



How good meetings make a difference

Audrey Thompson

Performance Solutions

audreythompson@earthlink.net

512-288-3297



Objectives for today

- Determine when you need to meet
- How to plan a meeting
- How to conduct a meeting
- Learn facilitation and meeting tools and techniques



**Have you been to a
good meeting lately?**

What happened?

Traits of a good meeting

- We knew our purpose for meeting
- We had an agenda and everyone knew their role
- Everyone was prepared
- We started and ended on time
- We stayed on topic
- Everyone participated-no one dominated
- The subject matter was relevant to my work
- We achieved our goal for the meeting

Reasons for having meetings

- Making decisions
- Solving a problem
- Plan
- Build a team
- Analyze from many view points

Don't have a meeting if the results are not going to be used



Alternatives to Meetings

- Conference calls
- Email
- 1 to 1
- Shared reports

What else?

?’s before each meeting

- What are my goals and desired results
- Is this meeting absolutely necessary
- Who should attend
- What is the chemistry of the group-what behavior can I anticipate
- What is the agenda content and how should it flow

Example Goals and Results

Meeting Goal Verbs

- ✓ Agree
- ✓ Analyze
- ✓ Assign
- ✓ Brainstorm
- ✓ Choose
- ✓ Create
- ✓ Decide
- ✓ Define
- ✓ Evaluate
- ✓ Explore
- ✓ Learn
- ✓ List
- ✓ Plan
- ✓ Prioritize
- ✓ Problem solve
- ✓ Rank
- ✓ Select
- ✓ Share information
- ✓ Write

Possible Meeting Results

- ✓ Action Items or Steps (+ who and when)
- ✓ Brainstormed list
- ✓ Decision
- ✓ Definition of procedure
- ✓ Document
- ✓ Feedback
- ✓ Goals
- ✓ List of alternatives
- ✓ List of pros and cons
- ✓ List of responsibilities
- ✓ List of suggestions
- ✓ List of volunteers for task or committee
- ✓ Mission, vision, values
- ✓ Plan
- ✓ Role definition
- ✓ Shared understanding
- ✓ Statement of purpose

Goal: Our goal is to brainstorm ways to improve our widget process.

Result: At the end of today, we will make a decision regarding the best way to improve the process.

Who should attend?

Consider:

- Someone who has authority to make a decision
- Those who will be affected by the decision
- Those who have the potential or power to obstruct the decision
- Someone who can speak for the organization or team
- Someone who has good team skills and has the time



What about chemistry, personal styles?

- What views might they have
- How much (or little) have they worked together
- What might be some “landmines”
- MBTI

Room arrangement

Room Arrangement	When Appropriate
U shaped (tables or just chairs)	Collaborative, interactive meetings with a facilitator, up to ≈25 participants.
Pods or round tables	Large meetings when you can't fit everyone around a U. Small group work.
Long rectangular table with chairs around sides	When there's no other choice. Small groups. When one person wants to be clearly "in charge".
Board room – table at front facing an auditorium full of chairs.	Formal public hearings only.
Classroom or auditorium style – chairs in rows behind one another.	Audio-visual presentations. Not good for any type of discussions or interactive meeting.

Activity

- Think about a meeting that you will lead or facilitate in the near future. What are some goals for the meeting?
- What are some results that you would like to come from the meeting?
- What do you already know about the people who will attend this meeting?
- What do you NOT know, but would be helpful to know in advance? Who might have this information.
- How will you arrange the room?

Ground rules

Create a set of ground rules early in the meeting or life of the team. Introduce 4-6 ground rules as “suggestions” the group may want to adopt. Ask what other ground rules participants would like to have and word them positively. Discuss each one briefly and adopt them by consensus in order to:

- Create group norms for the meetings
- Provide a way to deal with potential problems later

- **Attendance**- *how to inform Team Leader of an absence, how to handle interruptions from people who are late*
- **Promptness** –*starting and ending on time*
- **Participation**-*everyone’s ideas are valuable, everyone participates*
- **Confidentiality**-*what is said stays in the room*
- **Communication**-*limit side conversation, one person speaks at a time*
- **Decision making**-*consensus, majority rule*



Sample Ground Rules

- Allow everyone to participate
- Suspend judgement
- Focus on the problem, not the person
- It is ok to disagree
- Treat each other with respect
- Avoid jargon

Meeting Roles

You could do it all solo but why would you?

