Meeting Management

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1. Introduction

When the outcome of a meeting is to have another meeting, it has been a lousy meeting.
(Herbert Clark Hoover)

Nowadays, employees spend a lot of time in meetings. Often, these meetings appear to the participants as "boring", "off the topic" or as a "waste of time" (comp. [SMI00], chapter 1.2). Since every meeting costs a lot of time, money and energy, it is very important to conduct meetings that get results in an efficient way. This report will describe guidelines on how to manage a meeting so that it will be a success. Successful meetings are meetings that answer questions, save resources (personnel as well as time), and create a collaborative atmosphere. Meeting management hereby means the process from preparing the meeting, conducting it and taking the necessary follow-up actions to create a meeting that get results.

This report will focus mainly on the managerial point of view, i.e. from the point of view of the person, that has to or wants to hold a meeting, but still there will be some hints for participants of meetings, that will help them contribute to a good meeting.

1.1 Outline

This report will lead through all the steps necessary to accomplish a *good* meeting that gets results. Chapter 2 will begin with the preparation of the meeting, explaining the importance of a good preparation and what should be done before the meeting. Chapter 3 will continue with the starting of the meeting. In chapter 3 we will take a closer look on what should be done during the meeting and how to handle possible conflicts and problems. Chapter 4 will end the topic of meeting management by describing how to close the meeting and what should follow on each meeting. Finally the last chapter gives a brief summary about the meeting management process.

Since Meeting Management is rather a practical topic than a theoretical one, the following example of an imaginary meeting will be used to illustrate the subject of each chapter and will be used throughout the report.

The Global Muffler Company (GMC) produces special mufflers for luxury cars. John Miller is the CEO of the company. In the last month, three main objectives came up, which are:

- Since GMC only offers telephone ordering, customers have complaint lately about not being able to order 24 hours every day

- The marketing department has developed new corporate identity guidelines

- Recently more and more customers complaint about late deliveries

- The development of the new muffler M3000 will be finished next month

So John wants to hold a meeting to :

- Discuss and decide about the introduction of a web-based ordering system

- Inform the heads of the other departments about the new corporate identity guidelines

- Find the reasons for the late deliveries

- Discuss and decide about the marketing of the new M3000

2. Preparing the meeting

Before anything else, preparation is the key to success.
(Alexander Graham Bell)

Every good meeting starts with a good preparation. Not preparing the meeting means that the participants will have the feeling that the meeting was thrown together, that it is not necessary to prepare for the meeting or that it will probably fail, wasting lot of energy and resources.

2.1 Purpose

Before you start planning the meeting, you should ask yourself some questions:

- Is this meeting really necessary?
- Is a meeting the best way?
- Do we need to meet now?
- What happens if the meeting is not held?

You should be able to answer these questions and develop a clearly defined purpose. If you cannot answer the questions and develop the purpose, you should consider not holding the meeting. So the general rule is:

If you don't have a purpose, don't hold a meeting. ([STR03], p. 13)

To understand better the possible purpose(s) of a meeting, the following section will give a brief categorization of the different types of meetings.

Types of meetings

According to [SMI00] there are basically four types of meetings, which are:
- *Information-giving meetings*
  - Announce a new information
  - Training of employees
  - Motivation of employees
- *Information-exchanging meetings*
  - Exchange information among participants
- *Problem-solving meetings*

- Resolve conflicts
- *Decision-making meetings*
  - Follow-ups on problem-solving meetings
  - Get decisions about certain questions

Or to put it in the perspective of the participants as done in [STR03] :

- *Non-participating meetings*
- *Participating meetings*

If the purpose of the meeting is information-giving or information-exchanging meetings, respectively non-participating meetings, one should think about if there might be better ways to communicate the message than a meeting, like sending an email with the attached information, memos or just phone-calls. If the information meeting has to be hold anyway, you should make it very short. In the following sections, this report will focus on decision-making and problem-solving meetings.

As John takes a further look on his purposes for the meeting, he notices that the point

- Inform the heads of the other departments about the new corporate identity guidelines

can also be done by sending an email attached with the new guidelines. So he decides to remove that entry from his list.

