Fearless Facilitation!™

How to Lead Effective Meetings

Participant Materials

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Pre-Workshop Assessment

For each statement below, circle the number that reflects the level of your knowledge and skills before completing the Workshop. At the conclusion of the Workshop, you will complete a Post-Workshop Assessment and compare your ratings to those on the Pre-Workshop Assessment.

1. **I can describe the three primary responsibilities of a meeting facilitator.**

   High   4   3   2   1   Low

2. **I am able to effectively manage differences of opinions that surface during meetings.**

   High   4   3   2   1   Low

3. **I can successfully manage behaviors that could disrupt the process and results of meetings.**

   High   4   3   2   1   Low

4. **I can articulate the steps in a decision-making process.**

   High   4   3   2   1   Low

5. **I can lead meeting participants to reach a consensus on actions to be taken.**

   High   4   3   2   1   Low

6. **I can explain why it is important to conclude meetings with definitive next steps.**

   High   4   3   2   1   Low

7. **I know what my post-meeting responsibilities are as a facilitator.**

   High   4   3   2   1   Low

8. **I am confident and competent in my ability to lead efficient and productive meetings.**

   High   4   3   2   1   Low

Introduction

This workshop is designed to build confidence and competence in leading effective meetings.

Meetings are a medium through which organizations communicate information, share ideas, plan strategies and tactics, gather input on issues, solve problems, discuss organizational goals and objectives, reach decisions on courses of action, and follow through on commitments.

When conducted effectively, meetings are powerful drivers of corporate success. When conducted ineffectively, meetings drain the energy of associates, fail to capitalize on rich diversity and talents, and squander the time and high cost of bringing associates together to address organizational issues.

The Workshop focuses on:

- The **roles and responsibilities** of fearless facilitators.
- The **knowledge and skills** of fearless facilitators.

Organizations expect effective and productive meetings. This means people who lead meetings must know how to achieve desired results, and manage relationships and process at the same time.

By the end of this Workshop, you will be prepared to fulfill your organization's expectations for effective and productive meetings.

Purpose and Desired Outcomes

The purpose of the Workshop is to enhance your knowledge and to lead effective meetings. When you have completed this Workshop, you will be able to:

- Lead effective meetings.
- Prepare meeting attendees to participate effectively.
- Strike the balance between purpose, process, and participation.
- Make optimal use of people's time and talents.
- Exhibit the confidence and competence of a fearless facilitator.

You will experience …

- Pre- and Post-Assessments for self-evaluating knowledge and skills.
- A variety of discussions and exercises that cumulatively build tactics to lead meetings that produce beneficial results.
- Video demonstrations of responsibilities and tactics.
- Applications of tactics through practices and feedback.
- Additional activities based on your organization's needs.

Agenda

- ❑ Introductory Activities
- ❑ Roles and Responsibilities of Fearless Facilitators of Meetings
- ❑ Tactics for Each Responsibility
- ❑ DVD/Video Models
- ❑ Next Steps and Wrap-up Activities

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Ground Rules (or "Agreements")

- Start and end the meeting at agreed upon times.

- Respect the ideas and opinions of others.

- Invite others to share their ideas and opinions.

- It is okay to respectfully disagree with others.

- Limit conversations to agenda items.

- Meet all agreed upon responsibilities before, during, and after the meeting.

- Turn off cell phones and beepers.

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Make amendments, additions, or deletions as decided in the discussion about the Ground Rules listed above.

Estimating the Cost of Meetings

1. Write the *estimated* number of hours per week you spend in meetings; for example, team meetings, department meetings, staff meetings, project meetings, problem-solving meetings, planning meetings, information exchange meetings, budget meetings, performance review meetings, etc.

   _____

2. Multiply the number you wrote for #1 by the number of weeks you work per year (exclude vacation weeks).

   _____

3. Multiply the number you wrote for #2 by your *average hourly wage*. If you are a salary employee, approximate an hourly wage by dividing your annual salary by 2,080 (average number of hours worked each year).

   $_____

4. **Add 35%** to the number you wrote for #3 to account for administrative and overhead costs (preparations for meetings, additional resource time, printed materials, meeting room overhead costs, refreshments, etc.).

   $_____

5. Add the dollar amounts in #3 and #4.

   $_____

The dollar amount you wrote for #5 is the *approximate* annual cost to your organization just for you to participate in meetings. Consider the cost for all associates in your organization who attend meetings.

