Entelechy's Famous Meeting and Facilitation Tips

Meetings With Involvement and Results

Version 20020318

Entelechy, Inc.
P.O. Box 878 Merrimack, NH 03054-0878
1.800.376.8368
www.unlockit.com

Table of Contents

Introduction

Why This E-Guide?

A Story

To really succeed in a business or organization, it is sometimes helpful to know what your job is, and whether it involves any duties. Ask among your coworkers… "Hi," you should say. "I'm a new employee. What is the name of my job?" If they answer "long-range planner" or "lieutenant governor," you are pretty much free to lounge around and do crossword puzzles until retirement. Most jobs, however, will require some work.

There are two major kinds of work in modern organizations:

1. Taking phone messages for people who are in meetings, and…
2. Going to meetings.

Your ultimate career strategy will be to get a job involving primarily No. 2, going to meetings, as soon as possible, because that's where the real prestige is. It is all very well and good to be able to take phone messages, but you are never going to get a position of power, a position where you can cost thousands of people their jobs with a single bonehead decision, unless you learn how to attend meetings.

The first meeting ever was held back in the Mezzanine Era. In those days, Man's job was to slay his prey and bring it home for Woman, who had to figure out how to cook it. The problem was, Man was slow and basically naked, whereas the prey had warm fur and could run like an antelope. (In fact it was an antelope, only nobody knew this.)

At last someone said, "Maybe if we just sat down and did some brainstorming, we could come up with a better way to hunt our prey!" It went extremely well, plus it was much warmer sitting in a circle, so they agreed to meet again the next day, and the next.

But the women pointed out that, prey-wise, the men had not produced anything, and the human race was pretty much starving.

The men agreed that was serious and said they would put it right near the top of their "agenda". At this point, the women, who were primitive but not stupid, started eating plants, and thus modern agriculture was born. It never would have happened without meetings.

The modern business meeting, however, might better be compared with a funeral, in the sense that you have a gathering of people who are wearing uncomfortable clothing and would rather be somewhere else. The major difference is that most funerals have a definite purpose. Also, nothing is really ever buried in a meeting.

An idea may look dead, but it will always reappear at another meeting later on. If you have ever seen the movie, "Night of the Living Dead," you have a rough idea of how modern meetings operate, with projects and proposals that everyone thought were killed rising up constantly from their graves to stagger back into meetings and eat the brains of the living.

There are two major kinds of meetings:

1. Meetings that are held for basically the same reason that Arbor Day is observed — namely, tradition. For example, a lot of managerial people like to meet on Monday, because it's Monday. You'll get used to it. You'd better, because this kind account for 83% of all meetings (based on a study in which I wrote down numbers until one of them looked about right). This type of meeting operates the way "Show and Tell" does in nursery school, with everyone getting to say something, the difference being that in nursery school, the kids actually have something to say.

   When it's your turn, you should say that you're still working on whatever it is you're supposed to be working on. This may seem pretty dumb, since obviously you'd be working on whatever you're supposed to be working on, and even if you weren't, you'd claim you were, but that's the traditional thing for everyone to say. It would be a lot faster if the person running the meeting would just say, "Everyone who is still working on what he or she is supposed to be working on, raise your hand." You'd be out of there in five minutes, even allowing for jokes. But this is not how we do it in America. My guess is, it's how they do it in Japan.

2. Meetings where there is some alleged purpose. These are trickier, because what you do depends on what the purpose is.

   Sometimes the purpose is harmless, like someone wants to show slides of pie charts and give everyone a big, fat report. All you have to do in this kind of meeting is sit there and have elaborate fantasies, then take the report back to your office and throw it away, unless, of course, you're a vice president, in which case you write the name of a subordinate in the upper right hand corner, followed by a question mark, like this: "Norm?"

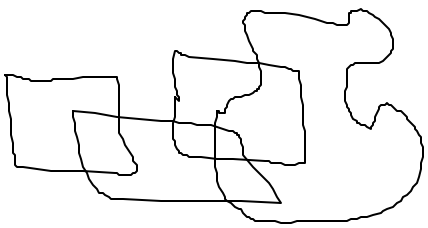
   Then you send it to Norm and forget all about it (although it will plague Norm for the rest of his career).

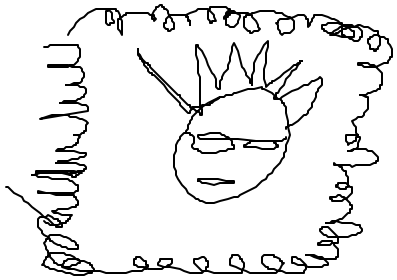
   But sometimes you go to meetings where the purpose is to get your "input" on something. This is very serious because what it means is, they want to make sure that in case whatever it is turns out to be stupid or fatal, you'll get some of the blame, so you have to escape from the meeting before they get around to asking you anything. One way is to set fire to your tie.

   Another is to have an accomplice interrupt the meeting and announce that you have a phone call from someone very important, such as the president of the company or the Pope. It should be one or the other. It would sound fishy if the accomplice said, "You have a call from the president of the company, or the Pope."

You should know how to take notes at a meeting. Use a yellow legal pad. At the top, write the date and underline it twice.

Now wait until an important person, such as your boss, starts talking; when he does, look at him with an expression of enraptured interest, as though he is revealing the secrets of life itself. Then write interlocking rectangles like this:





If it is an especially lengthy meeting, you can try something like this:

If somebody falls asleep in a meeting, have everyone else leave the room. Then collect a group of total strangers, right off the street, and have them sit around the sleeping person until he wakes up. Then have one of them say to him, "Bob, your plan is very, very risky. However, you've given us no choice but to try it. I only hope, for your sake, that you know what you're getting yourself into." Then they should file quietly out of the room.

(While the writing SOUNDS like Dave Barry and the topic SOUNDS like Dilbert's Scott Adams, I'm not sure who the author is.)

Seriously, It's About Results

"Meetings," they say, "are where minutes are taken and hours are wasted."

It is important to understand that there are very real costs associated with all meetings. As the meeting planner, you are responsible for using the organization's resources — people and time — effectively. Sometimes we don't realize the costs associated with meetings.

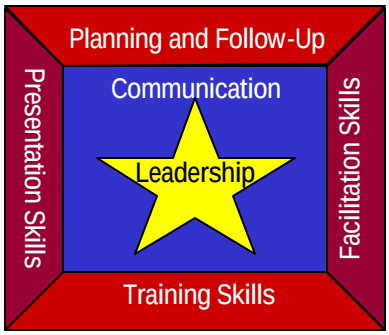
Number of meetings in past two weeks:		_____
Average time in each meeting:	x	_____
Total hours spent in meetings in the last two weeks:	**=**	_____
Multiply by 26	x	26
Total time per year you spend in meetings:	**=**	_____
The average number of attendees at each meeting:	x	_____
Total time per year spent in meetings:	**=**	_____
Average salary/hourly rate per attendee:	x	_____
Total cost of meetings you're aware of:	**=**	_____

Meetings cost a lot! When used effectively, they are worth the money. However, they frequently aren't as productive as they could be. Consider the meetings you attend. What percentage of the time spent in meetings would YOU say is valuable?

Recall the meetings that weren't as productive as they could have been. Determine what the problem was and what caused the problem. We'll address these common problems in this e-guide.

Six Unique Skills

Planning and conducting effective meetings — meetings that use resources and time wisely to achieve results — require six unique and interrelated skills.



Leadership: Meeting planners must accept the responsibility of leading — even if it's just for this one meeting. Your responsibility goes far beyond making sure that doughnuts and coffee are available! You are responsible for leading the group to the planned results and you are equally responsible for each individual in the meeting.

Communication: At its very core, meetings are about communication. Sharing information, training, discussing, problem-solving — all involve types of communication. At the root of communication skills lies the skills of questioning, listening, observing, and empathizing.

Presentation Skills: A special type of communication, presentations are primarily one-way exchanges of information. Effective presentations are clear, focused, and relevant to the participants. Effective presentations may include handouts that are clearly written. Effective presenters communicate clearly and with confidence and poise.