2.2 Thinking about the Participants

To invite the correct people is essential for a successful meeting. The most important rule hereby is that only those people shall be invited that can contribute to the meeting by knowledge as well as by authorisation (i.e. does the person's position in the company allow him to make the decisions?). People who cannot contribute should not be invited. For each person one should be able to answer the question how he or she can contribute to the meeting. This also saves meeting costs as well as discussion times (comp. [STR03], p. 26; and [SMI00]).

If the decisions that will be taken out have major effects on someone, you should also invite the person(s), or a representative of the group of the affected persons.

Part-time participants

Sometimes, the participants can only contribute to a specific item, but cannot contribute to the others. In that case it makes sense to invite the person only for that specific part of the agenda, but not for the whole meeting. That way it saves the person's energy and time as well as the company's money, since the person can work on his/her original work

instead (comp. [STR03], p. 27).

John decided to invite to the meeting Frank, who is the Chief Information Officer (CIO) of the company, and Sara, the Chief Technology Officer (CTO). Laura from the Ordering department, Peter, the head of the marketing department, Michael, the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), as well as Marc, John's personal assistant, and Claudia from the human resource department.

He also decides to invite Paul, the project leader of the M3000, but only for the third part of the meeting, since he has very few time and cannot contribute to the first two points.

So the people are Frank, Sara, Laura, Peter, Michael, Marc and Claudia as well as Paul who will attend later.

2.3 Agenda

The key of the preparation of the meeting builds the agenda. The agenda describes the structure of the meeting and serves as a guide throughout the meeting. The agenda should include the following items:

- Date and Time
- Place
- Purpose/Meeting outcome
- Pre-meeting preparation
- Responsible persons for each agenda item
- List of participants

For the time and place, there is no general rule to apply. E.g. a meeting just before lunch could be good, because people could want to finish the meeting to have lunch and therefore push to get a decision and discuss more efficiently, but it could also happen that the group tries to get a decision too fast, without considering alternatives. The most important in choosing the time is that all people can attend at that time.
Since in many cases the place cannot be chosen, there is no other option to use the common facilities. In any other cases, one should use a room which makes the group feel comfortable and has all the necessary equipment, like e.g. beamer, flip-chart, etc.

A meeting agenda is sometimes also called an action agenda, because the meeting agenda focuses on the outcome of the meeting (see [PAR06], p. 11).

After the agenda has been finalized, it should be distributed to all participants at least 24 hours before the meeting starts, so that the participants have enough time to prepare themselves. Therefore the agenda should of course contain all materials attached, that the

people may need to prepare themselves (comp. [STR03], p. 36-37).

Now that John has finished describing the purpose and thinking about the right participants, he creates the agenda for the meeting.

Meeting agenda

Date	June 14th, 2008
Start time	10:00
End time	11:35
Purpose	• Discuss and decide about the introduction of a web-based ordering system
	• Find the reasons for the late deliveries
	• Discuss and decide about the marketing of the new M3000
Desired Outcome	• Decision about a web-based ordering system
	• Root causes for the late deliveries
	• The marketing strategy of the new M3000
Schedule	
10:00 – 10:02	(2 minutes) Review agenda and any changes
10:02 – 10:32	(30 minutes)
10:02 – 10:07	Information about the problem and the competitors (Frank)
10:07 – 10:28	Discussion of options (all)
10:28 – 10:30	Decision (all) – Consensus
10:30 – 10:32	Assignments of tasks (facilitator)
10:32 – 10:37	Information about the late-delivery problem (Laura)
10:37 – 10:56	Root cause analysis (all)
10:56 – 10:58	Decision (facilitator) - Managerial
10:58 – 11:00	Assignments of tasks (facilitator)
11:00 – 11:05	Information about the new M3000 (Paul)
11:05 – 11:26	Discussion of options (all)
11:26 – 11:28	Decision (all) – Vote
11:28 – 11:30	Assignments of tasks (facilitator)

