

Faria Curriculum Summit

School Leadership

4 Steps of an effective Brainstorming to accelerate the Decision Making Process

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Meetings don't have to be a waste of time!

Oh no ... another team meeting? It's a waste of time. Did this happen to you? Leaning over the desk and moaning exactly these words in the direction of your favorite colleague?

In many companies and with many people, the term "meeting" is synonymous with "wasted labor". When you set a new appointment to discuss or work on something with your colleagues, you can hear a groan moving through the rooms. Too bad, because an exchange with colleagues is important and working together on topics is essential - especially from the perspective of an educator.

In fact, half of all employee meetings are considered redundant. A quarter of all participants believe that the topic of the meeting has nothing to do with them and their work and ask themselves: "What am I actually doing here?"

Too many and ineffective meetings waste time and money. Managers spend up to 50 percent of their time in meetings, which is about four hours a day and 130 working days a year. Now, assuming that half of these meetings don't work, that's a lot of time that could be used more effectively.

If you know how to run a meeting, you will always try to increase productivity for your company/school and minimize costs. If the leader works effectively, the meeting participants know exactly what to do next and why the tasks assigned to them are important. If the leadership is rather weak, it ends in wasted time and the loss of respect by the participants. However, care should be taken to ensure that meetings are conducted in a targeted and efficient manner. This post should show a few ideas for this.

PRE - DURING - PAST

If you sacrifice hours of your precious time to prepare and follow up the meeting, this is one way to a successful meeting. In order to make meetings effective, efficient and satisfactory, you should first be clear about which types of meetings exist or which ones you always have to attend. Basically, they fall into three different categories: update, workshop, and decision meetings.

PRE: Preparation is the Key

Define clear goals: Especially for workshop appointments, but also for update appointments, it is important that the organizer of the appointment defines the goals in advance. What should be achieved with the appointment? What results are desired?

Make it clear to the participants why they were specifically invited. What do those invited do when they invest energy? What exactly do you expect from the participants? Is it important that the colleagues give concrete thoughts to the meeting or even provide input? Then the invitation should make that clear.

Do not torture participants with too much text. It is worthwhile to make meeting invitations crisp. Use simple phrases, highlighting, subheadings and bullet points. Optimize the legibility of your texts. Participants feel respected if you make it easy for them. You will then show the necessary respect for your meeting topic.

Write an invitation, not a subpoena. Do you want everyone to look forward to the meeting? This only works if the participants' contribution is voluntary. You demotivate if you simply require consent to participate and prepare. Ask participants for feedback if they cannot meet expectations. Make the request for feedback as relaxed as possible. Those who do not have time for preparation or the meeting or who think they cannot make a contribution should not feel pressured. The people who are there like to come. And you have the chance to react to feedback in advance.

With which lead time should the participants be invited? It depends. Invitations that give less than two working days to the meeting should be the exception. Depending on the requirements for meeting preparation, more time may be necessary. It is important that you realistically assess the effort.

A description and agenda in advance: A new appointment can be set very quickly in Outlook or other calendar tools and sent to many people. Unfortunately, there is often just a title for the appointment, a more detailed description or even a correct agenda is missing. It is very important for the participants to know what it is really about and how the process is planned. On the one hand, a (potential) participant can better decide through such information whether he should accept at all. On the other hand, he / she can also

prepare better. And of course, the organizer of the appointment also prepares much more intensively. Combine preparation with the agenda. This makes it clear to everyone that concrete input is required. Nobody likes to go to such a meeting empty-handed.

The right participants: Too many participants cost money and can be counterproductive. The organizer should therefore think in advance about who is really relevant and necessary for the meeting. It may help to contact the relevant people in advance if they think they can contribute to the topic.

Preparation: Especially the organizer, but also all participants should prepare well for meetings. As already described, the organizer has to prepare an agenda, possibly send information and materials in advance, book a room, take care of the technical equipment, etc. The participants should read into the goal of the meeting and consider what they should bring with them (Data, materials, etc.).