Facilitation Skills: Another special type of communication, facilitation skills are required when it is important to elicit responses and active involvement from participants. Meetings can be fruitful for problem solving, generating ideas (brainstorming), and getting buy-in and support from the group; an effective facilitator is able to skillfully engage, challenge, stimulate, and guide meeting participants to achieve the desired response.

Training Skills: A third special type of communication, training skills are required when meetings include the learning of a new skill or body of knowledge. Training requires skill in adult learning, transmission of different types of content (see *Entelechy's Five Content Areas* in the **Improving Your Training** area at www.unlockit.com), and testing to determine whether participants can perform what you taught.

Planning and Follow-up: Effective meetings are well planned. Agendas are established, participants are thoughtfully selected, logistics are carefully planned, and problems are anticipated. After the meeting, minutes or information is disseminated, actions and responsibilities are identified, and results are achieved.

This guide provides tips to address the above skills and help you plan and conduct meetings that achieve results.

Why Entelechy, Inc.?

Over the years, Entelechy has provided training and support to organizations wishing to improve their meetings; our programs have helped thousands of managers, supervisors, team leaders, and others increase the effectiveness of their meetings. In the process, we've identified what works — and what doesn't — and put them together here for you.

Entelechy customizes each delivery of Effective Meetings since every company and organization uses meetings differently to accomplish different objectives. YOU can purchase the very same core materials that we use to customize our training programs. If you have the design and development capability and are looking for a jump start to building your own Effective Meetings training program complete with Facilitator Guide, Overheads, Participant Guide, and Job Aids, contact Entelechy at effectivemeetings@unlockit.com or call 603-424-1237.

For More Information

For more insights into effective management, sales, customer service, or training and how YOU can ***unlock your potential***, join us at www.unlockit.com.

Entelechy, Inc.
P.O. Box 878 Merrimack, NH 03054-0878
1.800.376.8368
www.unlockit.com

Planning Meetings

Introduction

In this chapter, we will discuss planning issues and tips, including:

- Types of meetings
- Determining your objective(s)
- Planning your agenda
- Determining who should participate
- Achieving objectives without meeting face to face
- Recognizing the damage of unnecessary meetings
- Preparing for the meeting

Types of Meetings

Reasons for meeting vary. Sometimes your meetings will include a variety of reasons for meeting. Reasons for meetings — or types of meetings — may include:

- To make decisions
- To share important and/or timely information
- To divide up work
- To find solutions to problems
- To build morale
- To define goals and vision

It is important to define why you're meeting and to use meeting time appropriately. By defining why you're meeting, you're more likely to 1) use meeting time wisely, and 2) achieve your objectives.

Determining Your Objective(s)

It is important to establish objectives for your meeting — and portions of your meeting. Ask yourself, "What specifically do I want to achieve in this meeting — or this portion of the meeting?"

Make sure that each objective is SMART:

S Specific: We must have a specific, describable reason for meeting. "To determine the next steps for the project." is specific. "To discuss the project." is not.

M Measurable: We must know when we've achieved our objective. If we can't tell when we've achieved our objective, we may not know when the meeting is finished.

A Achievable: We must be realistic in our expectations. If we can't achieve the objective in the meeting, the objective should be rephrased. "Overcoming the morale problem." is not realistically achievable but "Answering questions about the direction of the organization." may be.

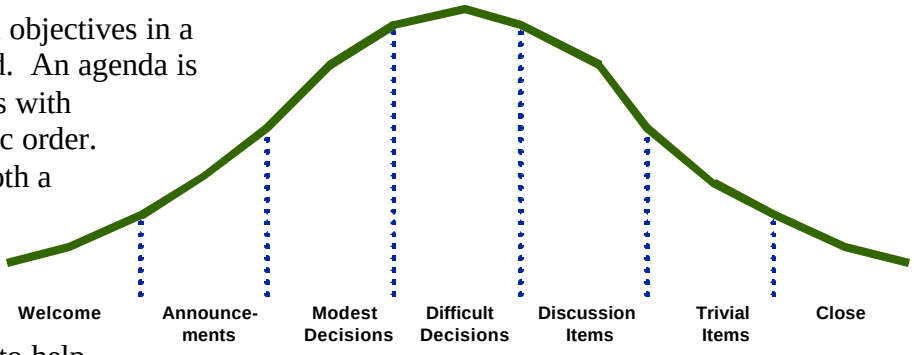
R Relevant: The meeting must be relevant to the work at hand and to the people you are planning to invite to the meeting.

T Time Bounded: The meeting must have start and end times; additionally, each agenda item should have time boundaries to ensure that discussion doesn't continue unnecessarily and to ensure that enough time has been planned for each topic.

Once written, SMART objectives can become part of your agenda. Attendees know what's happening. You can keep discussions on track. You can also use SMART objectives to determine if you need to meet!

Planning Your Agenda

Often you need to address several objectives in a meeting and an agenda is required. An agenda is simply a list of meeting objectives with associated timeframes in a specific order. Creating an effective agenda is both a science and an art.



When creating an agenda, consider the following:

- Follow the graphic above to help you make best use of people's time and brainpower. Obviously, if certain agenda topics MUST come before others, schedule them on the agenda accordingly.
- Identify items that require a decision or action from the group.
- Be realistic about the amount of time each topic will take. Remember, the more people at the meeting, the longer each topic will take.

- Be specific about times and schedule breaks if anticipated.
- You may want to include a brief statement about the agenda topic and list the objective or action needed.
- You may want to start the meeting at an unusual time to get people there on time (9:10 is preferred to 9:00, for example).

What's the value of having a well-prepared agenda?

It prepares attendees. Attendees can determine if they need to attend the entire meeting. It helps you keep discussions on track during the meeting.

Determining Who Should Participate

Who do you invite to your meetings and why are they invited?

Invite only those people who need to be at the meeting because of their involvement, expertise, or other appropriate reason.

Avoid inviting people who want to be there for information only UNLESS you clearly stipulate their role before the meeting. Avoid inviting people who may be involved in the project later but don't need to attend these meetings; you can send them the minutes of the meeting if they need to be informed.

Some meetings require a variety of people to participate but their involvement is only required for a specific item. To avoid wasting their time, it seems appropriate to invite them for only the portion of the meeting where they are needed.

Now that we're clear about what we want to achieve (objectives), how we're going to achieve it (agenda), and who is going to help us achieve it (list of attendees), we need to make certain that a face-to-face meeting is the best way to achieve our goals.

Achieving Objectives Without Meeting Face to Face

Sometimes meetings seem to be a waste of time and other times they seem to be very necessary.

What would necessitate a meeting; why would you choose to have a meeting as opposed to not having a meeting? Some reasons include:

- When discussion and exchange of ideas is important.
- When buy-in is critical.
- When information (facts) contains additional meaning or when they could be misinterpreted.
- When speed dictates immediate action.

In short, meetings may be necessary depending on your objective. Having a clear objective is required for an effective meeting.

Review your SMART objectives. Consider how you might accomplish that objective if you absolutely couldn't meet face-to-face. Force yourself to come up with an alternative.

While you should consider alternatives to face-to-face meetings when you first write your SMART objectives, you should also look at your agenda to determine what portions of the meeting could be done in ways other than face-to-face. You also may have attendees who, because of distance or schedules, force you to think of alternatives to face-to-face meetings.

When live exchange of information or discussion is critical, synchronous (real time) alternatives may be appropriate:

- Teleconference call with handouts or with downloaded presentation; check out:
  - ConferenceCall.com (http://www.conferencecall.com)
  - ECI Conference Call Services (http://www.calleci.com)
  - Genesys Telemeeting (http://www.genesys.com)
  - Teamcall (http://www.teamcall.com)
- Chat/instant messaging; check out:
  - Sprint (http://www.sprintbiz.com/icc/app/sim/)
  - MSN Messenger (http://messenger.msn.com/)
  - Imici (business messaging) (http://www.imici.com/)
  - Yahoo! (http://messenger.yahoo.com/)
- Videoconference
  - PC Based (you purchase equipment and software)
    - Sprint (http://www.sprintbiz.com/tools/icc/video_conferencing)
    - PicturePhone (http://picturephone.com/welcome.htm)
  - Site Based (you use their equipment at their facilities)
    - Proximity with 3,500 videoconferencing sites worldwide (http://www.proximity.com/)
    - Kinko's with 150 videoconferencing sites nationwide (http://www.kinkos.com/our_services/commercial_services/videoconferencing.php)
- Web conference using collaborative software; check out:
  - Collaborate Webinars (http://www.collaboratewebinars.com)
  - Genesys Meeting Center (http://www.genesys.com)
  - Linktivity (http://www.linktivity.com)
  - Placeware (http://www.placeware.com)
  - Webex (http://www.webex.com)
- Live presentation using web presentation software; check out:

- Sprint (http://www.sprintconf.com)

The above services and service providers are subject to change. Check out http://www.conferzone.com for an updated list of conferencing vendors and information.

