

Effective Meetings

Meetings are the medium through which managerial work is performed (decision making, knowledge sharing, training, motivation). This is a key to culture and results. We want to have the right number of meetings to get the desired outcomes, no more - no less. A crucial leadership responsibility is making meetings effective and teaching this throughout the organization. All meetings should start and stop on time.

Process-Oriented Meetings

Recurring meetings; pre-determined meeting process and objectives

- **Daily Huddles** – every person in the company should be in 1 or 2 10-15 minutes daily huddles. This drives communication, team building, energy, pace, and reduces email and “got a minute” meetings. They must be limited to 10-15 minutes with zero problem solving. The agenda is to have the meeting owner ask each person “What’s up today?” and “Where are you stuck?”. A key number or two can also be shared by each team member. All discussion should be moved off line or to quick follow ups after the huddle is over. See Verne Harnish – “Adrenaline Meetings” article for more.
- **Weekly Tactical meetings for all functions** – follow EM Tactical Meeting agenda and process. The key here is to get the team on the same page for awareness, dig into some tactical issues and determine how to solve, then force clarity and accountability by assigning “who” will get “what” done in the next 7 days.
- **Monthly Leadership Team meetings** – should hold 8 half day meetings per year, the two months in between quarterly meetings. These replace weekly tactical meetings. By adding 2-3 hours once a month, the team can focus on 1-2 key strategic issues and do a deeper review of company rocks.
- **Quarterly and Annual planning sessions** - follow Execution Maximizer process and complete/update the Execution Roadmap. Also, add innovation, leadership development and team dynamics to these sessions.
- **Team/Staff Meetings** - Should only be used for discussing anything that affects more than two of the people present—otherwise, the manager should ask them to break it off and continue their exchange later. The manager’s most important role is to facilitate the meeting and control its pace and thrust so it stays on track. Managers should leave the work of working out issues to subordinates, and help reach decisions. Opposing views and confrontation that develops gives you a much better understanding of an issue.
- **1+1** – One on One Meeting between manager and a direct report for coaching and accountability. Manager should listen, ask lots of questions to get to root of problems, and coach. Frequency of 1:1’s depends on subordinate’s experience. Typically, every week or every other week. *Leverage = 30-90 minutes of your time can enhance the quality of a subordinates work for two weeks, increase your understanding of their work, and create a common base of knowledge for effective delegation.*

Mission-Oriented Meetings

Ad-hoc meeting designed for a specific output or decision.

Before initiating a meeting, make sure you know what you are trying to accomplish. Usually, these meetings are the result of a tactical issue discussion in a weekly meeting that needs more time or other people to make the decision. The goal is to revisit the discussion so far and determine how to solve the issue.

Organizer should send out an agenda that clearly states purpose of the meeting, as well as what role everybody there is expected to play to get the desired output.

Invite required decision makers and team members needed to supply information or opinion on the issue. Eight people should be the absolute cutoff for a meeting called to make a decision. Decision-making is not

a spectator sport. If you're an invited participant, ask yourself if the meeting and your attendance is desirable or justified. If not, speak up before the meeting.

Meeting notes from discussion, decisions made, and specific action items should be sent out as soon as possible, before attendees forget what happened. If the meeting was worth calling in the first place, the work needed to produce the minutes is a small additional investment (high leverage) to ensure that the full benefit is obtained from what was done.

All meetings must start and stop on time. If the decision needs more time than allowed, get permission to continue or set another session.

Mission / Decision Meeting Agenda

1. **Identify the issue** – what is the real issue? What decision needs to be made? Is there something deeper that can be solved? Most issues come down to people or process.
2. **Discuss the information** – only to present information to help a decision or solution. Repeating information is the beginning of politics, which wastes time and can create dysfunction.
NOTE: This section may need specific presentations or recommendations from invited participants. If so, list these on the agenda with time guidelines for the presentation.
3. **Decide how to solve the issue** – make the decision. It's much better to make the wrong decision than to delay or not make one. Who is accountable for the decision? Once that person has heard from the team, it's time to make the decision. This may NOT be the CEO. It could be the department or functional leader. Whenever possible, allow the accountable person to make the decision. That is, after all, their job as a leader/ manager.
4. **Commitment to the decision** – whether you agree or not, commit to final decision. Watch the results and adjust if needed.
5. **Communication** - who needs to know what was decided?
6. **Clear action plan** - assignment of tasks with owners and deadlines

Ideally, Process meetings cover everything and Mission meetings aren't needed. However, up to 20% of your time in mission meetings is normal. If you are spending more than 20% of your time in ad hoc mission-oriented meetings, it is a sign of mal-organization. Time for a Tune-up.

Meeting Guidance and Sample Agenda

1 + 1 Meeting (weekly or bi-weekly)

Step 1: Change your Approach

Your job as manager is not to make *your* number; it's to help your team members make *theirs*. Using a regular 1 + 1 coaching approach helps to get the most out of your team and to *systematically* improve performance. Focus 70% of time on people side and 30% on results/process.

Step 2: Create the Environment

Coaches work hard to create and maintain an environment that is conducive to coaching. They truly care about their people and have their best interests in mind. People feel safe and openly share opinions, positive and negative. Remember that getting the most out of your team is the coaches' job.

Step 3: Transform the Conversation

Coaches are not "Nice-Guy Managers" or "Micromanagers. Coaches ask questions and challenge their team. These sessions are short, to the point, and productive. The 1+1 meetings focus on improvement and growth. Coaches talk 20% of the time and listen 80% of the time. Coaches hold team members accountable to high performance standards to get the best out of the team.

Five Critical Coaching Questions

1. What must you do?
2. How should you do it?
3. Did you do it?
4. What did you do right?
5. How can you improve next time?

This is the fundamental 1+1 agenda. The manager/coach gives these questions in advance of the 1+1, so the team member knows what to prepare. The art of coaching is to dig deeper into the replies. When appropriate ask "Why?" multiple times to dig into core issues and opportunities. "Ask one more question" – is a good reminder for the coach. The focus on what team members "MUST" do, comes from the company and individual rocks, core values, and top job requirements. Reviewing scorecards, KPI's or other metrics is excellent too, as long as the focus comes back to these five questions.

Sources: High Output Management - Andrew S. Grove, Great to Excellent - Jim Alampi, Weekly Coaching Conversation - Brian Souza