



Board Meetings That Make a Difference Wednesday, February 11, 2015

1. Plan the meeting so it has a beginning, middle and end
 - a. Beginning
 - i. Why this particular meeting
 - ii. What are the meeting goals
 - iii. What are the meeting restraints
 - b. Middle
 - i. Follow agenda
 - c. Ending
 - i. Review decisions made, information delivered and ideas generated
 - ii. Plan of action
 - iii. Evaluation
 - iv. Conclusion

Plan your meeting to have a beginning that includes the context (“frame it”). The context should include the “why” of this particular meeting, your meeting goals and any constraints (such as time). For the meeting to be effective there needs to be an ending that encompasses some sort of summary (review decisions made, information delivered, ideas generated and the plan of action), evaluation and conclusion (e.g. have each person state one word to sum up their perspective of the meeting).

2. Invite the right people to the meeting
 - a. Invite only those who can contribute to the meeting
 - i. Are instrumental in making decisions
 - ii. Have certain information that can only be covered at the meeting
 - iii. Can provide ideas

Invite only those who can contribute to the meeting. If they are instrumental in making decisions that need to be made in the meeting, they need to have certain information that can only be covered at the meeting, or they can provide ideas needed during the meeting, then they ought to be invited. If not, don't invite them. If you are holding a decision making meeting and some of the key players can't make it or aren't invited, then you may be

wasting your time since these players could sabotage the decision made in their absence, or just not have buy-in.

3. Be clear on the outcome for each agenda item
 - a. Do you want a decision made
 - b. Do you want to share specific information
 - c. Do you want ideas

Be clear on the outcome for each agenda item and communicate the outcome to the attendees at the meeting. Spend time establishing what you wish to accomplish for each of your agenda items. The clearer and more specific you are, the more effective the meeting will be. Do you want a decision made? If so, what type of decision? Perhaps you want the attendees to know specific information. What is that information and why do you want them to know it. Do you want ideas? What kind of ideas and to what end? Communicate to the attendees these outcomes. The meeting will be more meaningful and purposeful to the attendees when you articulate clearly the outcomes for each agenda item. The meeting will appear like it has direction and therefore worth the time.

4. Use appropriate processes and tools
 - a. Decision matrix – making decisions
 - b. Handouts – sharing information
 - c. Brainstorming – generating ideas

Use specific processes for making decisions (e.g. using a decision matrix), generating ideas (e.g. brainstorming) and resolving conflicts (e.g. establishing ground rules). Attendees will then be more confident that the goals of the meeting will be achieved. This way they can better focus on the “what” (the task at hand), rather than the “how” (the process).

5. Establish meeting ground rules
 - a. How each person should treat one another and their ideas

As a group have the attendees co-create a set of guidelines or ground rules for how each person should treat one another and their ideas. These guidelines will make it clear what is expected of one another. An example of a guideline might be “only one person talking at a time.”

6. Start and finish the meeting on time

An important aspect of running effective meetings is insisting that everyone respects the time allotted. Start the meeting on time, do not spend time recapping for latecomers, and, when you can, finish on time. Whatever can be done outside the meeting should be. This

includes circulating reports for people to read beforehand, and assigning smaller group meetings to discuss issues relevant to only certain people.

7. Use warm-ups and energizers

- a. Set the stage for great participation and collaboration

We tend to over-pack our meetings and end up with little time to set the stage for great participation and collaboration. If you take the time to energize and juice your group, you will get better results, more creative ideas, better participation, diverse perspectives, more energy, and better decisions.

8. Accept and value diversity

- a. Make sure that all ideas, knowledge and styles are embraced
- b. Be open and respectful, and value different points of view
- c. Reinforce good listening

Accept value and diversity in knowledge, ideas and styles. Make sure that all ideas, knowledge and styles are embraced. Find ways to get your team members to not only be open and respectful, but to actually value different points of view. Reinforce good listening. A good team listener listens attentively to ideas and perspectives they don't like. The great idea often comes from the diverse.

9. Ensure equal contribution

- a. Provide an opportunity for everyone to contribute

Provide an opportunity for everyone in the meeting to contribute to the meeting. This means that when there is an agenda item that calls to have the group generate ideas, make sure everyone's ideas are heard. When you discuss an issue, everyone gets a say. That way, when you make decisions, you'll tap into the best thinking of everyone in the meeting. This is not just about being "fair," but rather leveraging the talents and perspectives you have brought together.

10. Recognize introverts and extroverts

- a. Include processes that focus on both
 - i. Introverts: alone time for generating ideas
 - ii. Extroverts: group time for generating ideas

Include processes that focus on both introverted approaches ("alone time" for generating ideas) and extroverted approaches ("group time" for generating ideas). Some people think more effectively by themselves with no distractions, and some like the stimulation of other people. Most need both.

11. Pace the meeting

- a. Differs from group to group
- b. Increase pace when generating ideas; slow down when making decisions

It is important to be aware of the pacing of the meeting. If you move too slowly, you'll bore your team members and sap some of their energy. If you move too quickly, you'll lose most of your team members, or they will feel anxious. Stay flexible and get feedback on the speed. The right pacing will differ from group to group. A good rule of thumb is to increase your pace when you generate ideas, and slow down when making decisions.

12. Decide when you decide; present when you present; generate ideas when you generate ideas

- a. Make it clear what operation you are using

The three key operations that occur in meetings are making decisions, presenting information and generating ideas. Often in meetings these operations get mixed up. One person is making a decision, another is sharing information, and still another is generating ideas. This does not work since each of these operations has its own set of rules that do not co-exist productively together. In other words, the act of decision making does not mix psychologically well with the act of idea generating. Make it clear to the attendees what operation you are using.

13. Record the decisions, ideas and results on a flipchart

- a. Provides visual focus

Record the meeting results in a way that all members can literally see the work in progress. Doing this will also provide visual focus to the group. Use a flipchart and assign a recorder.

14. Plan for action

- a. Who will do what and when

At the end of the meeting make sure that some action will result. Ask "Who will do what and when?" Even if done in the middle of the meeting it is best to summarize the meeting with the plan for action.

15. Evaluate the meeting

- a. What worked
- b. What needs improvement

Make sure that you take the time at the end of each meeting to have the attendees provide feedback. Ask, "What worked?" and "What needs improvement?" This will enable you to continuously improve your meetings.

16. Conclusion

- a. Each person states one word to sum up their perspective of the meeting

Asking each person to sum up their perspective of the meeting in one word will give you a good starting point for planning your next meeting.