When live exchange of information or discussion is NOT necessary, asynchronous alternatives may be appropriate:

- E-mail conference (participants copy everyone on the distribution list when they respond)
- Web-enabled discussion group

Recognizing the Damage of Unnecessary Meetings

We already discussed the costs associated with meetings. We also mentioned that there are costs associated with travel and expenses as well as costs associated with opportunities we miss while we are in meetings. However, there are damages associated with unnecessary — or poorly executed — meetings.

These damages may include:

- Disgruntled employees.
- Misinformed team members.
- Confusion.
- Unwillingness to participate in future meetings.
- Your reputation as a leader is damaged.
- Missed opportunities and work that was postponed due to the meeting.

It is important that if we're going to have a meeting, we better do it correctly.

Preparing for the Meeting

There are several things good facilitators do in preparation for an effective meeting.

Logistics

Date/Time: Set a meeting date and time convenient to as many as possible. Consider rush hour traffic.

Site: Select a site — location and room — convenient for as many as possible. Consider traffic, ease of finding the location, and parking. Reserve the room and identify the person responsible for opening the room (name, telephone number, pager number).

Meeting room considerations

Size: Ensure that the room is large enough to accommodate the number of participants and room set-up you require.

Room set-up: Make sure equipment (overhead projector and screen, flipchart stands, etc.) including outlets is available and work as required. Check heating/air-conditioning controls. Rearrange tables and chairs to meet your needs.

Materials: Make sure flip charts, pens, tape, notepads, name cards, wastebasket, and other materials are accounted for. If desired, arrange for refreshments. Identify responsible parties (name, telephone number, pager).

Other: Check the locations of restrooms, telephones, drinking fountain, smoking room, refreshment area, etc.

Plan for the worst. If you show up and the room is in use, what's your back up? If your refreshments don't arrive, what's your plan? If your guest speaker doesn't show up, what will you do?

Attendee preparation

Speaker role: Confirm with speakers/presenters their role and the time they will be required to attend. Record their names, telephone numbers, and pagers.

Participant role: To make sure participants come prepared and on time to meetings, you should:

- Send a reminder (via email) with the following information in addition to the agenda:
    - Start and end times (Consider starting at an unusual time such as 9:10 instead of 9:00. The specificity of the time helps get people there on time.)
    - Location and directions to the facility with any special instructions for parking or finding the meeting room.
    - Instructions indicating what to bring or how to prepare.
- Call or send a fax; this will add a more serious intentional flavor to the invitation.

Summary

Planning and preparation is absolutely critical to successful meetings. If you did nothing else to increase the effectiveness than apply the techniques we covered so far, the effectiveness of your meetings would increase dramatically. To make them even more effective, we'll look at techniques effective facilitators use in running effective meetings.

Running the Meeting

Introduction

In this section, we're going to look at how to run effective meetings, focusing on facilitation techniques. We'll consider:

- Room preparation
- Roles: Facilitator, Timekeeper, Presenter, Recorder, Scribe, and Rathole Manager
- Using process checks
- Handling non-related issues
- Breaks and meals
- Ending the meeting
- Following up

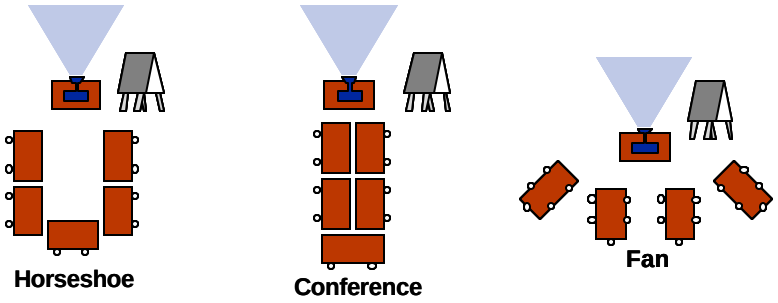
Room Preparation

Preparing the room in advance helps you achieve the desired effect and outcome you are looking for.

We discussed room setup earlier when we discussed site and room selection. We will talk in more detail about the room setup now.

Room arrangement should be dictated by the purpose of the meeting.

- If discussion is important, the horseshoe or conference style works best.
- If you're simply sharing information, the fan style works well.
- If you're anticipating forming teams, the fan works well since tables are already separated.



You will want to check the position of the overhead, flip charts, whiteboard, and any other visual aid to make sure everyone can see them.

You may want to position a table up front or by the door for materials.

Besides furniture arrangements, consider the following in setting up the room:

- Lighting controls
- Heating and air conditioning controls
- Controls for blinds/curtains
- Functioning equipment with spare bulb for overhead

Roles

While the facilitator — you — will have a major role to play, you may wear several hats; or you may wish to assign these roles to others attending the meeting before the meeting begins.

Facilitator

- Helps clarify the intended outcomes of the interaction (i.e., decision, information sharing, action, vote, etc.)
- Helps the group set the timeframe allowed.
- Keeps the discussion focused toward achieving the desired outcome.
- Helps identify ratholes and bin issues (items that are important but will not help you achieve your objectives).
- Senses the group's alignment and proposes action based on that sensing (i.e., if we're ready to move forward, we move forward).
- Uses effective facilitation skills (see Effective Facilitation Skills elsewhere in this e-guide).
- This role may switch to whoever is responsible for the specific agenda item.

Timekeeper

- At regular intervals reminds the group of time remaining.
- Raises a concern when the task remaining doesn't seem possible in the time remaining.

Presenter

- May also be the facilitator.
- Clearly outlines the desired outcome of the presentation (information, decision, action, vote, etc.).
- Suggests time required.
- Presents information, recommendations, updates, etc. in a brief, digestible format.
- Uses effective presentation skills (see Effective Presentation Skills elsewhere in this e-guide).
- May help facilitate the discussion leading to the desired outcome.

Recorder

- Record salient discussion points.
- May be called upon to recall discussions or decisions.

- Clarifies and records action items by noting:
    - What is the action
    - Who is accountable (one person)
    - Who is involved
    - Who needs to be informed
    - What are the deliverables
    - What are the timeframes
- Sends out minutes of the meeting.

Scribe

- Helps structure group discussion by writing major points on flipchart paper.
- Keeps track of bin items.
- Asks for clarification on points if unclear.
- Works with facilitator.

Process Role (Rathole Manager)

- Raises a concern when the group seems to be moving away from the topic at hand.
- Ensures that the group is adhering to communication and group norms (catches "zingers" — comments that interfere with good meeting relationships and communication).

Review your agenda and objectives to determine if you need to designate a person to a particular role or if you can manage the responsibility by yourself. Review your list of meeting attendees and determine the name of the person you think would best fulfill the role.

Using Process Checks

- Ask for agreement in adhering to the ground rules and roles. If necessary, remind participants of their buy-in during the meeting.
- Continually check for buy-in. If you sense that people are not in agreement but are not saying so, play the devil's advocate by outlining the other side of the story.
- Check timing throughout the meeting; it's not a matter of whether you're running short of time but HOW MUCH time you're short!
- If necessary, ask participants for an extension to the discussion or the meeting. Recognize that some participants may have made previous plans and may not be able to stay past the scheduled meeting time.
- During the meeting or discussion, ask if the process is getting us to the objective and if the process can be improved. Make process checks a natural part of meetings.

- Monitor facial expressions. If appropriate, call on the person to clarify. ("Jane, your facial expressions tell me that you're not agreeing.")
- End the meeting (or discussion) with a process check. Identify what worked effectively and what didn't work as effectively (i.e., plusses and deltas or strengths and areas for development.) Learn the lessons and apply them next time.

