

DEATH BY MEETING

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WHAT THE PROBLEM IS:

Meetings are boring
Meetings are ineffective

WHY? BECAUSE MEETINGS LACK DRAMA

(results of avoiding conflict and trying to end on time)

- To make meetings less boring, look for legitimate reasons to provide and uncover relevant and constructive ideological conflict
- To make meetings effective, they must be given contextual structure. Too many organizations have only one kind of meeting, which randomly roams from culture, to administrative trivia, to strategy, to tactics

Don't know whether to vote, brainstorm, debate, or listen

Need multiple meetings with clearly defined formats and purposes

TWO PROBLEMS

Lack of drama
Lack of Structure

LACK OF DRAMA

Movies/meetings
Interactive
Relevant to our lives

- The key to a good movie is to set up the plot from the outset
 - Employees are looking for a reason to care.
- Mining for conflict – without debate/disagreement, the issues will not be resolved
 - People need permission to express disagreement.
- Meeting stew – too many ingredients
- In an effort to save time – ineffective and unsatisfying for everyone

FOUR MEETINGS

Meeting #1 – The Daily Check-in (not practical for every organization)

- Five minutes/stand up huddle
- Consistent time and place
- Start on time

Meeting #2 – The Weekly Tactical

- Tactical issues of immediate concern
- 45-90 minutes
- Few critical elements
- Defer long-range strategic issues to another meeting

The lightning round

- Each team member takes one minute to share priorities for the week
- Gives everyone a real sense of what's going on that week

Progress review

- Routine reporting of key/critical information or metrics
- Lengthy discussion of underlying issues should be avoided here

Real-time agenda

- Disciplined spontaneity

Goals

1. Resolution of issues
2. Reinforcement of clarity

Challenges

1. The temptation to set an agenda ahead of time
2. Too much detail in the lightning round
3. Temptation to get into discussions about long-term strategic issues

Meeting #3 – The Monthly Strategic (most fun)

- Schedule at least two hours per topic
- Needs to be regular (can have ad hoc strategic meetings if the topic won't wait) so it can serve as a timely parking lot for critical strategic issues.

Challenges

1. Failure to schedule enough time
2. Putting too many items on the agenda
3. The failure to do research ahead of time
4. The fear of conflict

Meeting #4 – The Quarterly Offsite Review

- Review the business in a more holistic, long-term manner

Consists of:

1. Comprehensive strategy review
2. Team review – right people/right roles
culture/behaviors
3. Personnel expansion
4. Industry and competitors review

Challenges

1. Not to over-structure the meeting
2. Not to make it too much of a boondoggle
 - a. Too many social activities
 - b. Too exotic a location
3. Inviting outsiders to attend (changes team dynamic)

CONCLUSION

- Meetings don't have to waste time
- Good meetings **save** time
 - They rid the organization of “sneaker time:”
 - Emails, voicemails and roaming to clarify issues that should have been clarified in a meeting
- Alignment saves time