the methods as others become interested.

How do you inspire behaviour change toward effective meetings?

•Publicly recognize and reward participants: Create opportunities to praise colleagues who demonstrate behaviours that encourage effective meetings, including simply saying statements like 'thank you for setting the objective and agenda prior to the meeting', written 'thank you' notes or e-mails, and using your formal recognition and reward system.

•Publicly and gracefully call attention to participants who do not keep a commitment: These moments of attention might include using specific responses for specific issues. For example, when someone arrives after the meeting time, ask if he/she is committed to arrive on time and charge $1.00 per minute to be put into a pool.

•Measure and report progress at every meeting:

So what can you do right now?

You can make a powerful, positive difference in your organization by creating your own guidelines and introducing them into your and your organization's daily practices. Your colleagues will eventually follow you, and people interested in increasing the performance of your organization will applaud you. When someone says running an effective meeting is like herding cats, let them know that herding cats is easy when you show them the milk.