Handling Non-Related Issues

Have you ever attended a meeting where none of the agenda items get addressed because of non-related issues? I don't mean issues that are unimportant, I mean important issues that seem to crop up that should be discussed or conveyed?

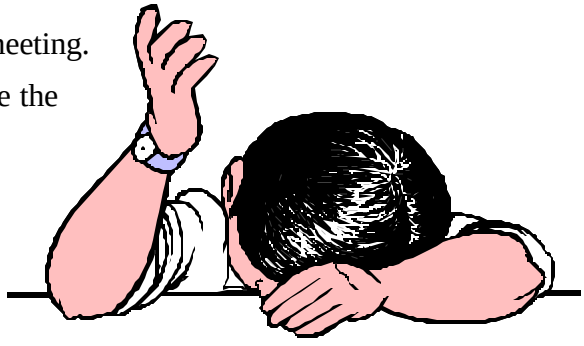
What do you do with these issues? You can't ignore them because they're important. And you can't deal with them AND keep to the agenda.

The answer: Park the issue! Here's how:

- If necessary, politely but firmly interrupt the person speaking when you believe that the issue is unrelated to achieving the objective at hand.
- State that the issue is important and needs to be addressed. However, it is beyond the discussion at hand. Therefore, let's record the issue and either discuss it at the end of the meeting if time permits or plan to discuss it another time.
- Then record the issue on a piece of flipchart paper and keep posted throughout the remainder of the meeting.
- At the end of the meeting, review the bin items and determine how they should be handled: immediate discussion, subcommittee work, discussion point for next meeting, etc.

Breaks and Meals

The best time to consider breaks and meals is BEFORE the meeting.



Breaks are an important part of meetings; they help rejuvenate the attendees and provide time to regroup and set up.

Consider the following tips for planning and taking breaks:

- Take breaks about every hour if your meeting goes that long.
- Specify the amount of time the break will take. Then specify the time the meeting will resume. Ask participants to look at their own watches and determine when they should return.
- If necessary, point out the locations of the restrooms, the drinking fountain, the telephones, the smoking area, and the refreshment area.

- Reconvene exactly on time; if necessary, close the door to, a) block out unwanted noise, and b) send a message to all latecomers.

Consider the following tips for planning and taking meals:

- If possible with your organization's policies, having lunch is preferred to eating out since, a) it is easier to maintain control over the meeting, b) no one gets "lost", and c) the temptation for attendees to run errands or return to the office is removed.
- Light lunches (sandwiches and fruit) are preferred to heavy lunches.
- Some wage classes require a certain period of time off duty for lunch and cannot be legally required to participate during lunch.

Ending the Meeting

A good closing helps ensure that objectives were met, decisions met, and next steps agreed to.

To end a meeting effectively:

- Review all of the decisions that were made. Verify who is taking responsibility for each action by what date.
- Set a follow-up schedule to include next meeting date and time (it's easier to coordinate schedules when everyone is present).
- Ask attendees to comment on the effectiveness of the meeting and make recommendations for improving it the next time.
- If appropriate or necessary, ask everyone to help clean up the room and rearrange furniture.

Following Up

A meeting is not over until actions have been completed; follow-up is critical.

Consider these important elements in following up:

- Send copies of the minutes to each member; solicit their feedback if appropriate.
- If time permits, call attendees to solicit their feedback about key issues that they may not have been willing to share during the meeting. Phone calls also convey a tone of "your input matters" which adds credibility to your meetings.

Effective Facilitation Skills

Introduction

Meetings can be effectively used to solicit input, brainstorm, problem solve, make decisions, and/or get buy in. The emphasis of these meetings — or these portions of meetings — is on group interaction. Effective facilitation skills are required to ensure that the discussions and activities get involvement and achieve their goals.

Facilitation is "The process of framing opportunities so that learners teach themselves." A facilitator, then, is more a guide than a presenter; more an observer than expert. The facilitator is one who is willing to commit to a style of:

- Asking rather than telling.
- Paying personal compliments.
- Asking for other's opinions rather than always having to offer their own.
- Negotiating rather than dictating decision-making.
- Listening without interrupting.
- Emoting but able to be restrained when the situation requires it.
- Drawing energy from outside themselves rather than from within.
- Being more outgoing than serious.
- Being more like a coach than a scientist.
- Being more like a counselor than a sergeant.
- Displaying natural curiosity about people, things, and life in general.
- Keeping the big picture in mind while working on the nitty-gritty.

The facilitator:

- Sets a safe, non-distracting climate that supports collaboration, group interaction and learning.
- Draws upon learners' knowledge and experience.
- Addresses participants' concerns and expectations.
- Balances the focus on gaining results (completion of task), process (how the task gets done) and maintaining relationships (people relating to one another).
- Provides learners some choice in sequence of learning and choice of method.
- Acknowledges individual and group accomplishments.
- Models behaviors expected of learners.
- Is effective in using core methods (distinguishes process from content).
- Carefully prepares thoroughly and uses time and space intentionally.
- Is skillful in evoking participation and creativity.

- Is practiced in honoring the group and affirming its wisdom.
- Is capable of maintaining objectivity.
- Is skilled in reading the underlying dynamics of the group.
- Orchestrates the event and enhances the learning effect.
- Releases blocks to the process and is adroit in adapting to the changing situation.
- Assumes responsibility for the group journey.
- Demonstrates professionalism, self-confidence, and authenticity.
- Maintains personal integrity.

In the final analysis, anyone can be a facilitator who is willing to be flexible.

Facilitator Competencies

Creates and maintains a learner-centered environment:

- Sets a safe, non-distracting climate that supports collaboration, group interaction, and learning.
- Draws upon learners' knowledge and experience.
- Addresses participants' concerns and expectations.
- Balances the focus on gaining results (completion of task), process (how the task gets done) and maintaining relationships (people relating to one another).
- Provides learners some choice in sequence of learning and choice of method.
- Acknowledges individual and group accomplishments.
- Models behaviors expected of participants.

Facilitation Technique: Brainstorming

Description

Brainstorming is a structured activity in which a large number of ideas are generated. The best ideas are then selected to apply to the situation.

Purpose

Brainstorming is often used to create a large number of solutions to a problem. The primary benefit of brainstorming is the quantity of alternative solutions to the problem.

Guidelines/Instructions

Keep idea generation separate from idea evaluation.

Set time limits.

Review the problem or opportunity; then broaden the definition.

Generate and record ideas and possibilities; go for quantity.

Piggyback ideas or free wheel.

Use humor.

No zingers or evaluation OF ANY KIND!

Best Use

Problem solving.

Idea generation.

Examples

Generating ideas for new program.

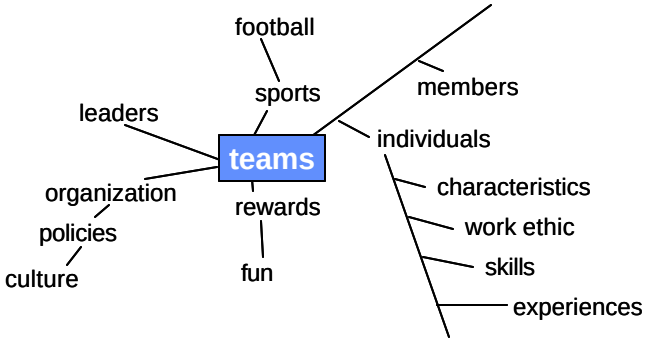
Facilitation Technique: Mindmapping

Description

Mindmapping is similar to brainstorming in the number of solutions and ideas/suggestions that can be generated quickly. Unlike brainstorming, mindmapping uses a specific structured questioning process to make sure that all avenues are investigated.

Purpose

Mindmapping is structured brainstorming where each idea can spawn sub-ideas.



Guidelines/Instructions

Define the problem to be solved. Ideally, write the problem out.

As facilitator, you must clarify responses so you can write them in the correct places.

Draw a line emanating from the problem and ask a question that will stimulate discussion about the problem. "What are the possible causes of the problem?" Write one response per line.

You may attach lines to the second tier or third tier as necessary.

Once you have exhausted all possibilities, you can select the ideas/suggestions that are most appropriate to the problem at this time.

Best Use

Problem solving.

Idea generation.

Examples

Generating ideas for ways to manage caseloads.

