

GROUP MEETING MASTERY

GOAL:

To present specific group meeting processes used by the Meeting Manager (the person in charge) that improve positive meeting happenings and outcomes.

MEETING MAGIC:

Going to meetings is usually not a favorite pastime. There have been times when attending a meeting has been known as a waste of time! It is the Meeting Manager's role to make the meeting worth the group members' time! Following are "things" that make the meeting magic happen.

To ensure that the group maintains focus on their responsibilities, the Organizational Standards are read by any group member and affirmed by the group members at the beginning of each meeting. The affirmation includes the definition, mission, purpose, philosophy, guidelines, policies, procedures, job descriptions, long-term goal(s), and short-term objectives of the organization. The reason for the audible group reminder of Organizational Standards is that there are times when unrelated conversations can replace the intended agenda items. Misdirected conversation wastes time and confuses the intended conversation related to the agenda items.

The Meeting Manager's role is to keep the conversation and each introduced agenda item at the forefront of conversation and identify how the group's decision-making outcomes meet the organizational standards. Leadership behaviors are to result in group leadership respect, such as consistency and predictability, producing a regulated environment with measurable and attainable outcomes related to agenda items.

It is the responsibility of the Meeting Manager to:

1. Refrain from wasting time! The agenda topics are to be clearly stated without dragging the topic and decisions beyond reasonable time limits. Laissez-faire communication (letting attendees do and meander in conversation as they choose) does not represent acceptable leadership in a group meeting.
2. Dismiss or uninvite group members to a meeting who would be wasting their time by attending.
3. Maintain continuity of group process by providing each group member at each group meeting with an updated so-called Perpetual Notebook. Include in each Perpetual Notebook all past minutes, current and past handouts, a copy of the Organizational Standards, and the current agenda. The Perpetual Notebook becomes the basis for conversations and decisions at each group meeting.
4. Have all group meeting members review the most recent past minutes. Verbally decide if there is a need for change(s) to the past minutes.

5. Start each meeting agenda item with a verb that expects a specific final decision, conclusion, or measurable outcome--- like “determine” or “recommend.” “Treadmill Verbs” as a beginning verb of an agenda item *does not produce a final decision*. “Treadmill Verbs” are the first words of agenda items (such as “discuss” or “consider”) that lead to *no measurable outcome*. There might be intended exceptions to this rule; however, being aware of this rule helps to effectively make astute decisions regarding the wording (therefore, the final expectation) of each agenda item.
6. Lead discussions related to each agenda item. Some of the best ideas and suggestions regarding agenda items come from outside sources. Therefore, there are times when providing each meeting member with a meeting agenda within a few days of a meeting allows meeting attendees to pursue additional agenda input. This input can be shared with the group meeting members during the upcoming meeting.
7. Change the location occasionally or momentarily to add an appropriate diversion of the meeting. Just standing up, providing a break for refreshments, or telling an appropriate joke can ease meeting tension.
8. Complement positive outcomes or bring attention to a person in attendance who performed an exceptional behavior(s) or an activity that promoted, met, or supported organizational success or goals.
9. Allow a time-controlled verbal response at the end of each group meeting of 2 to 3 minutes for comment(s) or opinion(s) regarding the group’s decision(s).

ENTROPY:

The concept of entropy is a universal thermodynamic principle that says all things in the universe constantly move toward randomness, destruction, and decay *unless held steady and constant in some way. The Meeting Manager's role is to keep constant the organizational standards (as stated above) through appropriate conversations related to agenda items. This helps eliminate the organization's propensity for randomness and destruction of organizational standards and will hold entropy at bay.*

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Recommended website/online reading: Entropy—A Factor for Change