11:30 – 11:35	Summation of main points, decisions and assignments (facilitator)
11:35 – 11:40	Evaluation (facilitator)
11:40	End
Participants	Frank, Sara, Laura, Peter, Michael, Marc,Claudia,Paul (from 11:00)

2.4 Meeting roles

As a single person barely can manage the whole meeting process on his own, one should define and assign roles to the team members to assist in the meeting. This extension of responsibilities of the meeting participants also helps to develop the sense of community needed in meetings (comp. [STR03], p. 50). The most basic rules that can be found throughout the literature are

- Leader
- Facilitator
- Scribe
- Note taker
- Timekeeper
- Participants

which will be described in the following.

Leader

The leader, as the name suggests, *leads* the group through the meeting by assuring that the group stays on track with the meeting purpose. He will take care that the team sticks to the "key outcomes, the overall's goals of the team, and the organizational context of the team's goals" ([PAR06], p. 17). So basically the leader manages the content side of the meeting (comp. [SMI00], chapter. 5 - facilitator).

Facilitator

In contrast to the leader, who manages the content of the meeting, the facilitator manages the people-side (comp. [SMI00], chapter. 5 – facilitator). His tasks include the following:

- Manage and encourage participation
- Handle conflicts
- Use tools and techniques such as 5 Whys

Scribe

The task of the Scribe is to keep a live record of the groups thoughts by posting them on a whiteboard (see Illustration 2: A whiteboard) or on a flip chart (see Illustration 1: A flip chart) (see [STR03], p. 56). This allows the group to refer to ideas and key points during the discussion.
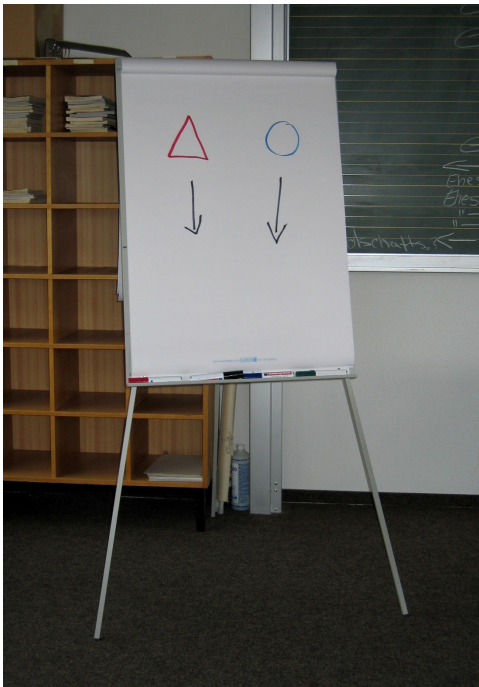
Illustration 1: A flip chart

Illustration 2: A whiteboard

Note taker

The note taker is responsible for taking a record of the key meeting outcomes. He also should write down (see [PAR06], p. 18, and [STR03], p. 58):

- the actions that were decided (see chapter Actions)
- the list of participants that attended respectively that were absent
- the date, time and place of the next meeting if there is one
- open issues
- key discussion points

After the meeting the note taker will finalize the minutes, based on the notes he took, and distribute them to the recipients (see chapter Minutes).

Timekeeper

The timekeeper is the person that is aware of the time. He will warn the group when the allotted time for an item is about to exceed and tell them when the time is up.

Participants

The rest of the people, but also the ones with assigned roles, build the group of participants. The responsibilities of the participants are to:

- prepare for the meeting

- be on time

- participate in the discussions

- stay focussed on the agenda objectives

As the meeting manager you should help the participants to achieve their responsibilities by reminding them before the meeting. A possible way is by attaching a list of questions to the meeting agenda that is sent to all participants (see [STR03], p. 40):

- Do you know the purpose of this meeting?
- Do you have an agenda?
- Do you know your role?
- Do you follow the rules for good meetings?