Solving group problems.

Facilitation Technique: Nominal Group Technique

Description

Nominal Group Technique is similar to brainstorming except that the brainstorming is done individually in silence; the "group" is a group in name only, hence the title, "Nominal" Group Technique.

Purpose

Like brainstorming, use Nominal Group Technique to generate a relatively large number of ideas or suggestions. Use Nominal Group Technique when there is a possibility of "group think" that occurs when one person states his/her idea and the group builds off of the idea rather than generating their own novel ideas.

Also use Nominal Group Technique when some of the participants will not share in a more free-for-all environment, like that created in brainstorming.

Guidelines/Instructions

Define the problem to be solved.

On a Post-It note, individuals write one idea/suggestion per note; the goal of this phase is to generate as many ideas as possible.

After a 7-minute period of silent brainstorming and writing, participants post their notes on the whiteboard.

Participants categorize the notes (theirs and everyone else's) as they see fit; the goal of this phase is to reduce the number of ideas/suggestions.

If appropriate, participants may "vote" for the top three categories or specific ideas/suggestions. This will quickly separate good solutions from others.

Best Use

Problem solving.

Idea generation.

Forcing involvement.

Examples

Solving group problems.

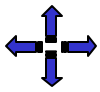
Facilitation Tip: Ensuring Order

- Get early acceptance of the idea that only one person has the floor at time. Interrupt side conversations.
- Protect the individual who has the floor from interruptions. ("One conversation at a time, please!")
- Prevent a few individuals from dominating the session. ("Mary's contributed many good ideas. Let's hear from others.")
- During heated discussion, participants often argue with their neighbors or spontaneously interject comments. While encouraging participation, you should ensure that only one person speaks at a time. Be sure to return to the person who gave up the floor, even if he or she does not wish to speak again.

Facilitation Tip: Getting Involvement — Diverging

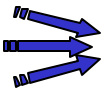
- As part of the ground rules, tell participants that participation is mandatory — it is NOT an option. You as facilitator will call on people whose ideas haven't been expressed.
- Actively solicit information from various individuals. You will help ensure a lively discussion with a more diverse expression of ideas.
- Set a challenge. ("Let's see if we can get five more ideas.")
- Use group techniques such as brainstorming, mindmapping, or nominal group technique.
- If possible, remember to associate ideas with names of audience members who introduce them. ("Bill earlier pointed out that...")
- If you want to encourage someone to continue talking, ask questions that call for more elaboration. ("Can you explain more about that idea?")
- "Why?" and "How?" help to draw out the reasoning behind opinions.
- Don't answer all questions raised by individuals. Try passing them on to the group or to a group member. ("That's a good question. Who'd like to answer it?")
- Be sure everyone can hear the discussion. Otherwise, private conversations might spring up around the room and the participants may lose interest. Try stepping away from a speaker so they automatically speak louder. If necessary, ask those furthest from the speaker whether they can hear.
- Use the blackboard or white board to sustain interest. Move to and from it to avoid the potentially hypnotizing effect of remaining stationary. Use showmanship by underlining ideas as they are repeated, drawing arrows between related points, and so on, to help maintain interest.

Facilitation Tip: Exploring All Options



- When a discussion is bypassing an important point, ask questions that require further subject analysis.
- Use humor to ease tension and to help people relax and open their minds.
- If the group attitude towards the case seems too one-sided, you may consider playing the "devil's advocate". However, you need a good rapport with the group. Do not try this unless you feel confident that the participants are ready and willing to challenge you.

Facilitation Tip: Clarifying and Concluding — Converging



- You may encounter some obviously absurd statements. Never label the suggestion as absurd or make a condescending remark. Do not automatically assume the role of expert. Some methods for handling this are:
    - Letting other participants challenge the speaker; do this by asking "Does everyone agree?"
    - Writing the statement on the board or on a flip chart; seeing the statement written out may reveal its weakness.
    - Using closed questioning to make the speaker aware of the problem, "What is the client's most likely reaction to such a move by the team?" or "Can you think of conditions where that might not be true?"
    - Asking the person to explain his/her reasoning in arriving at the conclusion.
    - If necessary, say, "I don't agree" and explain why.
- When participants' comments are imperfectly expressed you can:
    - Restate the remarks. Restating clarifies the statement for the participants as well as gives the participant an opportunity to correct or expand it.
    - Summarize them (if the statement has been lengthy).

  Restating should be done carefully. While you are simply repeating the participant's comments ("As I understand it, you are saying..."), your manner should not indicate that you disagree with the participant. Nor should you distort the meaning.
- Use the flip chart to list major ideas as they develop during discussions, or to list pros and cons in an argument. These notes can serve to clarify the discussion's developing logic. Ideally, at the session's end, they should approximate major headings in your own outline.
- Send up trial balloons to test for doneness. ("It appears that we seem to be leaning towards option B. Am I correct in my observation?")
- If trying to reach consensus, it is important to identify and address obstacles. ("Let's take a minute now and list all the reasons this WON'T work to make sure that we can all live with the solution and the challenges of implementing the solution.")

- Record on a separate flip chart important ideas that aren't related to the objective. (Parking lot.)
- Set up the end of the brainstorming session. ("How about one more idea?")
- Briefly recapping the full discussion is helpful when it has been lengthy and complex with a number of issues, some of which may have been raised earlier in the discussion but forgotten. Such summaries help a group to see how much it has progressed, and encourage them to continue.
- Try to identify ideas in the summary by naming those participants who suggested them. By doing so, you are recognizing these results as their own work, not that of the leader.
- Confirm the results with participants. If appropriate, ask for a show of hands for agreement. Or vote on priorities. Note that it is critical to have set the ground rules for making decisions and moving forward up front. One such ground rule is that we all have to support the decision of the majority.
- For controversial issues or issues where the majority is less than overwhelming, make the decision temporary with a review date. ("Can we agree to move forward with full support with the stipulation that we will revisit the decision in April?")
- For challenging/difficult issues, you may wish to do a roll call to see who wholeheartedly supports, supports, or supports with reservation. This will allow you to follow up after the meeting for one-on-one discussion. Do NOT try to rejustify the decision at this point since everyone's agreed to support the decision and rejustification may be interpreted as revisiting the decision.

Asking and Answering Questions

Questioning

- Your goal as a facilitator is to help participants to solve the problem. Therefore, your primary function is to question and paraphrase. Resist your temptation to share your expertise in the role of lawgiver or oracle. If you need to wear two hats — expert and facilitator — consider bringing two hats (or name tags) to help participants see your dual role.
- Skillful questions should:
    - Be understandably phrased.
    - Be answerable with available information.
    - Be appropriate for the background and experience of the meeting participants.
    - Stimulate thought and/or elicit opinions.
    - Not be an expression of the facilitator's opinion.
    - Never become part of the "Guess what I'm Thinking" game.

- Ask questions that keep the discussion progressing. You may invite learners to amplify remarks. ("Why do you think so?", or "I'm not sure I understand that point — can you explain it?")
- Do not appear to force the discussion. Keep questions casual. They should follow as a natural response to statements.
- After you pose a question to the group, give them enough time to formulate answers. Don't immediately give an answer when participants seem unwilling or unable to respond to your question. Thirty seconds of silence may seem eternal, but it can take that long for participants to phrase an answer. If they understand your question, and it can be answered, you will eventually get a response. Try looking at individuals who you think might be able to respond.
- If the question falls flat, rephrase it. Or solicit the help of the group to rephrase the question for you. Do not repeat it or ask another unrelated question. Repetition doesn't help. If the group understood it, they would have answered it the first time. Going on to another question causes confusion.
- Sometimes silence indicates a lack of focus and active participation; use the Nominal Group Technique to get people focused.
- Do not use a condescending tone when you ask a question.
- Avoid a pattern of rotating questions around the table or room.
- Your questions should help elicit ideas and information. They should not make you look like an inquisitor or cross-examiner.

Answering Questions

- Relay questions of you back to the group. Ask, "what do you think?" or "Why do you ask that?" If you answer too readily, you cut off discussion.
- If you answer a controversial question, qualify your response by stating that it is your opinion, and therefore open to critique. Keep your mind open to different points of view.

