

Facilitating Effective Meetings

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Outline

- What makes for a great meeting?
- Structuring meetings for effective participation
- Activity #1: Structuring an agenda
- Challenges of facilitating
- Activity #2: Managing challenging behaviours
- Resources



Why aren't more meetings like this?

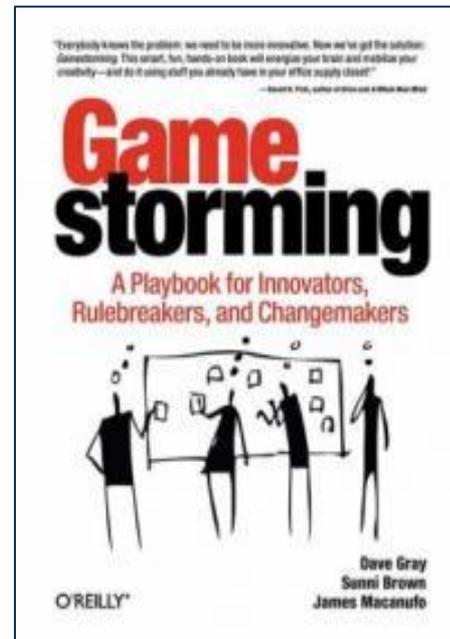
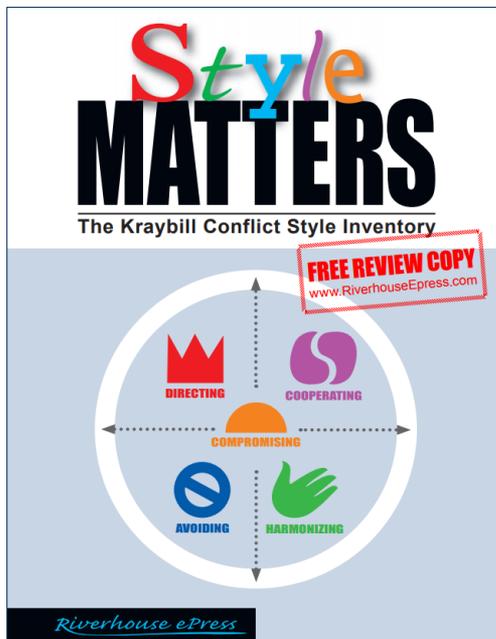
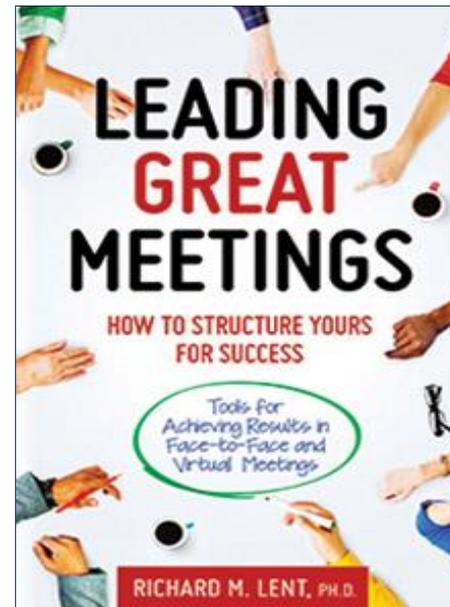
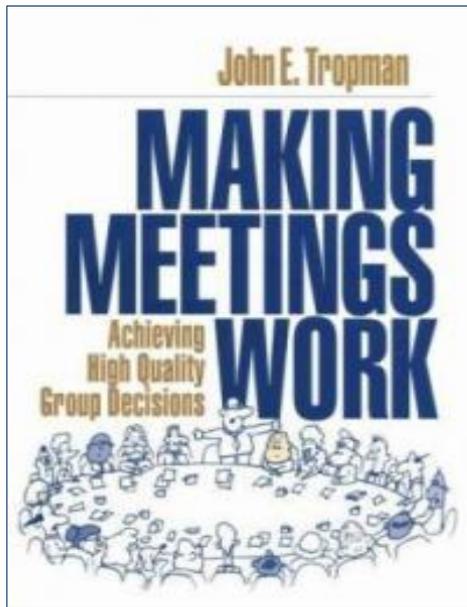
What makes for a great meeting?