DURING: The Basics for the good Meeting

A moderator: Especially in workshops it is important that someone keeps an eye on the appointment, the schedule and the focus on the essentials. For larger workshops, it is worthwhile to use a neutral (possibly external) moderator; if this is not possible or is necessary for shorter appointments, either the organizer should take over the moderation himself (he usually wants to get a good result from the appointment), or he can designate another person as moderator.

Establish meeting rules: Every company or at least every team should think about the rules according to which they want to meet. Such rules usually focus on mutual respect for one another, without which communication and collaboration is difficult. The rules should be worked out together and apply to all participants.

Possible rules can be, for example:

We start and end the meeting on time

We have switched off mobile phones, tablets and laptops

Everyone has the right to leave the meeting if they cannot contribute

Private calls take place during breaks

Everyone speaks for themselves, not for others

Only one speaks at a time

We let the others finish

We remain factual - no personal attacks

We stick to the topic

We don't talk for the sake of talking

Confidential remains in the group

Etc.

Record results and next steps: A lot can be said in an hour. It is important that the relevant information is recorded - ideally on the flipchart or whiteboard. This also includes which points you may have to deal with later or outside the meeting and who is responsible for them. This leads to all ToDos and follow-up topics including a responsible person.

The potential for chaotic interaction always exists. Therefore , structures for successful meetings are very helpful and will lead to productive conversations. Three of these strategies are:

- Decide on decision-making
- Develop standards
- Design the surround

Group members often don't have clarity about who is making the final decision and which process is being used. So it has to be clear what topics are ours, who decides, who is in the decision-making process, when and how will the decision being communicated.

Successful meetings should be embodied in five standards: One process only should be used, one topic should be addressed, the meeting should be interactive and engage balanced participation, a cognitive conflict should be engaged, participants should have understanding and agreement on roles.

Psychological, emotional, cognitive and physical elements contribute to the surround. Therefore, physical space and room arrangements should be considered, task, norms and standards should be visible, charting materials are necessary, seating arrangements should be selected.

PAST: Follow-up

The meeting is not over when it's over.

Minutes to all participants and relevant people: After the appointment, the organizer or moderator should send a short, brief report to all participants and other people who need to be informed. The most important topics should be listed briefly but in an understandable form, ToDos and those responsible should be named again and the next steps defined. As a product owner, for example, I send the results to the team and the stakeholders after each planning and send a summary of the sprint review to all relevant people.

Tracking results: Even if everyone agreed on one appointment and agreed on clear next steps, this unfortunately does not mean that work will be done on this. Therefore, as the organizer of an appointment, you should either ensure that the ToDos are actually processed, or you designate a person responsible for it. It can also make sense to get a status at regular intervals - either in writing or in a follow-up appointment (see point 1: only if really necessary!).

Decision-making made easy

Effective strategies provide three functions: focus, efficiency, and psychological safety which leads to getting an agreement in a brief time, and without acrimony.

CONSENSUS DECISION-MAKING is a cooperative process in which group members develop and agree to support a decision in the best interest of the whole. Main reasons to use consensus as a decision-making method are

- High quality decisions
- Building connection among members

Consensus is for people who are genuinely trying to work together, typically based on some shared interest, purpose or calling.

Focusing Consensus

How do we get a focusing consensus? We have to insist that all views will be heard, understood, and respected. All participants contribute resources and all perceptions should be legitimized. Issues should be addressed, not people. Everyone will share in the final decision. There is no unanimous vote. Don't change your mind just to avoid a conflict.

The Focusing Four

This is a brainstorm technique which allows you to conduct a decision-making by using four steps. These steps have to be explained to and understood by each participant before starting the activity.

Here are the steps to follow:

- Brainstorming
- Clarifying
- Advocating
- Voting/canvassing