Having people help manage the meeting can make your job as meeting leader much easier. Sharing responsibilities for the meeting generates participation before the meeting even begins.

Leader:

- Identifies the outcome and is accountable for ensuring the outcome is achieved
- Serves as contact point for communication between the team and the organization
- Meets with Sponsor to keep them updated
- Carries out the work between meetings

Facilitator:

- Suggests procedures, processes and alternatives
- Focuses the energy and conversation of the group
- Does not evaluate or contribute ideas
- Protects ideas and individuals from attack
- Encourages participation
- Coordinates planning before and after the meeting

Recorder/ Scribe:

- Recorder: the person taking notes, to be developed into meeting minutes later
- Scribe: records ideas/action items on flip chart during meeting
- TIP: *Record exactly what is said without editing or interpreting*

Participant:

- Contributes the technical skills to the project
- Contributes ideas, inputs
- Completes action items as assigned
- Communicate effectively with colleagues
- Suggests solutions to problems

Agenda content/flow

- Distribute the agenda and goals in advance
- Review the goals of the agenda at the beginning of the meeting. Invite additions or changes
- Review the ground rules
- Review action items from the last meeting. If actions were not done, discuss barriers, problem solve or write a new action item.
- Make sure there is a logical flow i.e. decisions after information
- Begin with quick wins to motivate the team
- Allow 10-15 minutes at the end to review action items and evaluate the meeting
- Take breaks every 60-90 minutes when you have longer meetings



