



## Keep 'Em Coming Back! (Part 1 of 2)

Since most of us lack psychic abilities and because there is no fairytale pixie that can sprinkle magic 'information' dust on us, there are times when team meetings are needed.

So, in an effort to help you make the most of your time together as a team, this month's message focuses on how to structure your meeting and on the responsibilities of everyone involved.

First, let's look at the elements of a good meeting.

- The meeting is focused and within a reasonable time frame.
- The meeting accomplishes its goal - information sharing, generating ideas, etc.
- Everyone feels included.
- Ideas are shared without being judged.
- Fun!

To achieve this ideal, here are some things to consider.

(The following tips have been collected from various leaders, the Internet and management related books and videos.)

### **Location, Location, Location**

Try to have meetings in a private area, so that everyone stays focused on what is being discussed and so that others in the area are not being disturbed.

### **Timing**

If your goal is to have meetings on a regular basis, choose a consistent day and time for meetings (every second Tuesday at 1:00) so that everyone becomes accustomed to the schedule.

## Agenda

The next step to a good meeting is the agenda. The agenda gives a sense of purpose and direction to the meeting.

Develop an agenda in cooperation with the team. Ask your team a week prior to the meeting for any items they would like to see discussed.

Validate the team member's agenda ideas by including them on the agenda or if you can't include them, explain why.

The goal is to create an environment where the team feels comfortable suggesting agenda items.

Your agenda should include the following:

- Start time
- End time
- Location
- Topic headings
- The time that each topic is expected to last
- Which participants are expected to lead a specific topic

Here is a sample agenda:

<u>Team 2-1</u>		
Start at 10:00 a.m. in Room F		
Item	Responsible	Time
Opening Remarks	Team Leader	5 min
Food day	Billy-Joe-Bob	10 min
New System Updates	Resource Officers	25 min
Mediator Role	Mike Lund	30 min
Team member info	Sue-Ann	5 min
Round Table	Everyone	15 min
End at 11:30		

Distribute the agenda and any background material, lengthy documents or articles prior to the meeting so everyone will be prepared and feel involved.

### **The Meeting - Leader Responsibilities**

- Start on time
- Mention the purpose of the meeting: To generate new ideas; to explain new procedures; team building, etc
- Stick to the agenda
- Encourage group discussion to get all points of view and ideas.
- Keep conversation focused on the topic. Feel free to ask participants for only constructive and non-repetitive comments
- Tactfully end discussions when they are getting nowhere or becoming destructive - "It seems like we've exhausted this topic". Summarize and move on to the next agenda item
- Ask permission or advise of a need to move on to next item
  - "Are we ready to move on to the next topic?"
  - "In order to discuss the other items in our agenda, we need to move on. Let's revisit this in our next meeting after Billy-Joe-Bob has had a chance to find out more details."
- Be a role model by listening and by showing interest, appreciation and confidence in everyone
- Use appropriate humour
- Don't be afraid to admit mistakes

## **The Meeting - Participant Responsibilities**

- Arrive on time
- Stick to the topic at hand
- Be aware of the time allotted for each topic
- Be clear and to the point when expressing your thoughts
- Let others finish their thoughts before voicing your own
- Be open to hearing ideas from others
- Use appropriate humour

## **The Ending - Meeting Leader**

- Ensure there is a round table discussion at the end of the meeting. To ensure that everyone feels included, it is important to give everyone the opportunity to contribute. Go around the table and ask each person if they have anything else to discuss. If for some reason people haven't contributed throughout the meeting, this is now their opportunity.
- Summarize at the end of the meeting to ensure that everyone has a clear overview of what took place and what action is now required
- If needed, set a date, time and place for the next meeting
- End on time and on a positive note
- Thank everyone for participating

## **After The Meeting**

- If the team considers it important, the meeting leader should distribute a summary of the meeting within 3 or 4 days.  
Use the agenda as a guide for summarizing the discussion.

**Meetings aren't just for team leaders to organize!**

If, as an employee, your team doesn't have meetings as often as you need, approach your supervisor and suggest an agenda topic, time frame and location.

If you are looking for a developmental opportunity, discuss with your team leader the possibility of leading the next meeting.

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In next month's message, we'll look at how to make meetings more fun and how to deal with various meeting behaviours.

Until then, happy meetings to all!

Mike Lund

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