Observation Notes for Video: Preparation Pitfalls

Use this form to take notes as you observe the video.

Craig (facilitator) is setting up for a meeting. Perhaps Craig does not understand all of the pre-meeting details he needs to address to assure an effective meeting. After Craig's demonstration, we will discuss your observations and reactions.

1. How do Craig's actions impact the meeting participants?

2. How do Craig's actions impact his credibility as a meeting facilitator?

3. How might Craig's lack of preparation affect the quality of the meeting?

4. Reference the flipchart titled "Characteristics of Ineffective Meetings." Which of the characteristics does Craig exhibit?

Fearless Facilitator's Roles and Responsibilities

Strike the balance between **purpose, process,** and **participation**.

| Task or results of the meeting |
| Manage the Environment |

| Optimize Participation |
| Manage the Process |

RESPONSIBILITIES

Manage the Environment Everything you do to promote comfort and productivity, such as making sure the right resources, materials, and equipment are available, as well as attending to the physical layout and temperature of the room.	❑ **Preparing for a Meeting** ❑ **Setting up for a Meeting** ❑ **Getting the Best out of Meeting Participants** ❑ **Resolving Differences of Opinion** ❑ **Managing Disruptive Behaviors** ❑ **Facilitating a Decision-making Process** ❑ **Building Consensus for Decisions and Actions** ❑ **Concluding a Meeting** ❑ **Following a Meeting**
Manage the Process Everything you do to keep the meeting focused and on track. You are responsible for having an agenda, allowing the right amount of time (or adjusting the time), generating helpful discussion, and documenting key points, decisions, or topics for later discussion.	
Optimize Participation Everything you do to inspire participants and provide them an opportunity to share their experiences, thoughts, ideas, concerns, and wisdom. Making sure the right people are in attendance. These are people who need to be at the meeting due to their knowledge or role within the organization—this lays the foundation for appropriate participation. Using a variety of facilitation techniques will help keep participation active and fitting.	

The following pages are samples of exercises involved with putting the responsibilities and observations of the workshop into practice.

Responsibility: Preparing for a Meeting

Why the responsibility is important.

Meetings are effective when they focus on a defined Purpose, Desired Outcomes, and an Agenda. The focus is not accidental or incidental. It is the result of thorough planning by fearless facilitators. If you neglect to prepare, you will stumble through meetings, and meeting participants will quickly lose faith in your ability to guide them efficiently and effectively toward the achievement of Desired Outcomes.

Twelve Tactics for Preparing a Meeting

1. Thoroughly study issues that pertain to the content of a meeting; for example, the organization's past history with the issues, current status of the issues, past meetings that have focused on the issues, and decisions and/or action steps taken concerning the issues.

2. Define the Purpose and Desired Outcomes of the meeting.

   A **Purpose Statement** begins with an infinitive; for example, to discuss, propose, inform, analyze, or research.

   Sample Purpose Statement: To explore proposed work processes in order to reduce the time required from product design to product delivery.

   Desired Outcomes begin with a noun; for example, a plan for, a decision to, an agreement on, or action steps for.

   Sample Desired Outcomes:
   - A plan of action to test proposed work processes.
   - Identification of personnel to test the processes.
   - A deadline date for a decision on the most appropriate work process.

3. Draft a list of possible **Agenda** items. Agenda items are usually related to the Desired Outcomes of a meeting.

   Sample Agenda items for a meeting to discuss a test of a new work process:
   - Describe the current work process.
   - Discuss problems with the current process and the need for a change.

- Brainstorm possible alternatives.
- Plan action steps to test several of the proposed alternatives.
- Identify personnel most appropriate to conduct and participate in the tests.
- Agree on next steps.

4. After you have drafted an Agenda, you might decide if a meeting is necessary to achieve the Purpose and Desired Outcomes and to address Agenda items.

   Many meetings are unnecessary. Perhaps the Purpose, Desired Outcomes, and Agenda items can be achieved through other means; for example, e-mail, telephone, or one-on-one conversations. For instance, communicating information that is not complex and would not evoke confusion or questions might not necessitate the cost and time incurred by a meeting.

   Meetings are appropriate when diverse talents, ideas, and opinions are valued to make a decision about a course of action; for example, exploring the feasibility of bringing a new product or service to market, or attempting to solve a nagging operational problem.

   If the Purpose, Desired Outcomes, and Agenda items require a meeting, proceed with the items below.