It is important to mention that the roles don't necessarily need to be different persons, as probably is the case in most meetings. The leader can also be the facilitator, but then the role is a very difficult one and need to be prepared properly. If there is a leader and facilitator, the facilitator can also play the role of the timekeeper, as he manages the people-side of the meeting. The scribe's part can also be left out if needed, since it's not an absolutely necessary role, but it makes things much easier during the meeting.

> As John will be the meeting's leader and doesn't want to play also the rule of the facilitator, he assigns Marc, John's personal assistant, the rule as meeting facilitator. He knows that Marc has already facilitated several meetings before and is able to play the role as the facilitator. John assigns Laura the role of the scribe, Sara will be the note-taker and Frank agreed to play the role as timekeeper.

2.5 Ground rules

The ground rules define the rules for behaviour for the team during the meeting. They should basically promote respect between the team members, encourage collaboration and improve meeting efficiency (see [PAR06], p. 46), without being too legislative. They can be pre-established by the manager or the organisation, or discussed and approved by the team at the beginning of the meeting. While the latter takes more time of the meeting, it will be very probable that the team pays more attention to the ground rules, since they just discussed them and everybody agreed to them.

As John has now done all the preparation - he defined the purpose, set up the list of participants, created the agenda and assigned the roles to the team - he is about to send the agenda. To remind every participant of the ground rules that GMC has established to improve the meetings of the company, John attaches the rules to the agenda and sends out the email:

As a participant I will:
- Show up for every meeting
- Read and prepare agenda
- Participate actively
- Remain focused on agenda
- Respect others

3. Starting the meeting

Management is nothing more than motivating other people.

(Lee Iacocca)

To prepare the room and to check if everything works properly, like e.g. the beamer, you should arrive at least a few minutes earlier. This also allows you to greet the members personally as they arrive (see [PAR06], p. 42).

Start on time

The meeting should be started on time, since starting late shows disrespect to those persons that arrived on time and will encourage latecomers to continue arriving late (see [PAR06], p. 10). Of course, if a very important person like the CEO of a company arrives late, the group should wait to start the meeting. If the leader, namely you as the manager, arrives late, the facilitator should already start the meeting, since everyone has the agenda and is prepared (comp. [STR03], p. 43).

Welcoming

If you want your meeting to become a success, you have to establish a sense of community during the meeting that allows the group to work productively and efficiently. To do this, you should already start at the beginning to try to create this atmosphere by starting with a smooth welcome. You should start the meeting with a warm-up of the team, to break the ice between people who don't know each other and to generate a team feeling (see [STR03], p. 44). This can be done for instance by asking every member to introduce themselves and letting them explain what their hopes and fears for this meetings are.

Agenda review

After the introduction, the facilitator should state once again the overall purpose of the meeting. Then he should go through the agenda reviewing each item and explaining what the key outcomes of each item will be (comp. [PAR06], p. 44).

Before continuing with the meeting process, the facilitator should remind the participants again of the ground rules, that apply for the meeting.

4. Conducting the meeting

A good manager doesn't try to eliminate conflict; he tries to keep it from wasting the energies of his people. If you're the boss and your people fight you openly when they think that you are wrong - that's healthy.
(Robert Townsend)

After the meeting has started, it's the facilitators responsibility to guide the team through the agenda, item by item (comp. [STR03], p. 63). The facilitator should share the information, conduct the discussions, manage the participation and get a decision.

4.1 Decisions

At the end of each meeting agenda item, you want to get a decision. Whether it is the follow-up decision after analyzing and solving a problem, or the decision on a question you already have had before (decision-making meeting). There exist basically four types of decision-making one can use to get the decision, which will be explained in the following.

Managerial or autocratic

In this approach the manager himself makes the decision, either with input from the participants or completely on his own (comp. [PAR06], p. 84). Therefore, the manager *rules* in an autocratic style. This style of decision-making can sometimes be more appropriate than using a more democratic way like consensus or vote and is probably the most efficient (see. [STR03], p. 19).

