

Strategies for Watershed Meetings that Lead to Results

Janet Ayres

Professor & Extension Specialist

December 14, 2011

Today's Objectives

- Keys to effective meetings
- Facilitating meetings
- Managing difficult meetings

Keys to Effective Meetings

- Purpose
- Objectives/intended outcomes
- Agenda
- Meeting logistics
- Communication/marketing
- Meeting management
- Follow up

Keys to Effective Meetings

- Purpose
 - Why are you having the meeting?
 - Meetings are costly. Is there a better way?
 - If you can't answer this question, consider whether or not to have a meeting.

Keys to Effective Meetings

- Meeting objectives/intended outcomes
 - What do you want to come out of the meeting?
 - Input/assessment
 - Feedback
 - Actions
 - Decision
 - If you can't answer this question, don't have it.
 - Make sure others know the objectives

Keys to Effective Meetings

- Agenda
 - Create agenda to achieve objectives
 - Prepared in advance
 - Be realistic, keep it short, prioritize
 - Assign times
 - Seek input from others
 - Prepare in advance

Keys to Effective Meetings

- Meeting logistics
 - Sponsorships (different types of support)
 - Place (neutral; accommodate group size)
 - Room set-up (consider comfort, ability to see & hear, group dynamics)

Keys to Effective Meetings

- Communication/marketing
 - Consider *all* media
 - News media, flyers, mailings, social media, websites, newsletters, organizational meetings
 - Consider role of news media

Keys to Effective Meetings

Roles	Responsibilities
Convener	Opens meeting, states purpose, provides introductions, closes meeting, clarifies next steps
Facilitator	Enables group to achieve its objectives by focusing on agenda and managing relationships
Recorder	Records information and sees that it is distributed

Keys to Effective Meetings

- Follow up is critical
 - Distribution of notes
 - Report back
 - Next steps – actions, roles & responsibilities

Keys to Effective Meetings

Do you have questions or comments
about running effective meetings?

Facilitating Meetings

- The more complex and contentious an issue, the more thought and effort needs to go into pre-planning a meeting and considering a skilled, neutral facilitator.

Facilitating Meetings

- Should you be the one to facilitate the meeting?
 - In a controversial setting, are you *perceived* to “have an agenda”?
 - Gain experience by working with a more experienced person
 - Start small and work up to more complex meetings
 - Consider co-facilitating with a partner

Facilitating Meetings

- Facilitation is...
 - The design and management of processes that help a group do its work and minimize the common problems people have working together

Facilitating Meetings

- Facilitation is...
 - A neutral process
 - Balance between process and content
 - *Fair* to everyone in the group
 - Maximizing the involvement of everyone
 - Enabling a productive meeting

Facilitating Meetings

- A facilitator has 4 basic roles
 - Structure and manage the meeting
 - Attend to relationships among participants
 - Ensure meeting objectives are accomplished
 - Organize and manage data & information needed to accomplish objectives

Facilitating Meetings

- Core practices
 - Staying neutral on content
 - Listening actively
 - Paraphrasing
 - Asking questions

Facilitating Meetings

- Core practices (cont.)
 - Limiting participation when necessary
 - Balancing/broadening participation
 - Synthesizing ideas
 - Giving and receiving feedback

Facilitating Meetings

- Core practices (cont.)
 - Staying on track
 - Testing assumptions
 - Observing and collecting ideas
 - Summarizing clearly

Facilitating Meetings

Let's stop here to address questions or comments about meeting facilitation.

Managing Difficult Meetings

- Difficult meetings are often the result of poorly planned and/or managed meetings
 - Unclear purpose
 - Undefined objectives/outcomes
 - Unrealistic or not well conceived agenda
 - Inadequate meeting arrangements
 - Poor communication/marketing
 - Biased or poor meeting management
 - No follow through

Managing Difficult Meetings

- Ground rules are a way to set meeting expectations
 - Listen carefully to understand others
 - Respect others when they are speaking
 - One person speak at a time; wait until 3 others have spoken before speaking again
 - It's okay to disagree
 - Keep comments focused on topic

Managing Difficult Meetings

What questions or comments do you have about challenging meetings or about “ground rules”?

Resources

- Bens, Ingrid. 2005. *Facilitating with ease: Core skills for facilitators, team leaders and members, managers, consultants, and trainers*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bens, Ingrid. 2003. *Facilitating uphill: Intervention strategies for challenging meetings*. Sarasota, FL: Participative Dynamics.
- Putz, Gregory Bryan. 2002. *Facilitation skills: Helping groups make decisions*. Bountiful, UT: Deep Space Technology Company.

Thank you!

Please feel free to contact me if there is any way I can assist you.

Janet Ayres

ayres@purdue.edu