Effective, Time-Efficient Meetings

From: *Results: The Key to Continuous School Improvement* (2nd edition), 1999, by Mike Schmoker, ASCD.

The following model enables a team to have a productive meeting in about 30 minutes (which is often all that is available). It can be tailored to fit a group's specific purposes. The approximate number of minutes for each part is in parentheses.

Before the Meeting

• Agenda. Was the agenda distributed in advance of the meeting? Is it posted in clear view of the participants?

• Recording Tools. Is flip chart, chalkboard, or computer ready to record brainstorming?

• Designated Tasks. Have the timekeeper, recorder, and facilitator been appointed?

During the Meeting

The team leader should establish and articulate the purpose of the meeting:
What outcomes are desired? (The general purpose proposed for these meetings is to identify major concerns and strategies to promote better results for an agreed-upon goal.)(1 minute)

Strategies That Worked (5 minutes)

What worked? The team leader gives each member a chance to offer evidence of a strategy that was effective in helping reach the goal since the last meeting.[2]

Chief Challenges (3—5 minutes)

What is the most urgent concern, problem, or obstacle to progress and better results?

Proposed Solutions (8—10 minutes)

What are possible concrete, practical solutions to these problems?

Action Plan (10 minutes)

• Which solutions might be best for the team to focus on between now and the next meeting? For example, if the goal or subgoal is "to increase the number of quality introductions," the team might focus on a strategy such as, "students will analyze model introductions before attempting to revise their own." (If agreement does not emerge quickly, rank-order voting to determine the focus may be useful.)

• If appropriate, the team may need to determine and record the names of the people who are responsible for specific tasks prior to the next meeting.

After the Meeting

The team leader distributes a memo documenting the team's focus between now and the next meeting. (A memo may not be necessary if brainstorming is done on a computer or using an LCD [liquid crystal display]; memos can then be printed out and distributed almost immediately.)

Summary

The meetings enable every team member to quickly and effi ciently take advantage of the maximum number of concrete ideas and each member's acquired expertise on a clear goal and strategic focus.

[2]The emphasis should be on concision. You may want to limit the time for each brainstorming contribution by applying what Allied Signal Corporation calls the "20-second rule." This method not only increases the amount of ideas that each member generates but also heightens energy level, focus, and clarity of expression.

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6/02