Vote or democratic

A simple approach to getting a decision is voting, either by plurality, that is, the choice with the most votes wins, or by majority, that is, the choice that gained at least 50% of the vote wins. However, if there is a draw, one can still go over to managerial decision-making to choose from the choices, or do another vote. This type is useful when the manager wants a majority of people in the company that support the decision (comp. [PAR06], p. 86).

Consensus or averaging

Consensus means that the group tries to get a compromise that everyone can live with. This is probably the most cooperative way, since everyone contributes to the consensus and no one opposes it. However, to get a decision can take quite a while, since it might be

difficult to bring together the different ideas or points (comp. [STR03], p. 22). This technique is especially useful when the commitment of all people is needed or the decision has a certain importance to the team (comp. [PAR06], p. 90).

Delegation or expert

From the manager's point of view, the last type of decision-making is probably the easiest. He simple delegates the decision-making process to another person. This option is the best one, if the members of the team don't know enough about the subjects or are not in the position to decide on that matter (comp. [PAR06], p. 87).

As John's takes a further look on what he wants to achieve with this meeting:

- to get a decision about a web-based ordering system
- to find the root causes for the late deliveries
- get a new marketing strategy for the new M3000

he thinks about the types of decision he will use. Since a web-based ordering system will almost effect the entire company, he wants to get a consensus about that, with which everyone can live. As the causes for the late deliveries are very seriously, he thinks that it would be best to just decide over the action to be done on his own. For the new marketing strategy of the M3000 he believes that the best way to get a decision about that will be to just vote over it.

4.2 Meeting disruptions

As probably no meeting will go straightforward to the decisions without any problems, the most common problems, that usually occur during meetings, will be explained in the following along with a way of how to handle them.

Late arrivals and no-shows

If a person arrives late, the meeting should not be disrupted by the facilitator unless the person arrives late regularly. This minimizes the effect of the interruption of the meeting and allows the group to stay on track with the meeting agenda (see [STR03], p. 137). Of course the disruption can be handled differently, if there is a ground rule saying what to do in case of a late arrival. If the late-arrival becomes common, the leader should ask the person about the reasons after the meeting.

Conflicts

As stated in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, conflicts don't have to be bad for

meetings per se. "A meeting which airs differences of opinions and exchanges of strongly held beliefs is a good meeting" ([SMI00], chapter 6.5). However the facilitator needs to control the differences among the parties/people, by insisting on following the agenda items and not get off the topic. If the persons get emotionally, one should tell them to stick to the ground rules.

Low participation

Basically, low participation can have two reasons, either the person is a shy person and doesn't have the heart to actively participate, or the person is bored by the meeting/topic and/or is thinking about other things.

Shy persons

If the person is a shy person, the facilitator should encourage the person to contribute to the meeting by establishing eye contact and asking them about their opinion. This should usually be done by circling through the group, asking everyone about their opinions, to not offend the shy person (comp. [STR03], p. 141).

Disinterest

If the facilitator notes that the person doesn't participate because he is disinterested in the topic, the facilitator should call the person by name and ask them questions (see [STR03], p. 139). If that doesn't change the situation, the facilitator should ask them after the meeting what's wrong.

Dominant persons and talk-a-lots

If a person dominates a meeting, by either just talking a lot or knowing everything better, the facilitator should intervene. He should thank the person for his contribution and call another person to ask him about his opinion. If the person interrupts, the facilitator should say to him e.g. "Hold that thought for now and let Barry finish his statement" (see [SMI00], chapter 6.4).

Negativity

Sometimes people tend to criticise every idea that arises. When such a situation appears, the facilitator should rephrase the critical comment into positive language and ask the person what his suggestions for a solution are (see [STR03], p. 151).

Side conversations

If side conversations get disruptive, because the people don't talk about the issue or don't stop their chat after a while, the facilitator should establish eye contact or slowly go around the table, to stand behind them. If this doesn't stop the conversations, he should ask them if they want to contribute their ideas to the group (see [SMI00], chapter 6.3).

During the meeting, Marc, the facilitator and personal assistant of John, notices that Laura keeps very silent during the first discussion about the web-based ordering system. Probably because she still doesn't know most of the people, since she joined the company just one month ago. Marc solves this situation by calling everyone's opinion in round robin manner.