The Good

- Meeting starts & ends on time
- Attendees participate in a constructive way
- Everyone has a voice
- Something actually gets done

The Bad

- Discussion is unfocused
- No clear agenda
- No clear action items result from the meeting
- Only a few people contribute / are heard



“A meeting process is a ‘deal’ between the members of the meeting and those who have called the meeting together.”

Tropman, p. 41

“The general form of the deal is that the members expect to...use their time in a productive way. On the meeting caller’s side, there is the expectation that the collectivity will act in a responsible way to assist in the development of high-quality decisions.”

Tropman, p. 41

To Build Trust

Agenda integrity

- Deal with all agenda items
- Do not deal with items not on agenda



Why do we need an agenda?

Temporal integrity

- Start on time
- End on time
- Structure the agenda and keep roughly to the timing set out



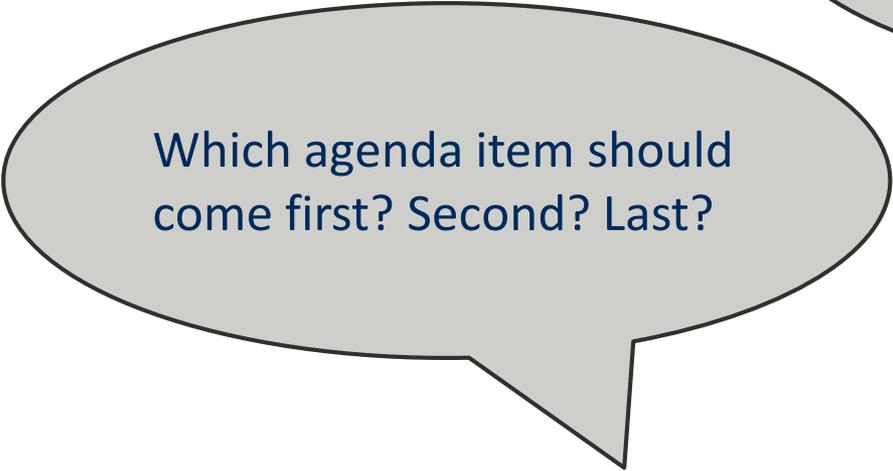
...and why stick to it?



Where do agenda items
come from?



How much time
should we spend on
each agenda item?



Which agenda item should
come first? Second? Last?



Where do agenda items
come from?

- Call for agenda items
- Standing items
- Carry forward items from last meeting
- Special guests
- Annual plan / goals / milestones for the group
- Requests from other stakeholders
- Agenda items set by Committee Chair

Structuring the Agenda

Categories of agenda items (Tropman's Agenda Bell)

First $\frac{1}{3}$ of the meeting

1. Approval of the minutes
2. Announcements (no more than 10% of meeting time)
3. Easy decision issues

Middle $\frac{1}{3}$ of the meeting

1. Moderately tough decision issues (in ascending order of difficulty)
2. Most difficult decision for today (when participants' energy and attention levels are highest)

Final $\frac{1}{3}$ of the meeting

1. For discussion only items (including blue sky thinking about upcoming issues)
2. Easiest item (adjournment, closure)

Activity #1 – Structuring an agenda

You and your neighbor have volunteered to co-chair a new Committee, the Environmental Sustainability Committee.

You have put out a call for agenda items and have received a lengthy list of suggestions.

You have **3 minutes** to place these in order.

Activity #1

(one possible “answer”)

1. Request volunteer to take minutes
2. Quick update
3. Quick update
4. Should we ban disposable cups?
5. How to reduce the amount of water we waste?
6. Brief presentation

Desired Outcomes

Sample Agenda Item	Desired Outcome
Annual publications update	Request for feedback
Initiatives to support the Strategic Plan	Generate ideas for initiatives
Update on outreach initiatives at various libraries	Share information about recent outreach initiatives
Library study zones project	Make a final decision about fall implementation

Before the Meeting...

