CEVO PROFESSIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

HANDBOOK FOR RUNNING BETTER MEETINGS

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1. OVERVIEW: RUNNING BETTER MEETINGS

In many organizations people dread meetings, they are perceived as big time wasters. Often this is because people don't know how to plan and run a meeting to make it productive and not tedious. There is a belief that happy people are productive, Harvard research shows that the opposite is true, productive people are happy. So by making meetings productive and efficient your people will be much happier and not dread the call to a meeting.

This handbook provides a structured approach to holding meetings and discussions to ensure more efficient and effective outcomes. Productive meetings are strategic discussions that build relationships, shared understanding, alignment and which empower high performance teams to make better decisions and take action. You can make your meetings more productive using some of these methods.

Objective:

The objective of this handbook is to provide a process to improve meeting effectiveness and productivity.

Outcomes:

Consistently short, productive meetings & discussions that improve understanding, alignment, commitment, accountability and results.

Problem definition:

Frustration, a perception of time wasting, unproductive meetings, ineffective internal communications, poor team spirit and morale, lack of commitment, weak accountability, poor results.

Design:

A structured process built around pre-planning, an agenda with a stated purpose, designated roles, focal questions, meeting ground rules, self-reflection before discussion, PGROW and tangible outcomes that produce shared understanding, team alignment, clearer decisions and/or action items.

Technology requirements:

Technology is not required for this process, though it can enhance it. Use of email/ecalendars to circulate agendas and pre-work, use of projectors, virtual online meeting applications for presentations at meetings and to capture notes, decisions and action plans from the meeting which are subsequently circulated to all participants.

2. PLAN THE MEETING

How can we spend less time in meetings and get better results from them? An effective meeting is a vehicle to exchange ideas, broaden understanding, develop relationships and ultimately make better decisions leveraging the collective knowledge and experience contained within a group. It is possible to consistently have more effective and efficient meetings with some simple planning and a structured process.

Meeting Checklist:

1. Do you have an issue/decision/strategy that requires input, understanding, collaboration and/or commitment to action from other people? *If your answer is no, then don't meet.*

2. Do you have specific objectives for the meeting? Can you state them in the form of a desired outcome? Document them and build your agenda around them. Only involve those relevant to the objective. That being said, no involvement, no engagement, no commitment, no accountability, no results.

3. Do you have an agenda? Never meet without an agenda and circulate it in advance with related preparatory / reference material as appropriate.

4. Your agenda should include:
    a. A one-sentence description of the objective for each meeting topic.
    b. Each agenda item should have a person and time limit assigned to it.

5. Ensure your technology, audio/visual equipment is working and have flipcharts, note pads and pens ready in advance.

6. The meeting chairperson should have a copy of the meeting handbook, and quickly review it as needed.

7. Every discussion should finish with:
    a. key points/issues and conclusions
    b. Decisions or assignment of action items. Action items should be documented, assigned to a specific individual and have a deadline.

8. Notes from the meeting should be circulated to all participants with a timely follow-up planned to ensure all participants are aware of the outcomes and are accountable.

3. MEET WITH A PROCESS

Facilitated Meeting / Discussion Process:

A discussion is much more effective using a structured process with defined roles, a clear objective and focal questions to guide the discussion.

1. **MEETING OBJECTIVE –** A single sentence describing the desired outcome for the agenda item/discussion (ie. "Weekly Operations Update" – Ensuring the Ops team knows what's going on).

2. **AGENDA TOPICS / FOCAL QUESTIONS** – Define each agenda item either as a topic or as a focal question that focuses the discussion. Samples – Topic "Update on Last Week's Tasks", or a focal question "What is our definition of success for the XXX initiative?".

3. **ROLES** – Designate a chairperson and a recorder. It is hard to facilitate and participate, so if the person calling the meeting wants to participate fully, then they may want to get someone else to facilitate; and the discussion will move faster if a different person takes notes.
    - **CHAIRPERSON** – The role of the chairperson is to hold the group accountable for the agenda, facilitate everyone's participation, enforce the discussion ground rules and time table.
    - **RECORDER** – The role of the recorder is only to keep notes on the major issues, conclusions, decisions, and action items.