4.3 Tools and techniques

There exist a huge list of tools and techniques one can use to support the meeting. Basically, they can be divided into three different categories (comp. [STR03], p. 111):

- Identify the causes of problems
- Generate ideas
- Organise, analyze and prioritize options

As these tools and techniques can be found throughout the literature, only a list of the most used ones for each category will be presented among with a common representative for each category (tools and techniques derived from [STR03]).

Identify the causes of problems

If you are holding a problem-solving meeting, you can use the following techniques to identify the causes for the problem:

- Repetitive why
- Cause and effect analysis

Repetitive why

The repetitive why analysis is a very simple technique to get the cause of a problem. It is as simple as asking why again and again to the problem, until the root cause has been defined.

Since one of the meeting's goals is to find the root cause of the late deliveries, Marc uses a repetitive why analysis to get the causes for the problems.

Marc: Why were the deliveries late ?

Laura: Because the orderings were shipped late.

Marc: Why were the orderings shipped late ?

Sara: Because the ordering system is overloaded.

Marc: Why is the ordering system overloaded ?

Frank: Because we haven't been able to buy the additional server to overcome the overload.

Marc: Why haven't we been able to buy the additional server ?

Michael: Because the budget of the IT department has been reduced.

Generate ideas

If you need to generate ideas, you can use these techniques:

- Brainstorming
- Mindmapping
- Displayed thinking

Brainstorming

The idea of brainstorming is to encourage creative thinking and generate a large set of ideas (see [STR03], p . 116). Every participant can contribute freely or in round robin manner any idea regarding the topic, without any restrictions. No contributions will be asked or criticised.

Marc uses brainstorming, to generate ideas for the marketing strategy of the new M3000:			
Nation wide TV-spot	Great sound	Create a new need	Motor-sport sponsoring
Great investment!	Motor-sport advertising	Advertisement	Comparison in product tests
Super-bowl advertisement	Cheap price!	Ecological – Saving the environment	Internet - selling
Compatible to every car!	Internet advertisement	A new car, a new muffler.	Radio-spot

Organize, analyze and prioritize options

The following techniques can be used to organise and prioritize options.

- Affinity diagram
- PMI
- Six thinking hats
- Effort-impact matrix

Effort-impact matrix

This technique is used to prioritize ideas or tasks. Every idea/task will be assigned to a quadrant in the effort-impact grid according to its effort (based on time, money or other resources) and its impact on the business (see Illustration 3: Effort-Impact Grid from http://www.thelgroup.com/). The priority of the ideas can than be derived from the quadrant number, where quadrant one has the highest priority and quadrant four has the lowest.
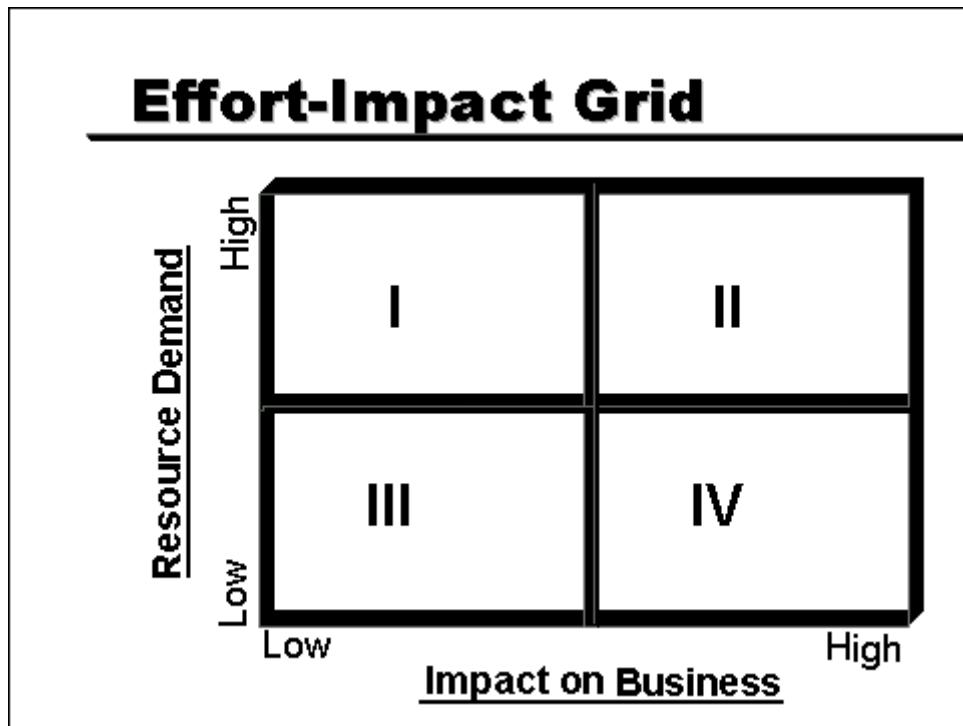

