

You are aiming for meetings that people won't want to miss?

## MEETINGS that ADD VALUE

Peter Schneider is a sales manager at a medium sized company in Dusseldorf. Things are going well and he is very busy. It is Peter Schneider's 4<sup>th</sup> meeting today – and it is just 3 pm. “No real work done yet”, he thinks, another long, long day. A mere waste of time.”

Let's look at one of Peter's meetings more closely:

Monthly meeting of management team, 2 hours, 10 – 12 am. Attendants: Head of departments (9), CEO, CFO. After some information by CEO and CFO, each attendant gives a short presentation about status of important projects in her/his department. After the presentations there is a short time for questions and comments, which especially the CEO and 2 other members use frequently. The meeting ends with a check on action items. 11:45: CEO asks if 'there is anything else' people would like to talk about? One manager asks about a detail for an upcoming event. CEO finishes the meeting.

Like Peter, many of my clients feel somewhat dissatisfied with their meetings. They ask me to attend for feedback and new perspectives. Those meetings in many cases are perfect according to textbook: Right people attend, agenda clear beforehand, people are well (enough) prepared. How come they still don't add enough value, that they do not “make sense”?

### (1) Meeting objective is not properly defined

The person in charge has no real answers to the following questions: What is the actual objective of our meetings? WHY are we meeting? What do we achieve that we could not achieve otherwise? Why should everybody want to attend?

### (2) Content or structure are counter-productive to the objective

For example: If your objective were “information-sharing”, quick reports from everybody would be just fine. If you want to make certain that your team is aligned, quick reports will be greatly counter-productive.

Back to the example above: This is a management meeting. You have your best people available in one room, undisturbed. Your objective could be:

- To make best use of all that joint brain-power, experience and creativity towards innovative ideas. [Getting to the 'next level']
- To create shared understanding and commitment towards common processes and goals [This is where we are heading to and that is what we need from each other to be successful]
- To give “sense”: “We will achieve something meaningful together. I/my people are playing an important role in it.”



Some “DOs” for meaningful meetings that add value:

- Provide relevant information beforehand.
- Set a frame, provide a relevant topic or question. Leave room (time) and use it...
- ...for real EXCHANGE. Explore opinions and perspectives, ask people for their experience and ideas. Try to understand what drives other people and areas, why and with what effects on you and your common process.
- Agree on major points and ways to go forward together. [Action Plans, RASI]
- Alternate the role of facilitator, who guides discussions, helps to explore and to wrap-up.

Most of my clients start introducing different, pre-identified meeting types, each type with its own different set of objectives: You might want to meet regularly in the morning for 10 mins either face-to-face or virtually for a quick informational meeting. You might check project status regularly with only 2 other relevant colleagues on a regular basis. Or you might go for an alignment meeting such as the above. **Whatever adds value and makes participants aware of this value makes sense!**

Puzzling? Challenging? Yes, certainly. After all, you might have to understand, learn and introduce a new meeting culture and communication patterns.

**Rewarding? Most definitely. You will gain a new level of effectiveness together AND people will feel your meetings are the ones that can't be missed because they would miss out on something.**

- ⇒ You want to have a closer look at the effectiveness of your meetings?
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