

Strategies & Tips for Leading Excellent Team Meetings

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Meetings should be like salt - a spice sprinkled carefully to enhance a dish, not poured recklessly over every forkful. Too much salt destroys a dish. Too many meetings destroy morale and motivation.
- Jason Fried



Excellent team meetings:

- Provide opportunities to come together and pool talents, knowledge & creativity
- Enable teams to move toward achieving goals



However what often happens is:

- Team meetings are just a part of the regular routine - uninspiring, dull, not a good use of time
- Poorly run meetings lead to “Meeting Recovery Syndrome” - time and energy wasted after unproductive meetings (confusion, frustration, complaining...)



If you regularly lead team meetings, the following strategies and tips are designed to help make your team meetings more effective, engaging and energizing. There are 2 parts to this presentation:

1. Taking Care of Business
2. Taking Care of Your Team



Taking Care of Business



Tip # 1:

Know WHY you are meeting

Surprisingly, many people don't really consider why they are holding a team meeting. So... take a sheet of paper and write down:

- Your first thoughts - why am I holding this meeting?
- Then dig deeper - what is the mission of your organization and the purpose of the work your team does together? How will this meeting help the team move towards its goals?
- Finally, break this down into 3-5 goals or outcomes you'd like to achieve in this specific meeting

Note: *if you don't have a solid purpose or reason for the meeting - consider cancelling or rescheduling until you do have a purpose!*



Tip # 2:

Build a Structure for the Meeting

Most people know a meeting is supposed to have an agenda - but here's what you need to know about the agenda

- Your agenda is not just a list of bullet points - it needs more detail
- Ask “why?” for each item. Also, consider what you plan to achieve in the meeting, and what process will the team use to achieve this?
- List the names of each person who will present or lead the discussion for each agenda item
- Add an estimated time allotment for each item
- Share with the team 1-2 days beforehand for their input



Tip # 3:

Stay on Track

Discussions often go off track - this is a common frustration for people who attend meetings.

- As the meeting leader, keep your attention on where the discussion is going. Your detailed agenda will help you keep the meeting on track
- If you have facilitation skills - use them! This puts you ahead of 75% of people leading meetings, who have no formal training in facilitating discussions
- Guide discussions back on track by asking open-ended questions
- Have a “parking lot” for off-topic items, questions and concerns - incorporate into the next meeting or allot 10 minutes at the end



Taking Care of Your Team



Tip # 4:

Keep it Balanced

- If you follow the first 3 tips your meetings will be very task-focused, structured & efficient - but could be lacking in team bonding, collaboration and participation
- Your meetings need a balance between achieving tasks and promoting social interaction
- Coffee and muffins, tea and cookies, fruit and veggies - all these can help break the ice and get people comfortable sharing ideas
- Other ways to balance your meetings include music, warm-up activities, or just spending the first 10 minutes for unstructured socializing



Tip # 5:

Remember Everyone Has a Voice

- A common barrier to collaboration in meetings comes from an imbalance in “air time”. When a few people dominate discussions and others don’t speak up, the team loses out on the full range of talent, expertise and opinions. Also this reduces buy-in for any decisions made in the meeting.
- Remember there can be several reasons for this imbalance - including personality, seniority, self-confidence - and disengagement.
- Address both under-participation and over-participation as part of your regular 1:1 discussions with team members to uncover any underlying issues
- Rotate tasks among the team - such as note-taker, presenter, discussion leader
- Try using Brainwriting and Round-Robin exercises to encourage balanced participation



Tip # 6:

Keep Discussions Civil

“Incivility impacts productivity, hijacks focus and creates stressful environments” - Christine Porath, Mastering Civility

- Healthy dialogue is a vital part of team meetings, but ensure that discussions are respectful to all
- Ask the team to develop their own “Rules of Engagement” for meetings
- Note that incivility includes body language as well as the spoken word - and this can sometimes can be quite subtle
- Always address instances of incivility - and for the most productive outcome do this privately with individuals, whenever possible



To summarize...

Taking care of business means being clear about why you're meeting, building a structure, and staying on track.

Taking care of your team means balancing the tasks and social elements, giving everyone a chance to participate, and addressing incivility for an open and inclusive environment.



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