Illustration 3: Effort-Impact Grid from http://www.thelgroup.com/

After sorting the ideas, generated by the brainstorming, Marc uses an effort-impact matrix to prioritize the ideas.

	Effort/Cost		Impact	
	low	high	low	high
Nation wide TV-spot		X		X
Motor-sport sponsoring		X		X
Motor-sport advertisement	X		X	
Super-bowl advertisement		X	X	
Radio-spot	X		X	
Internet advertisement	X			X

Assigning each of the ideas a quadrant, Marc gets the priorities:

1. Internet advertisement
2. Nation wide TV-spot, Motor-sport sponsoring
3. Motor-sport advertisement, Radio-spot
4. Super-bowl advertisement

5. Closing and following up on the meeting

> *A real decision is measured by the fact that you've taken a new action. If there's no action, you haven't truly decided.*
> (Tony Robbins)

The last step in every meeting is the closing of the meeting. The meeting should be closed in a *proper* way, since it gives the participants a feeling of accomplishment and allows you to eliminate the last confusions that still exist (see [PAR06], p. 137). In the following will be explained, what you need to do to close the meeting in a professional manner.

5.1 Actions

However, before you end your meeting, you should decide on the actions to follow the decisions made during the meeting. As stated in the quote above, it's very important that on each decision made follows an appropriate action, since the initial purpose of your meeting is to make a decision on how to act in a certain situation or how to solve a certain problem. The action defines:

- *Content*
  The content defines what has to be done to implement the decision made or the solution for the problem

- *Responsibility*
  The responsibility shows who is going to do the work.

- *Time line*
  The time line defines when the action is due.

As with the agenda items, you can also decide on the meeting actions in a managerial way, through consensus or vote, or to just delegate the decision.

After the team decided about the meeting topics,

- Decision about a web-based ordering system
  --> The team decided through consensus that a web-based ordering system is the best option and shall be established until 1st of June 2009

- Root causes for the late deliveries
  --> The team found out that the root cause of the late deliveries is the decrease of the budget of the IT department and John decided to increase it to solve the problem.

- The marketing strategy of the new M3000
  --> Using the prioritized ideas, the team voted for using internet advertisement as the new marketing strategy.

the team discussed the actions using consensus:

1. Frank will publish a bid invitation for web design companies to build the web-based ordering system until 3rd of May and will set up a meeting for the decision about the supplier until 1st of June.

2. Michael will increase the budget of the IT department to buy the additional server by 10.000€ until 1st of April, Frank will then initiate the ordering of the new server.

3. Peter will launch the internet advertisement campaign until 15th of February

5.2 Ending the meeting

The meeting should be ended on the scheduled time by the facilitator. This shows respect to the participants and avoids the frustration of never ending meetings (comp. [STR03], p. 90). You should end the meeting by doing a quick summary and an evaluation of the meeting.

Summary

You should review every single item of the meeting agenda, the decisions that where made and the actions that will follow (see [PAR06], p. 137). This also gives the participants the feeling that they have achieved something (comp. [STR03], p. 91).

