BUSINESS OPERATIONS
YOUR LIFESTYLE
TEAM DYNAMICS

Choose the Right Meeting Style for Your Team

Simple strategies for Your Team Performance with Eden Lovejoy

www.yourbizblog.biz

Productivity is impacted when people don't share information with each other efficiently and, perhaps contrary to popular belief, often a face to face meeting *is* the most efficient way to share information. The impact from failing to provide regular and successful team dialogue can range from low morale on a team where no one is talking to anyone, to completely disruptive "got-a-minute?" distractions or over the top chatter on personal matters.

While there's no single method that works for all teams there are many different options and innovative ways to hold effective meetings.   Here are a few top strategies and guidelines on when and how to apply them:

The Huddle

Perfect for busy teams headed in a lot of different directions, *The Huddle* can add a sense of team spirit to your employee group while providing quick feedback for all team members in a meeting environment everyone can look forward to.

Here are the pointers:

-   Identify the specific point that each team member is responsible for updating. Examples might be: appointments scheduled that day, customer complaints and responses, sales made, employee schedules/vacations upcoming, etc.
-   Schedule the huddle at a transition time for your team (i.e. first thing in the morning, end of the day, or before or after lunch)
-   Specify the location. A common/open area is best
-   This is a standing meeting, not to exceed five minutes
-   Be prompt, be high energy, have each person share their target information briefly and end each meeting with a cheerleading moment to keep momentum up!

The Project Manager

The Project Manager style meeting is a weekly check-in on specific projects where teams benefit from an alternate perspective on their work. Perfect for groups where there is a great deal of diverse experience and supervisors or team leaders are highly engaged during the week with their personal area of focus. Create an environment of creative brainstorming with this model.

Here are the pointers:

- Hold this weekly meeting toward the beginning or end of the week so the team can focus on either
    - a) major objectives this week and anticipated hurdles, or
    - b) major accomplishments this week and experienced hurdles.
- Schedule an equal amount of time for each team leader/project to be the focus of discussion
- Rotate who starts each week so no-one feels like they are always the team that runs out of time
- Train team leaders to the expectation that they have a set reporting format in a specific timeframe to present their project (i.e. team lead has three or five minutes to summarize status and projections, team has seven or ten minutes to provide input/comment brainstorm)
- It may take a bit of time for your supervisory level team to warm up to this format, but once they do, the information sharing will begin to extend to interaction during the week as members learn each other's strengths

The Perspective Shift

The *Perspective Shift* is a real mind flexor, perfect for creative teams motivated and inspired by the organization's established intention. More free flowing and idea generating, this model is great for teams who are all headed in the same direction, working well together and eager to leverage each other's success and generate new energy and ideas to support corporate goals. Here are the pointers:

- Schedule every other week or the first and third week of the month, so there's regular rotation and the team can get accustomed to the schedule
- Hold the agenda fairly open, with only a few formal updates on projects that were identified in an earlier team meeting to remind the group of the success of the team's efforts
- Start the meeting with a round-robin response to a question designed to get people thinking about their role and contributions (often something as simple as "what is your greatest success this week" can put people in a right frame of mind)
- Review a top organizational strategy for the current year and the projects currently in place to support the strategy
- Request and facilitate free form dialogue on how to advance the open projects and solicit new ideas on projects to add, abandon, or re-direct.
- Be sure this is a safe environment where all ideas are considered respectfully!

The Educational Model

The *Educational Model* is perfect for larger groups who will benefit from shared information, camaraderie, or regular motivation and incentive programs. The most formal of the meeting styles presented in this article, the *Educational Model* works well in a "one to many" environment where leadership is seeking to educate and inform. Here are the pointers:

- This model should not be used more often than once per month
- Schedule for mid-morning so folks can get their day started and urgent priorities met (this will help decrease distraction)
- Develop strong material well prepared for presentation and delivery
- *Do* leave time for Q & A and dialogue following all presentations
- *Don't* hand out detailed information for people to look at until the end of the presentation, or you'll lose their attention immediately
- *Don't* hold the meeting for the meeting's own sake if you don't have anything important to present!

Unfortunately, meetings can be (and often are!) one of the most frustrating parts of a person's week. It takes real candor and open-mindedness on the part of leadership to dialogue with team members to improve the process and results of regular meetings. Be creative, be flexible, you have an opportunity to create an event that

a) Keeps your team focused on YOUR primary goals and intention for the business, and
b) Reflects the style of your company
c) Creates an environment of camaraderie and mutual support, leveraging your investment in your team to the greatest possible return

Finally, remember that meeting needs will change over time as well, so be sure to evaluate periodically to find out if needs are changing or if a regular meeting has lost its impact. If it has, re-create the event to meet your current needs.