Effective Meetings

How do you run an effective meeting?

Imagine a workplace where people willingly attended meetings because they resulted in amazing outcomes and better team culture.

A team where people understood why they were in a meeting and everyone left with clear accountabilities and an understanding of people's roles in the team.

That feeling of achievement and progress is what drives a good culture – people are happier and motivated to input into the organisation's success.

"When a group of intelligent people come together to talk about issues that matter, it is both natural and productive for disagreement to occur. Resolving those issues is what makes a meeting productive, engaging, even fun."
— Patrick Lencioni

Meetings get a bad rap, but are they a lost cause?

Veteran leadership coach, Patrick Lencioni comes to the defence of the meeting. He believes that bad meetings are a reflection of bad leaders. He states that meetings can be productive, even energising, if leaders ensure that meetings have:

- Drama, by nurturing the natural and healthy level of conflict that should exist.
- Context and purpose set correctly. This may even lead to more and different types of meetings, but that is not a bad thing to ensure that issues and proposals get the correct airtime, cadence and setting.
- Commitment on the part of the leader. Simply put, meetings are what leaders do, and they need to commit and prepare the team to ensure they are meaningful, engaging and relevant. A leader who doesn't want to do meetings is like a surgeon who doesn't like operations.

How well does your team rate?

Choose a team you regularly contribute to and rate your team from 0 (not great) to 3 (nailing it).

	Rate 0 - 3
We are clear on agreed behaviours in meetings	
Our team meetings are useful and productive	
Our team meetings finish with clear outcomes	
We have a clear and well documented approach to decision making	

All members of the team have visibility into the priorities and progress of team projects	
It is clear what the current priorities of the team are	
We are clear on agreed behaviours in meetings	

Your Score

0 - 7	8 - 14	15 +
Your team's score is low which indicates that meetings are probably unproductive, and the team do not have a clear decision-making protocol and agreement as to the priorities. It will likely mean that the team is not as productive as they could be.	Your score in this area is medium which indicated that the team might not be having effective meetings with clear decision-making protocols and well documented and agreed priorities.	Your team's score is high which indicates that meetings are probably productive, and the team have a clear decision-making protocol and agree on the priorities of the work they need to do.

So how can you run better meetings?

Hint 1- Decide why you meet

Each team needs to define the purpose of their meetings.

A team may also have different meeting types, and this is an opportunity to capture what they are. Some examples may be:

- Daily stand-up meeting to review the progress of our work
- Monthly retrospective to reflect on our progress as a team and capture improvements
- Monthly meeting to review and refine how we work

Hint 2 - Determine how you want people to behave

It sounds obvious, but have you identified how you expect people to behave in the meeting? This can make a great group discussion, injecting some good-natured humour to dissuade bad behaviour or even worse boring meetings.

Some examples you could use are:

- Come to meetings on-time
- Come to team meetings prepared
- Complete tasks you committed to

- No digital devices
- Check-in at the beginning of the meeting to become present
- Adhere to the defined team values
- Speak up when you disagree with a proposed idea, assumption or solution; no point complaining later
- Give and receive critical feedback with curiosity and grace; you might learn something
- Embrace healthy conflict; it's the stuff of innovation
- Capture actions; meetings without actions are unnecessary meetings
- Check-out at the end of the meeting to capture the post-meeting mood; if a meeting doesn't work, change the format.

Hint 3 - Decide how you will make decisions

Good meetings are a collaborative place for decisions to be made. It helps to have a clearly defined decision-making method to ensure all relevant voices are heard.

Here are three common decision-making methods.

Democratic: Take a vote and the majority wins.

Autocratic: An individual, typically the leader, makes the decision.

Consensus: Each decision considers all parties contributions. The discussion continues until each member can live with the proposal. If someone says no, then the consensus method works on getting that person to yes, or I can live with it. The Team Leader can decide if there is a roadblock to progressing forward.

Arguably, the consensus method gives each stakeholder a voice and the decision can iterate to a better outcome. It provides a collaborative approach and reduces discontent with people being railroaded.

These are just three hints on how you can improve the effectiveness of meetings, but no two teams are the same so do what works for you. Collaborating as a team is a fantastic opportunity, so invest the time to develop the discipline to plan and lead meetings that people value and are motivated by.