Running Better Meetings

Session 2: Q&A, Tools & Tricks, Handling Difficult situations

Agenda

— Introduction

— Logistics

— Q&A from recorded session

— Tools, Tips, & Tricks

— Handling Difficult Situations

Topics

Tools, Tips, & Tricks (20 min)

— What has made chairing more manageable for you?

— What procedures or practices do you use in your groups that work well?

Handling Difficult Situations (30 min)

— De-escalating

— Online vs Offline matters

— Sensitive topics

Logistics

This session will not be recorded or minuted as we will be discussing sensitive topics.

Participants are welcome to take notes during the section on tools and tricks for their own use.

Participants are advised not to share real situations they have experienced unless they have permission from those involved, or can sufficiently anonymize the story in order to protect those involved.

Today's session will feature both informative content and time for participation.

Q&A

Open Discussion

Tools, Tips, & Tricks

The goal for every group is to achieve consensus and open communication. How can the tools we use facilitate that?

What have you done to make chairing or running meetings more manageable?

Do you use any of the following:

— Agenda builders

— Email templates

— GitHub labelling

What has worked, what hasn't?

What practices do you use in your meetings or communications?

— How do you encourage discussion?

— How do you handle time zone differences?

— How do you handle language difficulties or industry challenges?

— How do you handle scribing duties?

Open Discussion

Handling Difficult Situations

Reminder

This section is not minuted or recorded.

Sharing hypotheticals or examples from your experience is encouraged, but please remember to avoid sharing anything that could identify someone. Where possible, anonymize the story. If it is not possible, do not share.

Room for Discussion vs. Unacceptable Behaviour

Some conflicts or situations have room for discussion, others do not.

As a facilitator, it's your role to intervene when a situation moves past the point of discussion or presents a risk to participant safety.

Consensus, not Unanimity

The goal of every discussion we have is consensus. Consensus does not mean everyone agrees, but that everyone is satisfied with the decision.

Reaching consensus can mean working through objections, it can take time, but the result is worth it.

Cultural Considerations

As an international organization we have to consider that participants may have different perspectives on discussions. This diversity of perspective is good, but also requires facilitator consideration.

Some participants may be communicating in a second (or third, fourth) language, requiring extra time to process, other people may come from cultures or backgrounds where how people communicate differs from how a meeting may be run.

The best approach is to give space, follow up on comments, and ensure that collective understanding is reached.

Conflict Transformation

Emphasizes understanding underlying personal, social, and structural conditions in order to change our response to conflict.

— Conflict happens, and not all conflict is bad

— Goal is to turn destructive conflict into constructive conflict

— Common practice in diplomacy, peacebuilding work

Responses to Conflict

It's important to understand how we respond to conflict so we can change that response.

— Competitive: default to win/lose framing; conflict is zero-sum

— Avoidance: default to withdraw from the situation & remain neutral

— Accommodation: default to maintain harmony; appease other party

— Compromise: default to find minimally acceptable solution to all; protect relationships.

— Collaborative: default to expand outcomes; patience to find win/win solution

Reflect:
What conflict mode(s) do you find you most often default to?

Destructive Behaviours

— Shutting down or avoiding conversations

— Commanding an over-proportionate amount of space in the discussion

— Bringing unrelated issues into the discussion

— Name calling, micro-aggressions, physical aggression, etc.

Constructive Behaviours

— Active listening

— Exploration of others' thoughts or needs

— Tuning in to others' readiness for conflict conversation

— Sharing your needs and suggesting solutions

Conflict Escalation

The goal in any conflict is to reach a win-win resolution. One where all parties to the conflict can feel good about the result.

Most conflicts are easily resolved in this range as long as they are addressed quickly and constructively.

Interventions are about correcting the course, and ensuring conditions are right for participants to behave properly.

De-escalation

How do we de-escalate as we see signs of tension, or once conflict has started?

— Check in with participants - "I'm sensing some tension, can we talk about x?"

— Focus on mutually desirable outcomes

— Remind participants of areas of agreement

— Make room for all voices

— Restate process - how will a decision be made

— "We over Me" mentality - what is best for the group?

— Emphasize safety - moderate when needed, ensure participants are treated fairly

Discussion

— How might you handle de-escalating a heated discussion during a meeting?

— When sensitive topics or issues are raised, how might you direct conversation to keep the discussion civil?

— Have you ever dealt with aggressive or disruptive participants? What did you learn?

— How can we navigate industry specific challenges or conflicting business models?

Online vs Offline matters

There are a number of venues where conflict can take place, including in a meeting (in person or virtual), over email, on GitHub, and social gatherings. In addition to these "online" venues, we should consider things that may take place "offline", like social media, private emails, or direct messages.

Issues that occur during "online" activities are covered by the CoC. Offline issues are more challenging, but no less important to the safety and wellbeing of your group.

Social Media

Social media is one area where it can be difficult to determine what is appropriate, where the limits are, and what can be done. Posting on social media about W3C activities is a great way to connect with communities and share, but can also be used in ways that harm.

Some limits are clear, participants should not be using emails or direct messages to contact others without a clear reason or invitation.

Other situations that may arise can include things like posts that direct attention (positive or negative) towards someone, "sub-tweeting" or indirect criticism, or outright inappropriate posts.

Discussion

— How can we handle situations involving social media or communications outside of W3C activity?

— What resources are available to help with these situations?

— Have you experienced an issue like this before, and what did you learn?

Wrap-up

— Feedback?

— Are there any topics or concerns you have that you wish to see addressed in a future session, resource, or other capacity?

Thanks

Thank you for attending and participating. For any questions or concerns, please reach out to public-pwe@w3.org, or file an issue in our GitHub repository.