Developing Meetings that Work
Principles, Structures, Practices and Tools that Make Meetings Worth the Cost

“If you had to identify, in one word, the reason why the human race has not achieved, and never will achieve, its full potential, that word would be ‘meetings.”

Dave Barry

Meeting Facts

- America Spends over $37B per year in meetings
- 25M meetings per day
- 15% of an organization’s time (% has increased every year since 2008)
- 35% of Middle Management time
- 50% of Upper Management time
- 67% of meetings are judged to be failures

Meeting Facts

(How attendees are really spending their time)

- Several Studies point out:
  - 91% of meeting participants confess to daydreaming
  - 73% of meeting participants confess to doing other work
  - 47% of meeting participants confess to complaining
  - 45% of meeting participants confess to feeling overwhelmed
  - 39% of meeting participants confess to SLEEPING!
Pentland’s Discoveries

• Everyone in the group talks and listens in roughly equal measure, keeping contributions short

• Members maintain high levels of eye contact, and their conversations and gestures are energetic

• Members communicate directly with one another, not just with the team leader

Coyle’s Discoveries

• Close physical proximity, often in circles

• Profuse amounts of eye contact

• Physical touch (handshakes, fist bumps, hugs)

• Lots of short, energetic exchanges (no long speeches)

• High levels of mixing; everyone talks to everyone

• Few interruptions

• Lots of questions

• Intensive, active listening

• Humor, laughter

• Small, attentive courtesies (thank-yous, opening doors, etc.)

How do we get there?

• Get clear on meeting mechanics

• Make the implicit explicit

• Leave nothing unstated

Google Rules

• Every meeting must have one clear decision maker. If there’s no decision maker -- or no decision to be made -- the meeting shouldn’t happen.

• No more than 10 people should attend.

• Every person should give input, otherwise they shouldn’t be there.

• No decision should ever wait for a meeting. If a meeting absolutely has to happen before a decision should be made, then the meeting should be scheduled immediately.
Collins’ Council Rules

• Exists as a device to gain understanding about important issues
• Each council member has the ability to argue and debate but not from egoistic need to win or parochial interest
• Each council member retains the respect of every other council member without exception
• Does not seek consensus, recognizing that consensus decisions are often at odds with intelligent decisions. The responsibility of the final decision rests with the leading executive

Gaining Clarity:

• Should we meet?
• How many of us should meet?
• How long should we meet?
• What kind of meeting should we have?
• What tools should we use?
• How do we determine what to discuss when we meet?
• What is the structure of our meeting?
• How do we make decisions in the meeting?
• What are our agreements about meetings?
• How do we take notes in the meeting?
• What happens after the meeting?

Considerations on whether to call a meeting

Considerations on whether to attend a meeting

• Why am I invited?
• Do you have to be me to attend this?
• What am I expected to contribute?
• What are the opportunity costs of attendance?
• What is the difference between attendance and reading the minutes?
How to say “no” to a meeting invitation

- “What would you like me to postpone?”/“Would you prefer this meeting to X?”
- Be direct: “I am trying to lessen time lost in meetings so that…”
- “My calendar is up to date”
- Unit Agreement

Considerations on Meeting Size

- Avoid Social Loafing
- The Two-Pizza Rule
  - People x salary x hours x weeks
    - $129,600
      - 12x75x3x48
    - $64,000
      - 20x50x2x32

Considerations on Meeting Length

- >60 minutes should be exception
- ~50 is ideal
- COVID-19 has created a surge of <30 minute online meetings
- EXCEPTION: Team One meetings

Pause to share

- [https://hbr.org/2016/01/estimate-the-cost-of-a-meeting-with-this-calculator](https://hbr.org/2016/01/estimate-the-cost-of-a-meeting-with-this-calculator)
Considerations on Meeting Types

- 1:1 Meetings = “Conversations”
- “Working” = “Group-Work Sessions”
- Information Dissemination = “Update”
- Idea Generation = “Brainstorm”
- Regularly Scheduled Meetings = “Recurrent/Reoccurring Meetings”
- Social Meetings = “Get Together”
- Team-building Meetings = “Team build”
- Spirit-building Meetings = “Rally”

Considerations on Meeting Types

- 1:1 Meetings = “Conversations”
  - Dialogue required
  - Less formal (though not necessarily agenda*-less)
  - Great opportunity for walking meeting (MBWA)
  - Consider triad over dyad

*be sure to determine who sets the agenda

One of the biggest reasons meetings fail is the expected simultaneity of input and output.