Summary

Effective facilitation skills are required to ensure that the discussions and activities get involvement and achieve their goals. Use effective facilitation skills to solicit input, brainstorm, problem solve, make decisions, and/or get buy in.

Effective Presentation Skills

Introduction

Meetings are often used to convey information, especially information that is complex, timely, sensitive, or controversial. (Information that is not complex, timely, sensitive, or controversial should be conveyed via email or posted on the web; valuable meeting time should not be used to present/read information.)

Presenting information is both an art and a science. In this section, we look at some of the elements of effective presentations.

Speaking Clearly

Obviously, it is important that you enunciate and speak loud enough for people to hear you; we will not cover these common issues in this e-guide but you may wish to review any one of these excellent sources for more information on enunciation and vocal clarity:

- Powerful Presentation Skills, Dennis Becker and Paula Borkum Becker, ISBN 1-55623-870-3
- Presentations Plus, David A. Peoples, ISBN 0-471-55956-3
- I Can See You Naked: A Fearless Guide to Making Great Presentations, Ron Hoff, ISBN 0-8362-7944-1

Here are some tips that we've found especially effective that aren't often covered in presentation guides:

- Use the power of the pause to give your confidence and control (videotape practicing over-extended pauses).
- Use your voice. Put on an accent. Make up words to capture your audience's attention.

  Ever notice how sportscasters seem to take the most liberty with the English language? St. Louis Cardinals pitcher-turned-broadcaster Dizzy Dean peppered his commentaries with "ain'ts" and double negatives, and when he thought a verb too colorless, he invented his own, such as, "He slud into third base" or "The pitcher flung the ball." When an indignant listener complained, "Mr. Dean, don't you know the King's English?" Dizzy reflected for a moment, then replied, "Sure I do — and so is the Queen."
- Also avoid non-words and fillers such as "Ummm" and "you know". Use pauses instead.
- When you goof, laugh at yourself, correct yourself, and continue.

  One of my college compatriots in speech class shared with me the origins of her fear of public speaking. When she was in third grade softball, she was cheering on her boyfriend who happened to be the most desirable third-grader in the whole school. On a full count, he let go with a mighty swing that connected with a whap. The ball arched cleanly over the second baseman's head and dropped in for a base hit. As the boy raced for first, Kelly (my friend) began to yell, "Nice hit" but decided to change it to "Nice shot." You

know what came out of her mouth! In front of her world: her friends, their parents, and her boyfriend! Choose your words and speak them clearly.

- Be careful of remarks that you make off-handedly. If the audience cannot tell the difference between your opinions and real content, you will lose credibility.

Controlling Nervousness

- Use visualization; your first brain doesn't distinguish between reality and vivid imagination.
- Recognize that your audience is more interested in you succeeding than in you failing. What's the worst that could realistically happen?
- Step away from the lectern.
- Try touching thumb and pointer finger.
- Memorize the very beginning of your presentation and the very end. Once you start talking, nervousness typically resides. Memorizing the ending makes sure that your closing is powerful.
- Practice. Out loud. And then practice again!
- Rehearse using the equipment (overhead, projection system, lighting controls, microphone, etc.) that you will be using. This will allow you to become comfortable with the operation of the equipment. Anticipate and simulate common problems (batteries go dead on the remote, overhead bulb burns out, etc.); what is your backup plan?

Controlling Non-Verbal Behavior

Believability is communicated largely through our non-verbal language. The verbal message — the content — accounts for only 7% of what the audience ultimately believes; the vocal message — how you say it — accounts for 38% of what the audience believes; and the visual message — what the audience sees — accounts for a whopping 55% of what the audience believes. Seeing is truly believing!

- Use extended eye contact (five seconds with one person then move on). Remember this paradox: When you look at everyone all at once, you are actually looking at no one. When you select one person and look at that person for five seconds, the entire section of that room will sense you are relating to them. Divide the room into sections, when you move your eye contact, move to a different section, single out a different person each time and look at that person.
- Avoid triangle (looking at three people only), eye dart (like a scared rabbit), and copy reader.
- Avoid fig leaf (hands in front joined at the pelvis), swaying (shifting back and forth from one foot to another), jangler (fooling with the change or keys in your pocket), parade dress (hands joined behind your back), pacer (back and forth, back and forth), the big

executive or attack dog (arms folded in the front), jeweler (playing with the ring on your finger).

- Watch your posture, body movements. Stand with both hands down at your side in a relaxed, upright position. When you want to begin a gesture, move your arms upward with palms out. When arms are below your waist, the palms will be extended toward your audience. As the hands move up, the palms will naturally face toward you. This motion communicates receptivity and invites participation.
- Create a home position. This is a focal point, or central place, where you stand when addressing the entire group. Start in this position, move out from this position, and return to the position.
- Exaggerate your gestures. What feels big to you will look normal to your audience. Videotape practicing exaggerated gestures.

Use Questions

Questions are used to solicit input from participants for a variety of reasons. Questions can be used to "test" participants' knowledge of a topic. Questions can be used to guide a discussion. Questions can be used simply to get dialogue going, to problem-solve, to share experiences and expertise, and to build relationships.

- Use open questions to stimulate discussion; use closed probes to direct discussion.
- Ask clear, concise questions that focus on a single issue. Avoid rambling, ambiguous questions. Ask challenging questions that provoke thought. Don't ask questions that are too easy or too difficult. Ask honest, relevant questions. Don't ask "trick" questions designed to fool participants.
- For correct answers, use positive reinforcement. For incorrect answers, acknowledge the effort then redirect the question to others or answer it yourself. For partly correct answers, reinforce the correct portion, then redirect the question to the same person, to another, or answer it yourself.
- When planning discussions, anticipate questions that may move you away from your objective and prepare responses to those questions. Prepare a list of questions participants may have (or participants in the past have had); post and discuss.
- Ask preference/opinion questions that don't have right or wrong answers (i.e., how are your customers using this application?)
- Ask check back questions that are focused and inviting: "What questions do you have for me about (the topic)?" Wait for at least 10 seconds for responses if you are truly interested in getting responses.

Use Overheads

Overhead transparencies can effectively support your presentation if designed properly. Overheads without a purpose can frustrate your audience. Overheads that are poorly designed can confuse your audience.

- Design to your audience.
- KISS (Keep It Short and Simple).
- Use clipart judiciously and appropriately. Maintain consistency throughout the presentation.
- Use color (PowerPoint templates are color coordinated) to highlight or emphasize or simply for variety; use color to classify things (black=user response, green=system response).
- Consider that many people are color blind (especially blue and green); design the instruction to avoid depending on color discrimination.
- Be careful using red as it can be difficult to read and it denotes danger or a hazard.
- Limit the number of typefaces; be consistent in your use of typefaces throughout the presentation. Use ornate "display" typefaces sparingly and only for special effect. Serif typefaces make reading easier; sans serif typefaces are more legible for small-sized type and copy better.
- Limit one idea per overhead; no more than seven lines of text; no more than five words per line.
- Ask yourself, "What is the purpose of this overhead?" If the answer is "to keep me on track", consider eliminating the overhead. If the answer is "to simplify (order, organize, show, define, etc.) a concept (facts, information, examples, etc.) for participants" keep the overhead.
- Number your overheads in case you drop your stack.
- If using either an overhead projector or an LCD panel, double check to see that you have a spare bulb (and that you can install the bulb). When using a projection system with a remote, make sure that you have a second and third set of batteries for the remote.
- If you are using an LCD panel or a projector, test your equipment three times to ensure that it is working properly. Also, develop a back-up plan if the equipment does not work when you need it.
- When using an overhead projector, use tape or Post-It notes to mark the top edge of your overheads so you can easily align your overheads quickly.
- If you are using an LCD panel, project the PowerPoint slides in the Slide Show format.
- Make sure that the person farthest from the screen is no more than six times the width of the projected image. Ask people in the back to move up.
- Do not block the screen.