4. **FACILITATED DISCUSSION PROCESS** – The structured process for the discussion is:
    a) **INTRODUCTION** – BEFORE the discussion takes place:
        a. the chairperson will have everyone introduce themselves
        b. the chairperson will read the ground rules, and review the agenda and provide clarification as needed
    b) **FRAME THE DISCUSSION** – For each agenda item, introduce the topic/question and frame the discussion to help people organize their thinking for the discussions.
    c) **SELF-REFLECTION** – if you want to ensure input and participation by everyone in the meeting you can start by having all participants work independently for 2-3 minutes and write down their thoughts relative to the topic. <u>NO DICUSSION SHOULD BE HAPPENING DURING THIS TIME</u>. When they have completed writing then the chairperson will start the discussion.
    d) **FACILITATED DISCUSSION** - The chairperson can use the PGROW process, being cautious to not let the first person drive the entire discussion. A good practice is to first have each person share their single most important idea on the topic to start. Once everyone has shared, then the chairperson can facilitate an in depth discussion based on a pattern or key issue that arises.
        a. The recorder will capture the conclusions, lesson's and any action items.

b. If someone brings up a point they feel is important but not directly related to the topic, create an Ideas/Issues "Backlog" on a flip chart or note page. The purpose of this is to allow the main discussion to continue on topic, and at the same time allows the individual to feel they have been heard and to capture the issue for a future discussion.
c. Near the end of the allotted time, summarize the agenda item discussion and define any conclusions, decisions or action items.
d. Once all agenda items are dealt with, "Backlog" lot items can be reviewed and the group can decide to discard, discuss, defer or recommend an action item for each point.

e) **REPORT / MEETING NOTES** – The recorder will document and share the major findings from the meeting with all attendees.

4. DISCUSSION GROUND RULES

An effective discussion must happen in an **atmosphere of trust, mutual respect and where people feel safe to share their thoughts and ideas**. It helps to **reframe the objective of the discussion as pooling knowledge and having a mutual understanding**, not determining who is **right or wrong**, and ultimately we want to make better decisions based on the **collective intelligence of the team**. The danger in most meetings is not the content but the condition of the conversation. To keep it respectful develop your own ground rules, post them in the meeting room and have people acknowledge and agree to them. Sample rules:

- Electronic etiquette – turn off cell phones, be 100% present
- PEOPLE ARE SAFE, ideas are not safe
- We will treat each other with respect, so disagree without being disagreeable
- Vegas Rules – we respect confidentiality of the meeting
- Listen generously, first to understand, then be understood
- Be additive, not repetitive
- Be bold, blunt and brief
- Encourage everyone to contribute
- Discuss ideas, issues and behaviors, not people
- Speak for yourself, not others
- Stay on topic
- Follow these rules & we'll have fun & get things done.

5. CHAIRPERSON "COACHING" SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

For the chairperson, a coaching approach to facilitation is more effective for engagement. **Use questions to drive the discussion**, avoiding giving your answers, or jumping to solution before everyone else has shared. If people go off topic, have the recorder **create a "backlog" list** to capture the idea for later review, then keep the discussion on topic. The backlog list is also an effective strategy in dealing with disagreements that may require their own meeting. Some useful questions include:

- *We haven't heard from you yet, what points did you write down?*
- *From your experience, can you give an example to explain that point?*
- *Can you help us understand your reasoning behind that point?*
- *Does everyone understand the point?*
- *What is most important in that point?*
- *Does anyone want to add to or challenge that point?*
- *What could lead other's to agree with you?*
- *How could you argue against what you just said?*
- *What specifically do you agree/disagree with about that point?*
- *What is motivating your disagreement?*
- *What specifically is unacceptable to you in that point?*
- *What would have to change for you to accept it?*
- *Are we describing the same thing in different words?*
- *Is there evidence to support that?*
- *Focusing on our objective, what points do we agree on?*
- *How does that contribute to our goal?*
- *Does anyone else have anything to add?*

6. CHAIRPERSON – 15 TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

Often the chair person must give people in the discussion feedback. These tips may help.