Considerations on Meeting Tools

- Timed Agendas
- Agenda items in question form
- The value of the pre-read
- To screen or not to screen
- Jellyfish
Considerations on Agendas

• How items make it to agenda
  • Must either be or impact enterprise level or be an issue in need of input
  • Approved by executive in 1:1
  • Submitted in question form to X (By Friday after Thursday call)
  • Pre-read and Agenda uploaded (by Noon Saturday)
  • Read and responses prepared (by Tuesday Meeting)

Considerations on Agendas

• Agenda Parts
  • Check-in
  • Question (incl. pre-read), Presenter, Time (if using timed agenda)
  • Info Share
  • Decisions/WWDWW
  • Communication points for dissemination
  • Options

Considerations on Decision Types

(Determined and explained by executive in advance of every decision discussion)

• Autocratic
• Consultative
• Democratic
• Consensus

A Most important ability: Disagree and Commit

Listen like an animal being stalked

Pay attention like a “defensive lineman”
Considerations on Note Taking

Notes

Frank suggests plan c approach
Jill offered her team to lead

Comments/thoughts

What point?
LOVE this. When should we announce?

Perhaps most important:

Agreements and WWDWW

Follow up memo (Alfred Sloan)

These are considerations but there is one, non-negotiable element to successful meeting protocol...

Consistency.
Getting clear and being prepared is hard work.

And worth it because it leads to...

• Close physical proximity, often in circles
• Profuse amounts of eye contact
• Physical touch (handshakes, fist bumps, hugs)
• Lots of short, energetic exchanges (no long speeches)
• High levels of mixing; everyone talks to everyone
• Few interruptions
• Lots of questions
• Intensive, active listening
• Humor, laughter
• Small, attentive courtesies (thank-yous, opening doors, etc.)

I AM HERE TO HELP

mark.mccoy2@mail.wvu.edu
West Virginia University
[Unit] Agenda

10/13/20
1PM-1:50PM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Action Items</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12:30</td>
<td>Check In</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:35</td>
<td>Question 1</td>
<td>Professor Plum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:45</td>
<td>Question 2</td>
<td>Colonel Mustard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:55</td>
<td>Question 3</td>
<td>Mrs. Peacock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:10</td>
<td>Question 4</td>
<td>Ms. Scarlett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:20</td>
<td>Info Share</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check In</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open House this weekend</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poster Session Tuesday Night</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:23</td>
<td>Agreements</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:26</td>
<td>Communications to teams</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Type of meeting: (Re-occurring Committee, Recurrent faculty, etc)

Pre-read(s): Attached or appended

Please bring: (screens, computers, resource materials)

Agreements:
WWDWW:

Communications to team:

OPTIONAL:

Upcoming Events:

Special Notes

Congratulations to:
Does This Need a Meeting?

- Are you looking to collaborate?
  - Yes
    - Is it related to your job?
      - Yes
        - Do you have a company update to share?
          - Yes
            - Have you only invited relevant people to attend?
              - Yes
                - Purge your invite list and start again.
              - No
                - Can it be summarized in an email?
                  - Yes
                    - Are you lonely?
                      - No
                        - Get back to work, Jerry.
                      - Yeah...
                        - Send an email.
                  - No
                    - Write one.
          - No
            - Do you have a clear agenda?
              - Yes
                - Send an email.
              - No
                - Have that meeting!