- If you are using an overhead projector, turn off the projector when you are not discussing the points on the overhead. If you are using an LCD panel, place the projection in the blank mode when you are not discussing the points on the overhead.
- Face the audience, not the screen.
- Lay a pen on the overhead pointing to the text or graphic you are discussing; this enables you to face the audience. If you are using an LCD PowerPoint presentation, present the material one bullet at a time or use the pointer that is provided in the PowerPoint slide show. Make sure you can see the computer screen while facing the audience, so that you can face the audience while discussing the text or graphic.
- Do not read the overhead.
- If you have an overhead that is difficult to read, give participants a handout of the overhead and use the difficult-to-read overhead to keep participants together through your discussion.
- If you use the slow-reveal method for revealing parts of the overhead as you progress in your discussion, place the piece of paper between the projector and your overhead. This enables you to read the next line of the overhead before revealing it.

If you would like more information on the actual design or layout of effective overheads, review How to Create High Impact Business Presentations by Joyce Kupsh and Pat Graves (ISBN 0-8442-3519-9).

Use Flip Charts

Flip charts can be invaluable aids in training and presentations. They can be created ahead of time or they can be used to record points or ideas real-time.

Flip charts can be easily moved around a room. They can be displayed continuously to keep the points constantly in mind. They can be referred to quickly and easily.

When creating flip charts ahead of time, use the following tips:

- Design to your content and your audience.
- Watercolor or dry-erase markers typically do not bleed through flip chart paper as does permanent markers.
- When using prepared flip charts in a presentation, begin with a title page.
- Use lined flip chart paper if your printing is sloppy. (If you don't have lined paper, create a single lined sheet and place it underneath the sheet you're working on to act as a guide.)
- On the flip chart, lightly write notes to yourself in pencil to help you remember key points.
- To avoid the text from the next sheet from showing through, leave a blank sheet between filled-in sheets. You may wish to staple the filled-in sheet to the blank sheet for easy flipping.

When creating and using a flip chart in real-time, use the following tips:

- Label (and number) the sheets. If, for example, you are recording on a flip chart the responses to your initial question, "What do you hope to get out of this presentation?" label each sheet with a descriptive label (i.e., "Presentation Objectives - #1) making it easy to remember what activity generated those responses.
- Use masking tape to post the flip charts. During break, rearrange the flip charts keeping the room orderly; if necessary, explain to participants where the flip charts have been repositioned.

Conveying Proprietary Information

When presenting to people who are not employees of the company, you must be aware of what you can and cannot divulge regarding company confidential information.

- If a customer asks a question that may involve proprietary information, it is your obligation to say that the answer involves propriety information that you cannot divulge.
- If another person is better qualified to answer, you may defer the question to that person. For example, you may want to defer a customer's corporate pricing agreement to the appropriate sales representative.
- Keep in mind that you are representing your company and must act accordingly.
- Do not disparage your company's products, services, business strategy, management, or anything else. While it is tempting to share horror stories about debugging software that crashed because of the nincompoops in the next department, it serves no purpose and damages your own credibility.

Summary

Presenting information is both an art and a science. There are many resources on public speaking; in this section we presented tips that are unique and valuable and not commonly found in other resources.

Remember, presentations should be used in meetings to convey information that is complex, timely, sensitive, or controversial. Information that is not complex, timely, sensitive, or controversial should be conveyed via email or posted on the web; valuable meeting time should not be used to present/read information.

Making Meetings Better

Introduction

In this section, we'll look how to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of meetings and how to handle challenging situations.

Increasing Meeting Efficiency and Effectiveness

Think about the best meetings you've attended — meetings that were exceptionally smooth, well run, and productive. What made them noteworthy?

Start on Time and Deal with Latecomers

Excellent meetings start on time and dealt effectively with latecomers. If your meetings DON'T start on time:

- You "punish" the people who showed up on time.
- Your meetings will get the reputation that they don't start on time and everyone will start showing up late.
- You waste people's valuable time.

Tips for starting on time:

- Start on time. Period.
- If necessary, wait a predetermined time for key decision makers. For anyone else who is late, start without them.
- Consider using fines for late-comers. Announce the fines in the pre-meeting letter or before the first break. Donate the money to charity or use it to buy sodas.

Keep on Track

Excellent meetings keep on track. If YOUR meetings don't stay on track:

- You will be unable to achieve all of your objectives. Important items are lost in rambling conversation.
- Your meetings will be thought of as a waste of time.

Tips for keeping on track:

- Stick to the objectives. If the conversation seems to be off track, interrupt the speaker and ask: "How will this help us accomplish our objective?" or "Can you quickly summarize your main point?"
- If discussion continues after all sides have been discussed, vote. While consensus is always admirable, it is not always achievable.
- "Park" non-related items by noting them on a flip chart for future consideration; then get back on track.

- Appoint a "rat-hole" manager to look specifically for those times when discussion begins veering off track. Use humor to call attention to the digresser: a plastic rat can be pushed in front of the person who is taking the conversation off track.

End on Time

Excellent meetings end on time. If YOUR meetings don't end on time:

- People may leave.
- People may think of you as inconsiderate as they may have made other plans.
- You may be perceived as a poor leader.
- Consistently running over is likely to have a negative impact on future meetings.

Tips for ending on time:

- End on time. Period.
- To get through the meeting in order to end on time, focus the meeting on the objective. Continue refocusing to the objective if the conversation strays. In a small group, arrange for a signal (such as a finger in the air) for anyone to use signifying that the conversation is not leading to the objective.
- If it looks as though you will not end on time, 15 minutes before the end time, call a halt to the discussion and outline the options: continue later than expected, defer the discussion until the next meeting, set up a subcommittee to handle the discussion, etc.

Accomplish Your Objective

Excellent meetings accomplish their objective. If YOUR meetings don't accomplish their objectives:

- You will have to schedule another meeting to accomplish the objective. Remember, a short meeting with nothing accomplished is worse than a longer meeting where your objective was achieved.

Tips for accomplishing your objective:

- Continually monitor progress towards your objective.
- Reset your objective or your timeframe earlier rather than later.
- If it becomes apparent that you are not able to reach your objective, stop the meeting and propose another course of action: continue later than expected, defer the discussion until the next meeting, set up a subcommittee to handle the discussion, etc.

Reduce the Number of Participants

Excellent meetings reduce the amount of time people have to be in the meeting.

If someone has to be present for only a short period during the meeting, they should not stick around for the entire meeting. They become frustrated and could distract attendees. They also could interrupt the meeting to ask questions.

Tips:

- Invite people only for those portions of the meeting they need to attend.
- Announce at the beginning of the meeting that people will be coming and leaving to make best use of their time and the attendees' time.

Handling Challenging Situations

It seems that there's one in every crowd: someone who presents a challenge in your meetings. I don't mean the person who disagrees or voices an opinion that others disagree with. I mean the angry participant or the participant who seems intent on making you or someone in the meeting look bad. Or someone who wants to drag the meeting down.

How you handle the challenging situation depends on your skill and your ability to think on your feet. Here are some general guidelines for dealing effectively with these challenges.

Set the Stage/Ground Rules

If you anticipate challenges, have the group establish or agree to ground rules BEFORE the challenge is allowed to rear its ugly head. Ground rules may vary based on your objective and your timeframe; they may include:

- How the group is going to make a decision at the end (i.e., consensus, vote with majority rule, prioritize with top three ideas moving to the next phase).
- One conversation at a time.
- No zingers (comments that shut down a person from contributing).
- Everyone plays a role. Roles vary based on your objective, timeframe, and number of participants.
- Everyone contributes; participation is not negotiable.

Get everyone's agreement to adhere to the timeframe, ground rules, and roles.

Follow the Steps

Regardless of the ground rules you establish, you may find yourself in a challenging situation. Follow these steps for challenging situations:

1. Remain calm.
2. Don't belittle or become sarcastic.
3. Consider your options.
4. Describe the behavior.
5. Describe the impact.
6. Request a different behavior.
7. Listen to response.

8. If necessary, request again.

Specific Challenges

You may find yourself facing the following challenges:

Challenger	*The Behavior*	*The Impact*	*Your Options*
The Disagreer	Disputes your information.	You lose credibility; takes time to address the dispute.	Respond the first time or two. If s/he might be right and you don't know, "park" the issue and research. If s/he is misinformed, ask for clarification.
The Opinion Sharer	Voices opinion (often contrary).	Annoying to you and others; no real harm.	First time: ask if there's a question that you can answer. Second time: "Thanks for sharing."
A Little Knowledge is Dangerous	Wants to move forward; doesn't have enough info.	Often causes the group to run into avoidable trouble.	First time: suggest that waiting for complete instructions or information would have avoided the trouble. Second time: speak off-line.
I'll Just Watch	Doesn't want to participate in group activities.	Creates an imbalance in participation. May not learn as much.	First time: recognize the challenge it may be; point out benefits; defer to contract — we all participate. Second time: speak off-line.
Rathole	Takes discussion to inappropriate detail.	Wastes time. Participants lose interest. Content missed.	First time: stop discussion; apologize; "Is there a specific question or point?" Second time: stop discussion; "We must go on." Third time: "Those interested can continue after the meeting or over lunch."

