Effective meetings

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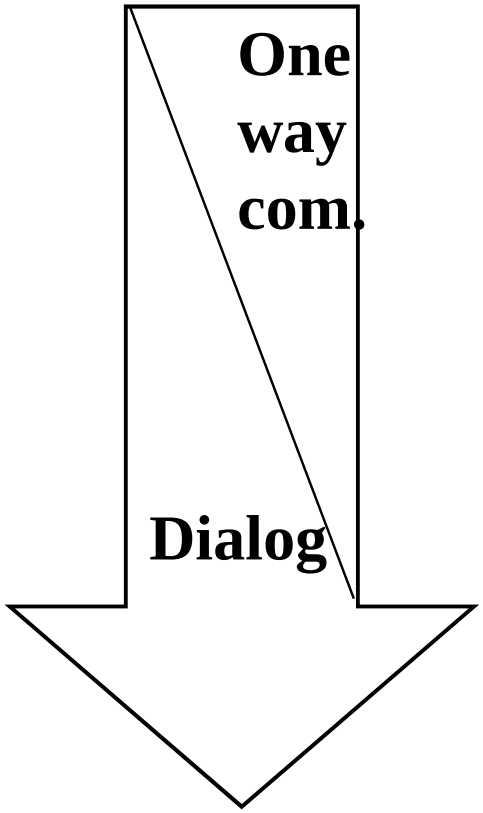
Types of meetings



- Information
- Instruction
- Consultation/negotiation
- Decision-making
- Problem-solving
- Exchange of ideas
- (Socializing)

The “group meeting”

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Effective meetings

- Call a meeting for a *reason*
- *Before* the meeting:
  - *Prepare* the meeting: Chairman prepares agenda with assigned responsibles (default: Himself) and time/location/duration
  - Send out *invitations* (incl. agenda, suppl. material, etc.) in due time
  - *Assign* roles: Chairman, Secretary,…
- *At* the meeting
  - *Listen* and *participate*
  - *Reach* decisions and consensus – wrap up
  - Assign *action items* clearly – must be in the Minutes of Meeting
- *After* the meeting:
  - (review the meeting)
  - Send out MoMs (Minutes of Meeting) ASAP
  - *Follow up* on decisions and action items.

Meeting roles

- Chairman
  - Conducts and moderates the discussion
  - Ensures that focus is kept, stops off-topic discussions/talk
  - Ensures everyone is heard in the discussion
  - Stops ongoing discussions to reach conclusions
  - Ensures time frame is kept
- Secretary
  - Writes minutes of meeting during meeting, collects supplementary material, sends minute to stakeholders for comments
- Attendees
  - Listen
  - Participate (very important)
  - Respect the right of others to talk and the democracy of the group

Example: Agenda of meeting (template)

Agenda of Meeting

Date: 07.08.2011 11:00 a.m., group room
Chair: TG
Attendees: TG, PAH, LAMO, THJE, HH

Agenda:
1. Approval of last meeting's minute
2. Status (all)
3. RFID Sensor investigations (LAMO)
4. Computer Vision Algorithm (PAH)
5. Discussion on the road ahead (TG/all)
6. AOB "Any Other Business" - an item for free miscellaneous points

Minutes of Meeting

- The Minutes of Meeting (”MoM” or just ”minutes”) are very important
  - Among other things a contract in the group
  - A point to return to to track decisions
- Contents:
  - date/time of meeting,
  - chairman,
  - attendees/absentees/AWOLs,
  - agenda,
  - resumé of discussions and their conclusions
  - decisions made
  - action items and assignees
- Minutes should be written during the meeting and sent out ASAP afterwards with request for comments

Example: Minutes of meeting (template)

Minutes of Meeting

Date: 07.08.2011 11:00 a.m, group room
Chair: TG
Attendees: TG, PAH, LAMO, THJE
Absentees: HH

Agenda:
1. Approval of last meeting's minute
2. Status (All)
3. RFID Sensor investigations (LAMO)
4. Camera Vision Algorithm (PAH)
5. Discussion on the road ahead (TG/all)
6. AOB "Any Other Business" - an item for free miscellaneous points

Ad 1:
Approved

Ad 2:
PAH explained the status of establishment of the connection to ....., etc. etc.

Next meeting: 14.08.2011 in group room

An approach to discussions: Six Thinking Hats

- how to practise parallel thinking

The White Hat is neutral, objective and non-emotional. White is effectively colourless. With this thinking hat you focus on the data available. You look at the facts and figures and see what you can learn. You try to extrapolate past trends from historical data. You search for gaps in your knowledge, and either try to fill them or take account of them.

The Red Hat by contrast is the emotional hat, where you can present views based on your intuition without explanation, or justification of your emotions. "Wearing" the red hat, you look at problems using intuition, gut reaction, and emotion. You should also try to think how other people will react emotionally. Try to understand the responses of people who do not fully know your reasoning.

The Black Hat is gloomy and negative. You take time to look at the risks and why a proposed solution will fail. Black Hat thinking helps to make your plans "tougher" and more resilient. It can also help you to spot fatal flaws and risks before you embark on a course of action. Black Hat thinking is one of the real benefits of this technique, as many successful people get so used to thinking positively that often they cannot see problems in advance. This leaves them under-prepared for difficulties.

The Yellow Hat is sunny and optimistic and you take time to be hopeful. . The yellow hat helps you to think positively. It is the optimistic viewpoint that helps you to see all the benefits of the decision and the value in it.

The Green Hat stands for the creation of new ideas, concepts and perceptions. Green is the colour of plants that grow from tiny seeds and the creativity of nature. When you are wearing the Green hat you are concerned with change, and escaping old ideas in order to find better ones. It is a freewheeling way of thinking, in which there is little criticism of ideas.

The Blue Hat stands for process, control, or taking an overview. As the sky is over all of us, and blue is the colour of the sky, then wearing a blue hat means taking time to look from a higher and wider perspective to see whether you are addressing the right issue. This is the hat worn by people chairing meetings.

This lesson's assignment

- Prepare an agenda for your next meeting in the group
- Assign roles (chairman/secretary) and Action Items for the meeting: Who is going to prepare what?
- (Not today). Conduct the meeting according to the agenda and evaluate it afterwards. Did you get the results we sought?

another meeting
another cup of
coffee