1. **Feedback** is communication to a person, or group, regarding the **effect their behaviour is having** on another person, the organization, the customer, or the team.
2. **Positive feedback** involves telling someone about **good performance**. Make this feedback timely, specific, and **frequent**.
3. **Positive feedback in front of a group (recognition)** is a powerful motivator. Most people want more recognition, so recognition effectively drives more of the behavior you want.
4. **Constructive feedback** alerts an individual to an area in which his performance could improve. Constructive feedback is not criticism; it is descriptive and should always be directed to the action, not the person.
5. The main purpose of **constructive feedback** is to help people understand where they stand **in relation to expected** and/or productive behaviour. One on one constructive feedback is better for sensitive people or situations, group feedback can be a more powerful influence.
6. Effective feedback always focuses on a specific **behaviour**, not on a person or their intentions which implies a value judgements of the person. (When you held competing conversations during the meeting, when Mary had the floor, you distracted the people in attendance.)
7. Effective feedback is **specific**, not general. (Saying, "The report you turned in yesterday was well-written, understandable, and made your points about the budget very effectively." Works better than, "good report.")
8. Effective feedback describes actions or behaviour that the individual **can do something about**.
9. Effective feedback involves the sharing of **information and observations**. It does **not include advice** unless you have **permission** “Can I give you some advice?” or advice was requested.
10. Effective feedback is **well timed**. Whether the feedback is positive or constructive provide the information as close to the event as possible.
11. Effective feedback involves **what or how** something was done, not why. Asking why is asking people about their motivation and provokes defensiveness.
12. The best feedback is **sincerely and honestly** provided to help others be more effective. Trust me, people will know if they are receiving it for any other reason.
13. Whenever possible, feedback that is requested is more powerful. **Ask permission to provide feedback**. Say, "I'd like to give you feedback on the presentation, is that okay with you?"
14. **Check** to make sure the other person **understood** what you communicated by getting them to paraphrase, or ask clarifying questions, or observe changed behavior or body language.
15. Effective feedback is **consistent**. If the actions are great today, they're great tomorrow. If the policy violation merits discipline, it should always merit discipline.

7. USING THE PGROW PROCESS TO PRODUCE RESULTS

If the discussion is going around in circles and you feel you aren't making progress then there is an excellent simple process you can use to re-focus your discussions and ensure you have an outcome from your efforts.

The process is very simple and it is called **PGROW** (Problem, Goal, Reality, Options, What).

PROBLEM – The first step is to get clarity on the problem/issue that is being discussed, get each person's perspective of the problem, issues or challenge. Engage everyone quickly, don't get stuck, look for the pattern of what you hear and frame the discussion based on the most common issues people agree on.

GOAL – The next step is to reframe the problem by describing a goal, an ideal outcome (a SMART goal is best), that defines what you want to achieve. This is the "why" of having the discussion, which is critical to make clear before you go on to what and how.

REALITY – Once you have the goal defined, it is time for a very free ranging and challenging discussion where you use all the processes and rules described in the other sections to keep the discussion constructive and focused. If people raise good points that are valuable but not relevant to the immediate discussion, capture them on a page (call it a "Backlog") with the understanding that you will make a decision at the end of this meeting as to the Backlog points raised require further discussion, with whom and when.

OPTIONS – During discussions when a potential solution to the issue or problem is proposed, capture it as an option and then keep the discussion going to explore what other options are available. Do not allow the discussion to simply focus on one potential solution, find some options to spark creative thinking and to engage everyone in the discussion. Once you have some options then you can use a feature comparison matrix, pros and cons comparison or less structured discussion tools to evaluate them and decide on what you will act on.

WHAT/WHO/WHEN – Finish the meeting with conclusions and decisions and be clear and specific on what is decided. What will be done, who will do it and when will it be done by? Even if the decision is to gather more information in order to have another meeting to make the decision, capture it as an action and make someone accountable for it.

8. SAMPLE AGENDA – 30 MINUTE WEEKLY HUDDLE

AGENDA

WHAT:	SALES WEEKLY HUDDLE
WHEN:	8:15am – 8:45am
WHERE:	Main Boardroom

1. **What's up?**
   - Maximum 30 second update per person.
     - Good news? Personal or Professional

2. **Performance Review & KPI numbers for this week? (group/individual KPI's if available)**
   - Outcome from last week
   - Review Key Performance Indicators – the chairperson will provide the group numbers, each person will review and provide feedback on their numbers.