Evaluation

After summarizing the main points of the agenda, you should take the time to do a short evaluation of the meeting. This is to get response from the participants about what they thought about the meeting. If it was useful, what could be improved, etc. This can be done in several ways, by doing an open discussion, by asking everyone in round robin manner, or by preparing a quick multiple choice sheet.

Finally you should thank every team members for the participation in this meeting and their contributions to it.

After Marc has summarized the meeting and conducted the evaluation, John thanks everybody for their contribution, and closes the meeting. Finally he asks Sara to distribute the meeting minutes by 12am the next day.

5.3 Minutes

The minutes are the documentation of what happened in the meeting and what is scheduled to happen after the meeting (comp. [STR03], p. 104). They are to be distributed by the note-taker not later than 24h hours after the meeting. The meetings should contain the following items (taken from [PAR06], p. 147 and [STR03], p. 104/105):

- Date, time, and location of the meeting.
- Names of members and guests present as well as names
- List of people invited but absent
- List of key outcomes and decisions.
- Actions to be taken
- If necessary: Next meeting date, time, and location.
- Meeting evaluations
- Links to or attachments of relevant documents like e.g.
  - Agenda
  - Reports prepared for the meeting

After the meeting, Sara creates the minutes for the meeting and distributes it to the participants by email attached with the agenda, the reports presented and the meeting evaluation.

Meeting minutes

June 14th, 2008, 10:00 to 11:35,

Participants: John, Frank, Sara, Laura, Peter, Michael, Marc, Claudia, Paul (from 11:00)

Key outcomes and discussions:

- Decision about a web-based ordering system
  --> The team decided through consensus that a web-based ordering system is the best option and shall be established until 1st of June 2009

- Root causes for the late deliveries
  --> The team found out that the root cause of the late deliveries is the decrease of the budget of the IT department and John decided to increase it to solve the problem.

- The marketing strategy of the new M3000
  --> Using the prioritized ideas, the team voted for using internet advertisement as the new marketing strategy.

Actions:

1. Frank will publish a bid invitation for web design companies to build the web-based ordering system until 3rd of May and will set up a meeting for the decision about the supplier until 1st of June.

2. Michael will increase the budget of the IT department to buy the additional server by 10.000€ until 1st of April, Frank will then initiate the ordering of the new server.

3. Peter will launch the internet advertisement campaign until 15th of February

Attached:

- Meeting agenda
- Meeting evaluation
- Reports

6. Summary

Every meeting costs time, money and people's energy. Therefore, it is necessary to follow some guidelines to create a meeting that gets results.

Preparation

Every meeting should be carefully planned. This begins by asking what the purpose of the meeting is and clearly defining it. If there is no purpose for the meeting, one should not hold the meeting. To save the time and energy of the persons, the meeting manager should intensely think about the participants, asking for everyone how he can contribute to the meeting. If he cannot contribute, he shall not be invited. The next task is to create the meeting agenda which contains the time line and the key outcomes of each agenda item. The meeting agenda needs to be distributed at least 24h prior conducting the meeting to allow the participants to prepare themselves. Participants can play different roles (facilitator, note taker, timekeeper, etc.) to help the manager during the meeting. To keep the meeting focused, the participants should follow previously established ground rules.

Starting the meeting

The meeting should be started with a short warm-up of the group, followed by the review of the agenda.

Conducting the meeting

The facilitator guides through the meeting, by conducting the discussion and getting decisions. There are basically four ways of getting a decision: managerial, democratic, consensus and delegation. To help the decision making process, there exist tools and techniques for identifying the causes of problems, generating ideas and for organizing, analyzing and prioritizing options. Since no meeting will be without any disruption, we've seen guidelines to handle these disruptions.

Closing and following up on the meeting

No meeting will be successful if there are no actions that follow on the decisions made. The actions describe what has to be done by whom and by when. After the actions have been decided, the meeting should be ended with a summary of the main points, followed by an evaluation of the meeting. Finally, the meeting minutes, i.e. the key outcomes and actions, have to be distributed to the participants.

Bibliography

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