5. Estimate the amount of time you should allot for each agenda item. For example:
   - Describe the current work process: *5 minutes*
   - Discuss problems with the current process and the need for a change: *10 minutes*
   - Brainstorm possible alternatives: *30 minutes*
   - Plan action steps to test several of the proposed alternatives: *15 minutes*
   - Identify personnel most appropriate to conduct and participate in the tests: *10 minutes*
   - Agree on next steps: *15 minutes*

   Research indicates that meetings lasting more than 1.5 hours typically become counter-productive. People lose concentration and energy. If you have more agenda items than can adequately be addressed within 1.5 hours, reduce the number by prioritizing agenda items. If all the items are important, consider chunking them into several meetings.

6. Identify and personally invite individuals whose expertise and positions in the organization are needed to provide diversity of ideas and points of view.

   Facilitators often invite the wrong participants; that is, participants who do not have the necessary expertise or information, who will not be directly or even indirectly affected by actions taken and decisions made, or who do not have decision-making authority.

7. Do not proceed with a scheduled meeting if individuals whose presence is critical are not able to attend. Reschedule the meeting. Otherwise, you will waste the time and energy of those in attendance.

8. Prepare those invited to a meeting:
   - Convince them that their presence at the meeting is important.
   - Communicate the Purpose, Desired Outcomes, and Agenda at least one week in advance of the meeting. More advance notice should be given if you are asking those invited to gather information or to bring pertinent materials.
   - Let them know the type of participation you request, for example:
     - Bring data, facts, or figures.
     - Share their ideas, opinions, and perspectives on the topics of the meeting.
     - Reflect on the ideas, opinions, and perspectives that others may have, how they differ, and how differences might be resolved.

9. Set an agreed upon meeting date, time, and location.

10. Gain up front commitment and participation by asking those invited:
    - For input regarding Purpose, Desired Outcomes, Agenda, and amend them as appropriate.
    - To assume responsibility for Agenda items within their areas of expertise.
    - To bring information and materials that will aid in achieving the Purpose and Desired Outcomes.

11. Send at least one week prior to a meeting (or whatever number of days your team or organization deems acceptable):
    - Revisions of the Purpose, Desired Outcomes, and Agenda items.
    - Information and materials pertinent to the meeting's agenda.

12. Make appropriate arrangements for a room that is conducive for a meeting: space to comfortably accommodate meeting participants, equipment, materials, and refreshments.

Responsibility: Setting up for a Meeting

Why the responsibility is important.

A facilitator who is not thoroughly organized and efficient in setting up for a meeting wastes the precious time of meeting participants, drains their energy from the start, and wastes the financial resources of an organization.

NineTactics for Setting up a Meeting

1. Set up the room and materials on the day or evening prior to the meeting, or in plenty of time before the meeting starts, keeping in mind that some participants arrive earlier than expected.

2. If not using a conference room table, arrange seats in a U-shape or square so participants can see and talk easily to other participants.

3. Provide sufficient space for participants to spread out materials.

4. Ensure all seats afford a clear view of projections and flipcharts.

5. If using a U-shape table, save either the right or left front seat for yourself. Move your chair inside the "U" so you position yourself as one of the group, not as a teacher or lecturer behind a desk or table.

6. Check that all equipment is in working order and that you are familiar with how everything works.

7. Check that overhead/PowerPoint® slides and flipcharts are arranged in the order you will use them and cover them until you are ready to use them.

8. Lay out participant materials and handouts on a side table, if available.

9. Attend to physical distractions:
   - Adjust the thermostat to a comfortable setting and re-adjust it when you sense that participants become too cold or too hot.
   - Draw blinds (if available) if some participants will be facing windows and sun glare.
   - Press the "DND" (do not disturb) button on the telephone if there is one in the room.

Practice: Writing Purpose and Desired Outcomes, and Creating an Agenda

Directions

Part 1:

1. Read the Practice Scenario on page 13.
2. Use the Practice Worksheet on page 14 to write:
   - Purpose of the meeting
   - 2–3 Desired Outcomes
   - 2–3 possible Agenda items
   - Estimate the time needed for each Agenda item
   - Consider whom you will invite to the meeting and why (the important contributions they might provide)

     Note: For "who" you will invite to the meeting, use departments and/or functional responsibilities; for example, marketing, finance, operations, production, or human resources.