More challenges:

Challenger	*The Behavior*	*The Impact*	*Your Options*
Who The Hell Are You To Tell Me...?	Questions or defies your authority.	You lose confidence and credibility if you respond inappropriately.	"The organization pays me to...." or "It's my responsibility to...." Restate your request.
Based on My Experience	Justifies opinion based on experience.	Annoying to you and meeting. May take meeting time.	First time: ask if there's a question that you can answer. Second time: "Thanks for sharing."
The Critiquer	Suggests "better" ways to do things.	Annoying to you and meeting; no real harm.	First time if better: "Thanks! I'll do it!" First time if not better: "Thanks for sharing." Second time: speak off-line.
Sorry I'm Late	Comes in late.	Interrupts meeting; misses information	First time: speak off-line; remind him/her of contract. Listen to reason. Restate request. Second time: talk to manager.
I've Got Better Things to Do	Writes letters; reads other material	Annoys you tremendously! May annoy others around him or her.	First time: ask questions directed at him/her. Second time: speak off-line.
Different Levels	Dazed looks on some; boredom from others.	Meeting is too slow for some and too fast for others.	Pre-meeting letter to participants and managers with objectives, prerequisites, etc. Plan for it! Provide materials for less knowledgeable participants; more active roles for advanced participants. Pairing
Cliques	Include certain people and exclude others.	Causes hurt feelings; some are left out.	Prevent: Set up contract at beginning. Remove: Move seating. Form your own groups.

Extras

Facilitator Competencies and Characteristics

The Facilitator:

- ☑ Sets a safe, non-distracting climate that supports collaboration, group interaction and learning.
- ☑ Draws upon learners' knowledge and experience.
- ☑ Addresses participants' concerns and expectations.
- ☑ Balances the focus on gaining results (completion of task), process (how the task gets done), and maintaining relationships (people relating to one another).
- ☑ Acknowledges individual and group accomplishments.
- ☑ Models behaviors expected of participants.
- ☑ Is effective in using core methods (distinguishes process from content).
- ☑ Carefully prepares thoroughly and uses time and space intentionally.
- ☑ Is skillful in evoking participation and creativity.
- ☑ Is practiced in honoring the group and affirming its wisdom.
- ☑ Is capable of maintaining objectivity.
- ☑ Is skilled in reading the underlying dynamics of the group.
- ☑ Orchestrates the event and enhances the teaming effect.
- ☑ Releases blocks to the process and is adroit in adapting to the changing situation.
- ☑ Assumes responsibility for the group journey.
- ☑ Demonstrates professionalism, self-confidence, and authenticity.
- ☑ Maintains personal integrity.

The Facilitator is one who is willing to commit to a style of:

- ☑ Asking rather than telling.
- ☑ Paying personal compliments.
- ☑ Asking for other's opinions rather than always having to offer their own.
- ☑ Negotiating rather than dictating decision-making.
- ☑ Listening without interrupting.
- ☑ Emoting but able to be restrained when the situation requires it.
- ☑ Drawing energy from outside themselves rather than from within.
- ☑ Being more outgoing than serious.
- ☑ Being more like a counselor than a sergeant.
- ☑ Displaying natural curiosity about people, things, and life in general.
- ☑ Keeping the big picture in mind while working on the nitty-gritty.

In the final analysis, anyone can be a facilitator who is willing to be flexible and disciplined in that flexibility.

Meeting Planner

Meeting Objective (SMART):_____
_____
Sub-Objective (SMART):_____
Sub-Objective (SMART):_____
Sub-Objective (SMART):_____

Preliminary Agenda

Topic	Action/Objective	Time Required	Agenda Placement
_____	_____	_____	#_____
_____	_____	_____	#_____
_____	_____	_____	#_____
_____	_____	_____	#_____
_____	_____	_____	#_____
_____	_____	_____	#_____

Preliminary Attendee List

Name	Reason for Attending	Name	Reason for Attending
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Alternatives (e-mail, conference call, videoconference, no meeting) considered? ____ Yes ____No

Meeting Date, Time, and Location

Meeting Date:_____ Time: From____To____ Location: _____

(consider religious holidays, long weekends, rush hour traffic, ease of finding location, parking)

Site Contact:_____ Phone:_____ Pager:_____

Meeting Logistics Checklist

Room Logistics
____Room arranged
____Heating/AC controls
____Overhead projector
____Overhead screen
____Flipchart stands
____Other
Contact:_____
Phone:_____
Pager:_____

Site Considerations
____Restrooms
____Telephones
____Drinking fountain
____Smoking room
____Refreshment area
____Other

Materials
____Flipchart pads
____Pens/markers
____Tape
____Notepads
____Name cards
____Other
Contact:_____
Phone:_____
Pager:_____

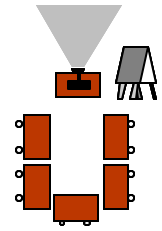
Meeting Planner (continued)

Pre-Meeting Communication Strategy:_____

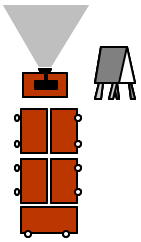
_____

___Agenda
___Directions to Site and Room
___What to Bring/How to Prepare
___Email
___Phone
___Fax

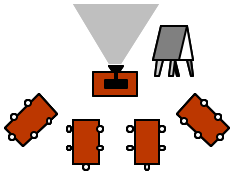
Room Preparation



Horseshoe



Conference



Fan

___Lighting controls
___Heating and A/C controls
___Controls for blinds/curtains
___Functioning equipment with spare bulb for overhead
___Other_____
___Other_____

Meeting Roles

Role	*Name*	*Role*	*Name*
Facilitator	_____	Timekeeper	_____
Presenter #1	_____	Presenter #2	_____
Presenter #3	_____	Recorder	_____
Scribe	_____	Rathole Mgr	_____

Running the Meeting

- Start on time (wait only a specified time for key people).
- Manage latecomers (brief them, fine them, ignore them).
- Be clear about the objective and the process to achieve the objective.
- Use group activities to increase interactivity.
- Stay on track. Avoid "rat-holes"; appoint someone to monitor time and relevance of the discussion.
- Break every hour; agree upon a specific time the meeting will resume. Resume promptly.
- Occasionally ask to see how the meeting is progressing. Should we speed up? Slow down?
- "Park" non-related but important items for consideration at the end of the meeting.
- End the meeting with a review of decisions and actions; agree to follow-up and next meeting.

Handling Challenging Participants

Steps

First Step: Contract with group
Second Step: Off-line with offender
Third Step: Off-line with manager
Fourth Step: Remove from meeting

It's always best to set performance expectations up front to give yourself something to defer to.

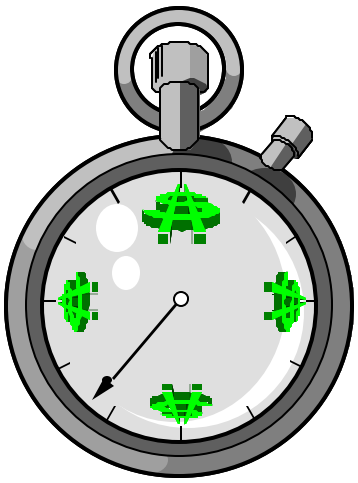
Problem Solving

1. Remain calm
2. Don't belittle or become sarcastic
3. Consider your options
4. Describe the behavior
5. Describe the impact
6. Request a different behavior
7. Listen to response
8. If necessary, request again

This Meeting Costs….

This meeting costs the organization $_____

_____ participants
x _____ $/hour
x _____ hour(s)



Be on time.

Why are YOU here?

Stick to the agenda.

Follow through on action items.