



HOW TO HAVE A GREAT MEETING

“The right task + the right people + the right setting = unprecedented actions.”
-Marvin Weisbord, adapted by Claros Group

TEN REASONS MEETINGS FAIL

1. Lack of planning & preparation
2. Undefined purpose and outcomes
3. Agenda consists of a list of topics without desired results or time frames
4. Wrong people at the meeting
5. Meeting leader lacks effective facilitation skills
6. Dysfunctional behavior isn't managed
7. No agreed-upon ground rules for how the group will work together
8. Starting late, ending even later...without confirming who will do what by when
9. No decisions reached
10. Wandering way off track

WHAT GREAT MEETINGS DO

- Strengthen relationships
- Use valuable time effectively
- Increase innovation and creativity
- Increase group participant's energy and willingness to contribute
- Enable work to get done in a timely manner
- Implement well thought out decisions with buy-in & commitment
- Improve performance

THE ONLY REASONS TO HAVE A MEETING

- To communicate information that needs to be discussed
- To explore an issue or a situation from multiple perspectives
- To think or create together (e.g. design a program, service or process)
- To make a decision that requires the input of others
- To generate commitment and shared ownership

HOW TO HAVE A GREAT MEETING (CLAROS GROUP) – PAGE 2

HOW TO ENSURE A GREAT MEETING

1. **Before:** Plan what needs to happen.
 - Clearly define the purpose of the meeting, the desired results, the topics to be discussed, the time needed for each topic, who needs to be there, the meeting length and location.
 - Take care of logistics (room set up, equipment, supplies, refreshments, etc.)
 - Send out the agenda and pre-work in advance.
2. **During:** Manage the opening, the middle and the closing.
 - **Beginning:** Review meeting purpose, outcomes, agenda and end time. Ask for revisions then finalize the agenda, priority order and time frames for each topic. Post a chart-pad in the front of the room called “Parking Lot” and use it to capture issues to be addressed later.
 - **Middle:** Keep the group focused on the topic being discussed. Ask questions and encourage participation and sharing of different perspectives. Periodically summarize what has been said. When a decision is needed, make sure everyone knows how it will be made (e.g. majority vote, consensus, etc.) Check for understanding and agreement before moving to the next topic.
 - **End:** Summarize agreements and decisions. Agree on action plan (who, what, by when). Identify issues to explore further, by when, and how. Generate agenda items for the next meeting and schedule the date, time and place.
 - **After:** Follow through for results.
 - Distribute minutes in a timely manner.
 - Ensure progress on agreed-upon next steps.

HARD WON WISDOM – WHAT WE’VE LEARNED

- If you are not clear about what you want to accomplish or the right people are not available, don’t have a meeting.
- Meetings are not lectures. Make sure they are designed to include conversation.
- If no one talks, consider the meeting a failure – you can be sure they will talk afterwards and not favorably.
- Use visuals: post an agenda and write ideas on a flipchart.
- Provide time to explore the issues. People commit to what they co-create.
- Use small groups to encourage conversation.
- Model the energy and attitude you want others to have.
- End on time to convey respect for group members and their other commitments.
- Be creative (e.g. consider holding short ten-minute stand up meetings.)
- Evaluate meetings every six months to see if they need to be redesigned or disbanded.