- Send out minutes of the last meeting
- Follow up on outstanding action items
- Schedule the date and time
- Book the room and any equipment needed
- Invite guests & guest speakers
- Send out an invitation/reminder to meeting participants
re: time, date, location, “homework”, etc.
- Make arrangements for remote attendees
- Prepare handouts
- Set the agenda

Meeting Day

- Arrive early
- Check room (temperature, lights, enough chairs)
- Set up/check tech
- Queue up websites
- Queue up Skype/web conferencing software for remote attendees
- Make/bring copies of handouts

Then, there's the stuff you can't plan for...

Activity #2 – Managing Challenging Behaviours

Each person has been given a scenario which would challenge successful facilitation.

In pairs, you will have 3 minutes to discuss strategies for managing this challenge.

Ian Interrupter

Ian Interrupter is full of ideas and enthusiasm. At meetings, Ian Interrupter often interjects to add an opinion or correct a colleague when they are speaking. Some of his colleagues have complained to the Chair; some have stopped participating during meetings.

Ian Interrupter: Strategies for keeping meetings on track

- Address interruptions directly as they happen, especially repeat interruptions. Use humour if appropriate to disarm tension and avoid hurt feelings.
- If interruptions are a chronic issue in your group, establish ground rules for how the group will interact at the beginning of each meeting.
- Use a strategy for ensuring equal opportunity to participate, such as a speaker's list or talking chips.

Ian Interrupter

- Conversely, if you are shy about speaking up and feel you need to interrupt to participate, prepare notes ahead of time and/or let the chair know you are interested in providing feedback so they can call on you.
- Establish a 'parking lot' for good ideas that are out of scope for the current meeting but could be brought forward for future consideration.

Norma Naysayer

When colleagues bring up ideas for new projects during meetings, Norma Naysayer is often negative, either using body language (sighs, rolled eyes or frowns) or saying things like “that will never work” or “we’ve tried that before” when new ideas are presented. Although Norma has enough experience to have perspective on what might be more likely to work than not, some team members are frustrated and have stopped contributing ideas during meetings.

Norma Naysayer:

Strategies for keeping the tone positive

- Focus on the positive. Ask the participant for their input on positive aspects of the idea presented.
- Ask the participant to suggest a solution to the problem(s) they anticipate regarding a new idea. Try to address them if possible.
- If the item under discussion is at the ‘idea generation’ stage, remind the group that the objective is to generate ideas for now, to be evaluated later.

Norma Naysayer

- Structure the meeting so that the pros are discussed before the cons.
- Speak with the individual in private if this is an ongoing issue.

Uma Unengaged

Uma Unengaged is a very busy person, who often juggles multiple projects and responsibilities. During meetings, she is often engaged in side-conversations, checking her phone, making notes, etc. She seldom contributes to discussions. The meeting facilitator is not sure why she doesn't want to participate, but her behaviour is distracting to other participants and her input would be helpful for group decision-making.

Uma Unengaged:

Strategies for engaging participants

Addressing side conversations and disruptions:

- Use body language. Subtlety works: make eye contact, smile, shift your body toward the participant.
- Ask the participant engaged in a side conversation for their thoughts on the current discussion item.
- Address side conversations directly during the meeting if they are recurring.
- Talk to the participant privately at another time if necessary.

Uma Unengaged:

Strategies for engaging participants

Drawing hesitant participants in:

- Use a go-around to make sure everyone has a chance to participate.
- Use the *1-2-ALL* technique to allow everyone to organize their thoughts and get feedback before risking this in the full group.
- Solicit feedback on agenda items from hesitant participants before the meeting. Call on them for this feedback during the meeting if they are comfortable with this.
- Make a special effort to acknowledge input from shy participants.
- Invite them to plan and lead the next meeting if interested (but no pressure).

Also in your post-conference slides:

- Steve Sidetracker
- Carly the Competitor
- Derek Dominator

Steve Sidetracker

Steve Sidetracker loves his job and enthusiastically participates in meetings. He is an 'ideas guy' and often brings up new ideas at meetings. When bringing forward these (good) ideas, he often strays off topic to explain how he came up with the idea, adding in personal details and derailing the agenda.

Steve Sidetracker:

Strategies for keeping meetings on track

- Create a structured agenda, distribute it ahead of the meeting and refer back to it if the discussion strays from agenda items.
- Be consistent - create an expectation among participants that you will keep to the agenda.
- At the beginning of each agenda item, note the anticipated outcome and refer back to it if needed. If the discussion strays, ask a specific question to re-focus the group on the topic/outcome.