3. Refer to page 8 (Responsibility: Preparing for a Meeting) to help in completing the Worksheet.

Part 2: After you have completed Part 1:

1. Pair up with a partner.
2. Take turns sharing your Purpose, Desired Outcomes, Agenda items, and the people/functions you will invite.
3. Give feedback to each other:
   - Are the Purpose and Desired Outcomes clear and understandable?
   - Are the Agenda items appropriate for the Purpose and Desired Outcomes?
   - Are the time frames for each Agenda item sufficient?
   - Will the appropriate people be invited to the meeting?

Time for the Exercise:

- Read the scenario: 2 minutes
- Write the Purpose, Desired Outcomes, and Agenda items for the meeting, who you will invite, and why: 5 minutes
- Share your work and feedback with your partner: 8 minutes (4 minutes per partner)
Total Time for the Exercise: 15 minutes

Practice Scenario

You are an associate in the Product Development Department of XYZ Corporation, a producer of personal tax reporting software. You are concerned that, because it takes so long to update tax software and to develop more sophisticated software, XYZ will lose its position as #1 in the market.

You believe a lag in development is caused by inefficient and ineffective planning meetings. Examples are:

- Meetings are scheduled with only a few days' notice.
- Agendas for meetings are not known until associates arrive at meetings.
- The Purpose and Desired Outcomes are not clearly stated.
- Associates often come to meetings without information that would have helped in discussions.
- Discussions ramble from topic to topic, are dominated by vocal associates, and often get heated.
- The V.P. of Product Development leads the meetings and often unknowingly intimidates associates from freely expressing their ideas and opinions.
- Decisions are made without sufficient data, input, or consensus.
- The same associates are in every meeting whether their expertise is pertinent to agendas or not.
- Representatives from other departments whose contributions to discussions would be valuable are not invited.
- Meetings end without plans for follow-up on issues raised.

The V.P. has agreed to your request that you facilitate a meeting to:

- Review problems you see with the current way meetings are conducted.
- Propose a systematic process and specific procedures for meetings.
- Get buy-in from associates on the process and procedures.

Use the Practice Worksheet on the following page to write a Purpose, Desired Outcomes, and an Agenda for your meeting.

Practice Worksheet

Purpose of the Meeting:

Desired Outcomes: (2–3)

Agenda items (2–3), and time frames for each item:

Representatives of functions/departments you will invite and why.

Functions/Departments	Why

Observation Notes for Video: Staying on Track: Handling an Off Topic Conversation

1. If you were Grace, what would you say or do at this point?

2. What insights does the narrator provide?

3. Grace employed three tactics for dealing with the sidebar conversation. What beneficial effects did Grace's management of the situation have on Nick and the others in the meeting?

   • Recognize the importance of Nick's comments:

   • Use a "Parking Lot" to capture Nick's comments:

   • Refocus and move on:

Key Tactics:

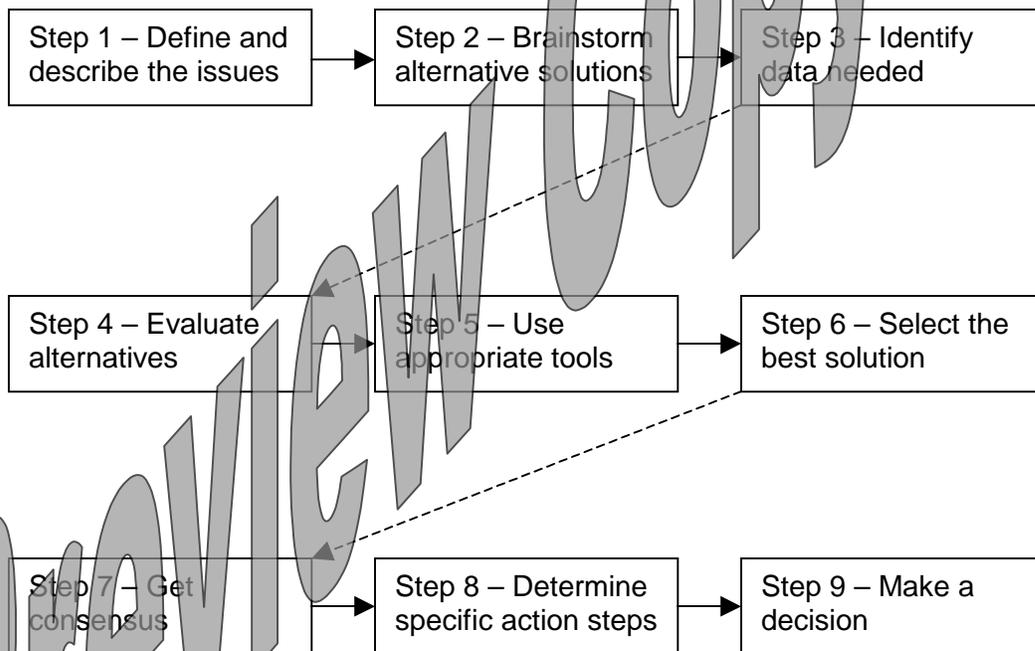✓ Recognize Importance
✓ Use "Parking Lot"
✓ Refocus and Move On