3. **Challenges?**
   - Each person can explain if you are having any problems or what is holding you back from achieving your goals. The chairperson can advise if the issue should be discussed outside the meeting or added to a future meeting agenda.

4. **What is your one most important priority for this week?**
   - What is the one, most important thing you will work on to improve this week?

5. **Closing Round**
   - “Shout Out” - Each person will share a closing comment and give positive feedback to someone else in the meeting for something they’ve contributed in the discussion.

9. SAMPLE AGENDA – MONTHLY PLANNING MEETING

MEETING AGENDA

WHAT: MONTHLY OPERATIONS MEETING

WHEN: Thursday, January 12, 2018 @ 2:30pm – 4:00pm

WHERE: 12th Floor Board Room & Go-to-meeting

1. Review Agenda — 5 minutes
2. Personal Update (1 minute each - good news & goal for this week) — 10 minutes
3. Review last month's action items — 15 minutes
   a. Status – on track, off track, changed
   b. Accomplishments
   c. Challenges, Ideas, Lessons learned
4. Today's Topic(s) — 45 minutes
   a. Operational Excellence Initiative – develop 5 ideas to increase our productivity or reduce costs. Use the PGROW process to guide the discussion
5. Next Month's action items — 10 minutes
   a. What – who – when
6. Backlog Review — 5 minutes
7. Next Meeting Date:
8. Close
   a. "Shout Out" - Each person will share a closing comment and give positive feedback to someone else in the meeting for something they've contributed in the discussion.

10. SAMPLE REPORT TEMPLATE

MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

WHAT: MONTHLY OPERATIONS MEETING NOTES

WHEN: Thursday, January 12, 2018 @ 2:30pm – 4:00pm

WHERE: 12th Floor Board Room & Go-to-meeting

ATTENDEES: ____

ITEMS, ISSUES, ACTIONS

1. Stated meeting objective:

2. Review of previous month's performance:

   a. Person 1 – On track, everything completed
   b. Person 2 – off track, needs help from …
   c. Person 3 – Change in priority to do ….

3. Today's Topic(s):
   a. Topic 1) Major findings, issues, decisions or action items
   b. Topic 2) Major findings, issues, decisions or action items

4. Action Items for Next Month:

1	Describe action as an outcome	Who is responsible	Completion date
2	Describe action as an outcome	Who is responsible	Completion date
3	Describe action as an outcome	Who is responsible	Completion date
4	Describe action as an outcome	Who is responsible	Completion date

5. Backlog Review:

1	Describe issue	Decision – defer for discussion, conclusion, action item	
	describe action as an outcome	Who is responsible	Completion date
2	Describe issue	Decision – defer for discussion, conclusion, action item	
	describe action as an outcome	Who is responsible	Completion date

6. **Next Meeting:**

11. SAMPLE WEEKLY PERFORMANCE CHECKIN

One on One Performance Review Meeting Objective:

People should never wonder how they are performing. The best way to set people up for success is for their direct supervisor to have a very brief one on one weekly performance checkin meeting to keep them constantly updated on your expectations and perception of their performance. Focus on commitments and what has changed, do not review all activities.

5 Minute Weekly Checkin Agenda:

1. **What did you accomplish last week?**
   a. Accountability / follow up on last week's action commitments
   b. Give Feedback - Celebrate milestones/success; plan to fix non performance
2. **Is there anything you need to help you perform?**
   a. Discuss what is needed to clear any roadblocks
3. **What are you focused on this week?**
   a. Action items to be reviewed at next week's meeting

Manager Role:

The manager keeps the meeting on topic and enforces the ground rules. You may literally have to interrupt and reschedule big issues raised for more involved later discussions.

Notes:

- Record relevant details, action commitments and share their notes within an hour of the meeting being completed.

Performance Feedback checklist using the ACHIEVE model:

Consider these issues in advance so you can incorporate them into the discussion.

- **A**bility (Can they do it? Do they need any training?)
- **C**larify (Are they clear on what the expectations are?)
- **H**elp (Are they getting the coaching, equipment etc. to be able to perform?)
- **I**ncentive (What's in it for them if they perform?)
- **E**nvironment (Are the physical surroundings conducive to good performance?)
- **V**alidity (Why are they doing it? What are the reasons?)
- **E**valuation (Do they know what good performance looks like? How is it measured?)