Steve Sidetracker:

Strategies for keeping meetings on track

- Use a whiteboard or flip chart to create a space for good ideas that come up but are outside the scope of the agenda. Bring the ideas forward to the next meeting or make arrangements to discuss them offline.
- Seek input on agenda items from participants ahead of time to help focus participation during the meeting.
- In a sidetracking situation, acknowledge the on-topic input and then invite another participant to comment.

Derek Dominator

Derek Dominator has a lot to contribute to meetings. Unfortunately, he tends to control and monopolize group discussions, making it difficult for others to participate. He sometimes comments that his colleagues don't have much to say or come to meetings unprepared, not realizing that others have become frustrated and given up trying to participate.

Derek Dominator:

Strategies for ensuring even participation

- Use a meeting structure that makes space for all participants: 1-2-All; brainwriting; speaker's list; talking chips.
- Quickly recap the participant's point and immediately invite other contributions.
- Listen with a neutral expression. Use positive reinforcement for concise comments. Acknowledge other comments and re-direct.
- Coach and prepare quieter participants ahead of time.
- If this is a chronic issue in your group, speak with the individual in private and establish ground rules/agreements for how the group will interact at the beginning of each meeting.

Carly the Competitor

Carly the Competitor is very confident in her ideas and keen to share. During meetings, she is focused on “winning” and almost always gets the last word. While other participants speak, she is mentally preparing her next point, rather than listening and trying to understand others’ points of view. This dynamic is damaging team morale and stifling idea generation in meetings.

Carly the Competitor:

Strategies for managing conflict in meetings

- Stay calm – don't allow emotions to enter the equation.
- Ask all participants to paraphrase the previous contribution before commenting.
- Use a technique such as brainwriting or cyberstorming for idea generation.
- Use structured consensus guidelines for group decision-making.
- If the tension gets too high, consider deferring the item.
- Establish ground rules and review them at the beginning of each meeting.

Setting Ground Rules

(aka rules of engagement, meeting norms, team agreements, etc.)

Why are they important?

Types of Ground Rules

Procedural (processes & procedures)

- Meetings should start on time
- Cell phones should be set to vibrate

Behavioural

- Show up on time
- Share all relevant information

The “best” rules are:

...concrete, not abstract

Abstract	Concrete
Be respectful	Listen without interrupting

After the Meeting

- Share meeting minutes, presentation slides, etc. This is important for those who could not attend the meeting.
- Follow up with action items.
- Start making a list of agenda items to be carried forward to the next meeting; if you're not chairing the next meeting, communicate these to the next Chair.

Resources

- Culligan, R. (2016, April 29). Run meetings that are fair to introverts, women, and remote workers. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved online: <https://hbr.org/2016/04/run-meetings-that-are-fair-to-introverts-women-and-remote-workers>
- Gray, D., Brown, S. & Macanuso, J. (2010). *Gamestorming : A playbook for innovators, rulebreakers, and changemakers*. Cambridge: O'Reilly.
- Kaye, G. (2013). Conducting Effective Meetings. In Work Group for Community Health and Development, University of Kansas, *Community Toolbox* Retrieved January 17, 2013 from <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/group-facilitation/main>
- Kraybill, R. (2011). *Style matters: the Kraybill conflict style inventory*. Harrisonburg, VA: Riverhouse ePress.
- Lent, R. M. (2015). *Leading great meetings: how to structure yours for success*. Stow, MA: Meeting for Results.
- Excerpts and free resources: Consensus Guidelines; Meeting Culture Survey; Productive Meeting Evaluation; Choices and Tools for Effective Meeting Structure - <http://www.meetingforresults.com/resources/>
- Schwarz, R. (2016, June 15). 8 ground rules for great meetings. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved online: <https://hbr.org/2016/06/8-ground-rules-for-great-meetings>
- Tropman, J. E. (1996). *Making meetings work: Achieving high quality group decisions*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- <http://guides.library.utoronto.ca/communications> > DIY section > Tips for running effective meetings (includes a link to an agenda template and these slides)

Thank you!

Questions?

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