Responsibility: Facilitating a Decision-making Process

Why the responsibility is important.

An organization's success is largely the result of making wise decisions. In turn, wise decisions are the result of using a systematic decision-making process. The process requires a significant investment in expertise and time to explore issues, to evaluate alternative solutions for issues, to select the best alternative, to build consensus for supporting the alternative, to implement the alternative, and to continuously monitor the alternative's strengths and/or limitations.

Nine Steps in a Decision-making Process

Step 1 – Define and describe the issues	Step 2 – Brainstorm alternative solutions	Step 3 – Identify data needed
Step 4 – Evaluate alternatives	Step 5 – Use appropriate tools	Step 6 – Select the best solution
Step 7 – Get consensus	Step 8 – Determine specific action steps	Step 9 – Make a decision

Common Decision-making Tools

Many decision-making tools are available to assess alternative solutions for issues. Some tools are complex and require the guidance of a highly skilled and knowledgeable facilitator. Some are relatively easy to use, yet are still effective.

A characteristic of fearless facilitators is that they know their limitations, as well as their strengths. Facilitators who do not consider themselves sufficiently skilled in the use of sophisticated tools often enlist the services of an expert—someone who is knowledgeable and experienced with analytical methods and techniques.

Remember a few "rules of thumb" concerning decision-making tools:
- Use tools to help evaluate options and make critical decisions.
- Do not make decisions based on the results of just a few tools. The results of different tools often contradict one another.
- Evaluate with a variety of tools until you see a pattern for or against an alternative.

Summarized below are eight of the most common tools.

1. **Rating:** Rating uses rows to list a number of alternative solutions for an issue and columns to write a set of guidelines; for example, cost, time, and customer acceptance. Each alternative is rated on a scale, such as: "10 = High Importance" to "1 = Low Importance."

2. **Ranking:** Ranking is similar to rating. The tool has rows on which a number of alternative solutions for an issue are listed, and columns on which guidelines are listed; for example, cost, time, and customer acceptance. Each alternative is then ranked on each guideline, such as: "5 = High Priority" to "1 = Low Priority."

3. **Advantages/Disadvantages/Implications:** It is important to check each alternative course of action to assess if it is likely to improve a situation. This tool uses a table with column headings of Advantage, Disadvantage, and Implications. In the column for "Advantage," write positive effects of taking the action. In the column for "Disadvantage," write negative effects. In the column for "Implications," write down the implications and possible outcomes of taking the action, whether positive or negative. Using a scale such as "5 = High, 1 = Low," assign a value: +5 for Advantages, -5 for Disadvantages, and either +5 or -5 for Implications. The scores you assign may be quite subjective, but that is okay as long as your scores are recorded with serious thought. A strong "Advantage" score suggests that an alternative solution should be taken, whereas a strong "Disadvantage" score suggests that

Sample Format for Evaluating a Meeting

At the end of a meeting, group members may be a bit brain-weary for lengthy evaluations of the meeting. Keep it simple, but meaningful enough to provide you with feedback.

Sample evaluation questions are:

- Did we accomplish the Purpose and Desired Outcomes of the meeting?

- Did everyone have ample opportunity to express ideas and opinions?

- Did we resolve disagreements to everyone's satisfaction?

- Is everyone clear about and committed to accomplishing agreed upon next steps?

- Did the meeting move at an appropriate pace: neither too fast nor too slow?

- Was the meeting a worthwhile use of your time and expertise?

- Do you have suggestions on how we could have improved the meeting?

- Do you have other comments you wish to make about this meeting and/or future meetings?

- What went well? What do you recommend we do differently next time?