So—here's the background for changing how meetings are run. Sounds like a lot of obstacles, doesn't it? Are meetings such a good idea? Worth trying to fix? Who needs them, anyway?

Why Meetings?

Here are some reasons why meetings, with their pitfalls, can be the best and often the *only* way to work well together.

- *Getting a sense of the whole*

So much work is done privately and so many components are delegated in the workplace that it's vital to hear the overview and see how the pieces, including the ones you're working on, fit together.

- *Comparing notes*

Knowing that the same knotty problem has also stumped others, or discovering similarities between the workers and the work done elsewhere and in your outfit, is most reassuring.

- *Sharing information*

Learning from what others have learned; hearing ways to solve problems; being able to give something you've learned to the group; picking up data you need—all reasons for, and positive outcomes of, group meetings.

- *Being visible to each other*

Much of what we do at work, we do alone. We need a place to feel in unison. It's important to get the sense of a team pulling together in any group endeavor. Seeing and hearing from each other, experiencing the unity of energies being expended in the same effort, is a powerful team builder. It can also be *the* place for the leader to inspire the troops . . .

- *Comfort of hearing others' opinions openly*

There is great anxiety around being asked your opinions and ideas privately, one-on-one, by the boss, knowing that he/she will also be asking others. This makes you much less forthcoming as you hedge your answers in fear of being too exposed or too far off base in comparison to your co-workers. Airing ideas in a group gives everyone some orientation to the norm and helps people decide how far they want to go.

- *Looking for solutions jointly*

"Two heads are better than one" is true for many reasons. You get so committed to the sound of your own inner voice and its ideas that it's