

One Minute Skill Building Series

Center for Student Involvement Resource Center

Pitfalls of Meetings

These are some things to watch out for in meetings—they happen in meetings everywhere from student organizations to board rooms!

- ☞ **No Clear, Agreed Upon Agenda**—It is important to have a written pre-meeting agenda to all the members. Groups must agree to go toward a certain goal. As they said in *Alice in Wonderland*, “If you don’t know where you are going, how will you ever know if you get there?”
- ☞ **Leaving the Process of the Meeting to Fate**—Separate out the power (authority) and content (subject matter) from the PROCESS (how the meeting proceeds). A meeting leader must facilitate, not wait for luck. Facilitating is helping the group stay on track, on time, reaching for the goal, etc.
- ☞ **Speeding Off Without a Map**—Ask: Where does this meeting fit in the overall plan for dealing with the issue? Take time for the planning process—*go slow now to go fast later*.
- ☞ **Mixing Purposes**—Be clear (by using your agenda) whether you’re planning a procedure (drawing the map) for dealing with a topic, or actually dealing with it. In other words, are you laying out the steps or taking a step. One purpose at a time.
- ☞ **Too Many Agenda Items**—Always ask ‘are these goals realistic within the time frame?’ Don’t set your group up for failure with an over-ambitious agenda.
- ☞ **No Mutual Agreement on What the Problem Is**
- ☞ **Jumping In With a Solution**—There is a danger in coming in with or arriving at a pet solution before clearly identifying or agreeing on the problem with others involved. “Buy-in” assures support.
- ☞ **Shifting Focus**—Stay on the same subject; use the same process. For example, either brainstorm or evaluate ideas, not both at the same time.
- ☞ **Lack of Visual Helpers**—Find a way for participants to follow the subject as the meeting proceeds. Use audio-visual helpers to help everyone focus on the content flow.
- ☞ **Unclear or Incomplete Action Items or Decisions**—Pin down the who, what, when, where, why, and how at the meeting. Check out all agreements made during the meeting at the end of the meeting.
- ☞ **Too Many Participants: The Wrong Participants: Missing Key People**—When agendas have many items, more people need to be there even though they are only involved in one item.
- ☞ **Meeting Being Dominated By One or Two People**—When this occurs, pull back and ask someone to facilitate. Don’t miss this opportunity to make the most of your staff; make the most of the opportunity to participate yourself too!
- ☞ **Not Taking Time to Assure Mutual Understanding**—Learn the issues facing other members. Explain your own position. Ask the other people to repeat back in their own words what they hear you saying. This will head off frustration and reluctance to cooperate.
- ☞ **Uneven Preparation**—Varying levels of understanding—set up a way for all people to be prepared to talk about the issues at the same level of understanding.
- ☞ **Premature Motions**—Don’t make a motion until the problem is adequately discussed and analyzed. If you can’t agree on the problem, you probably can’t agree on the solution (the motion). Premature motions divide the group and create artificial disagreements.

Adapted from Suffolk County Community College-
Michael DeRosa

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FUNDamentals of Involvement

When was your life the easiest? When you were a child! Why? Because everything was fun, fewer rules and norms—you decided what was fun until someone told you otherwise. Let’s revisit...

“Find something you love, learn about it, think about it, practice it, reflect on it, and if you still love it—find someone to pay you for it!”—Will Keim

Find FUN in the world—it’s not hard if you shift your focus and look around you. (FUNd raising, FUNction, FUNgus, FUNk, FUNhouse, FUNnel, FUNny bone or anything! There’s even FUN in FUNeral!)

META-PHONLIES—this process requires a lifelong commitment and practice of creative thinking and application! Soften your thinking with *metaphors*, combine with *what if* questions to create a *Meta-phony!* For example: pholy work was like going to the beach?

PLAY around with traditional approaches and come up with some new ideas on your own!

Look for more than one right answer—be a creativity thief.

Take a *recess* once in a while to reflect and think about how things are going.

Realize that PLAY is not frivolous!

Use games, songs, dance, music, art, children’s books, toys, humor and other playthings to reinforce your messages and make them more memorable.

Play the fool! (Class clown/jester)

Be ambiguous! Humorous!

Entertain your membership throughout their organizational lifespan.

View other playgrounds to refresh your viewpoint.

Involve your friends and make new ones!

Develop a GOING attitude! Get Over It Now Gang! When others destructively challenge, criticize, prejudge, or set obstacles in your way—*they need to get GOING!* Don’t listen to ‘I’m not creative’ messages.

Listen and hear the feedback—if its constructive, take it to heart and you get GOING. Be willing to make errors, learn from them, think about them and turn them around. The way to increase your success rate is to double your failure rate. Take some risks!

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