

Roger Turcotte & Co. LLC

25 Ways to Lead People to High Performance



*Leading
Effective
Meetings*

Article 18


Leadership Education

Empowering Leaders to Excel

THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

“Holding team meetings is often an unproductive and frustrating activity. Attendance is spotty, and we waste a lot of time. I do it because it seems like I should, but sometimes I’d just as soon forget the whole thing and just get the work done.”



In order to succeed as a leader, it is important to understand the concepts and master the techniques involved in organizing and conducting productive meetings. Getting team members together as a group is a necessary component of developing team cohesiveness and maximizing team potential.

IDEAS FOR SOLUTIONS



FOCUS ON THE MEETING PROCESS

The key to leading productive and effective meetings is to concentrate on the processes used to organize and conduct the meeting, rather than to focus exclusively on the tasks to be completed.

For any meeting, there are some functions that must occur beforehand, and some that take place during the time that the group is together. While some of these functions may be delegated, it is the leader's responsibility to make certain that someone carries them out. Investing time in defining and monitoring these process functions is the absolute key to having meetings that are productive and rewarding for leaders as well as for team members.

Whenever possible, an agenda

should be developed and published prior to a meeting. If individuals other than the leader are allowed to provide suggestions for agenda items, it should be clear what the time frames and procedures are to have these items included. At the beginning of the meeting, the leader should review the agenda, meeting objectives, time frames, and the roles of various group members.



Once the ground rules and directions have been established, the leader must continue to provide guidance and support for effective processes during the meeting. By doing so, the leader creates an atmosphere that promotes full, meaningful participation by all the members of the group, and also moves the meeting toward the accomplishment of its purpose.

THE CORE FUNCTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Process Facilitation

- Encourage the participation of all members
- Provide support for the airing and full consideration of diverse views
- Paraphrase, summarize, and translate when necessary
- Summarize actions, decisions, and assignments at the end of the meeting



Time Keeping

- Keep the meeting on schedule
- Remind group of time remaining, asking for a change in timing goals if needed

Gate Keeping

- Keep the group focused on the task at hand
- When necessary, ask for a limit on the length of statements
- Call for decisions when discussion appears to be complete

In addition to these core functions, there are two functions that are of significant help in meetings with more complex agendas.

Active Recording

- Write pertinent information on a large pad or board, so that everyone can see it
- Write exact quotes or summaries of statements or ideas under consideration.
- Write out decision statements for approval or for clarity after approval



Post-Meeting Recording

- Have notes taken during the meeting, and published afterward.

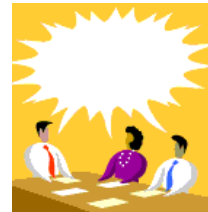


BEHAVIORS IN A MEETING

There are a wide variety of behaviors that individuals might exhibit in a meeting. As a point of reference for monitoring and evaluating people's participation, it is helpful to categorize key behaviors in terms of those which are helpful to the group, and those which are barriers to successful meetings. Leaders should encourage and reward helpful behavior, while discouraging and addressing negative or barrier behavior.

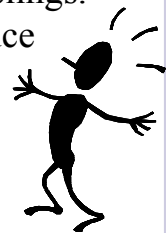
Behaviors Helpful to the Completion of Tasks

- **Initiating** - Suggesting new ideas, problems, and activities. (This doesn't mean disrupting the activities going on, but surfacing new ideas when appropriate.)
- **Orienting** - Identifying the relationship between what is being done, and the purpose and goals of the meeting.
- **Clarifying** - Helping all members of the group to understand what is being said and done.
- **Giving Information** - Providing the group with facts with which to work.
- **Integrating** - Helping the group to consider all sides of an issue, in order to arrive at a conclusion that combines the best aspects of the discussion.
- **Summarizing** - Pulling together all the ideas that have been expressed, and demonstrating their relationship to any conclusions or decisions.



Behaviors Helpful to Effective Process

- **Encouraging** - Being friendly and responsive to others; recognizing others and their contributions.
- **Expressing Feelings** - Accurately sensing and expressing the feelings, mood, and relationships among the group; sharing one's own feelings.
- **Harmonizing** - Attempting to reconcile disagreements and reduce tensions; helping others to explore their differences.
- **Modifying** - Offering to modify one's own position when in conflict; admitting error when appropriate.
- **Facilitating** - Attempting to keep communication channels open; facilitating the participation of others; suggesting procedures that will bring out balanced discussion of conflicting viewpoints.
- **Evaluating** - Objectively assessing group functioning and production; measuring results against group goals.



Behaviors that Create Barriers to Group Success

- **Aggression** - Deflating other's status; attacking the group or its values; joking in a sarcastic or negative manner.
- **Blocking** - Disagreeing and opposing beyond reason; stubbornly resisting the group's requests and ideas; diverting discussion to a personal agenda.
- **Dominating** - Asserting authority or superiority to manipulate the group or individual members; interrupting others; presenting overlong, repetitive reasoning.
- **Out-of-field Behavior** - Acting the clown to support one's lack of involvement or commitment; ignoring the group by doing personal work during the meeting; initiating side conversations during group discussion time.
- **Special Interest Solicitation** - Using the group setting to promote personal interests.



Acting as a positive contributor in a meeting is an important performance requirement for all staff members. Leaders should clearly define their expectations for the behavior of team members when attending meetings. A critical dimension of performance for all team members is being a 'team player' which requires certain behavioral standards be adhered to whenever the team meets. Leaders can use these behavioral standards as part of their interactions with their staff members in the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of their performance.

Leaders must remember that their behavior at meetings will serve as a model to members of their team. Therefore, it's vital that leaders demonstrate the desired behaviors. Addi-

tionally, leaders must address individuals who demonstrate barrier behavior. On most occasions this is best accomplished outside of the meeting.

Establishing and enforcing reasonable standards for planning and conducting meetings will yield many rewards for leaders. Team members will not only attend meetings but they will do so willingly and will participate in a meaningful manner because they know that the leader is organized and focused.