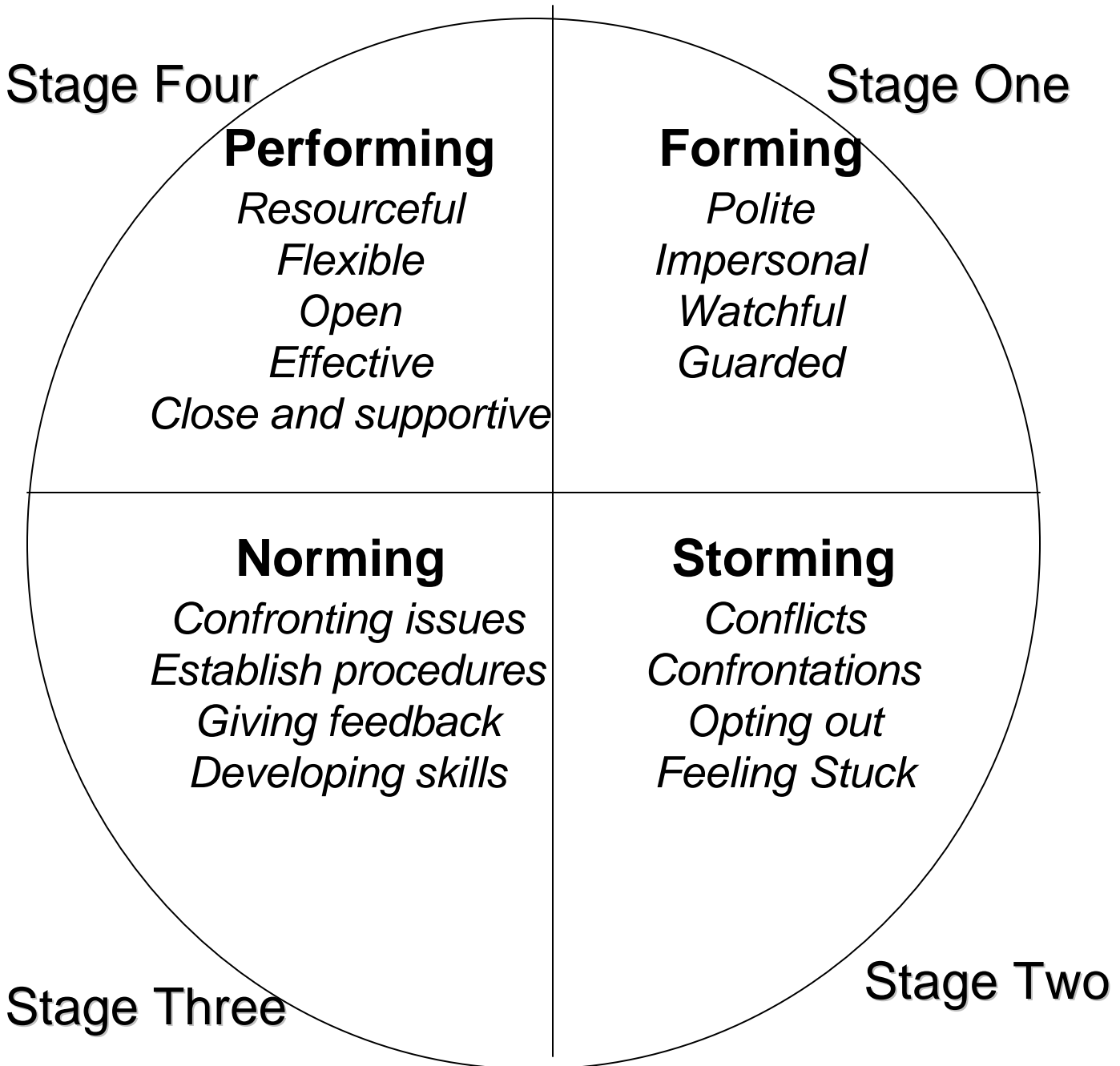
Agenda Items

- Objective of each agenda item
- What tool or technique will be used to deal with each issue
- Person responsible for leading the discussion
- Estimated time for each item

Closing the meeting

Summarize	Summarize the outcomes. Restate what was discussed, decisions that were made, action items (who will do what and by when)
Next Steps	Set next agenda if possible or decide how next meeting agenda will be created and distributed. Agree on date, time, location for next meeting.
Evaluation	Record what worked well and what should we continue doing and what didn't work well and should we do differently next time? You could also use a survey tool to quantify results.
Follow-Up	Send out meeting minutes to team members and/or post on intranet (usually the recorder will do this)

Stages of team development



Discussion Tools

Question Tools	Used For.....	Sounds Like.....
Probe	More information Challenge Clarify	“Why is that important?” “How do you mean?” “Is that important because.....?”
Prompt	Generate more ideas Bring others in Keep discussion moving	“What else...?” “What thoughts do others have?” Who else thinks...?”
Reflect	Confirm understanding Clarify Build trust	It sounds like you’re saying...” Let me see if I’m understanding you correctly, you’re saying....?”
Lead	Deal with irrelevant point Guide the group Expand discussion Try out new ideas	“Good point. Can we put that on the parking lot list?” “Could there be other solutions in the area of...?” “What other alternatives could we consider?” What about____? What benefits might there be?”
Summarize	Find common ground Shorten discussion Validate disagreement Highlight agreement	“We’ve had a lot of discussion and I’d like to try to summarize where we are. Bill is in favor of X, and Susan likes Y. They both agree W is important. What if we now look at Z.”

Facilitative Responses

Problem	Possible Responses
Personal Attack	“Bill, your emotions are very strong and it is getting personal. That shuts down our discussion. The ground rules focus on issues, not people. Can you do that?”
Discussion Dominator	“It looks like we don’t have the broad participation we need. Who else wants to give input on this?”
Nay-sayer	“Rose, I’d like to know what you do like about what Don just said?”
Silence	“We haven’t had a lot of participation on this. Would it help if we talk in small groups for 3 minutes and come back together with fresh ideas?”
Lost in Space	“I need to point out that we’ve gotten completely away from our agenda and we’re now on a completely different topic. Is this what we need to talk about right now or do we park it and come back to the agenda?”
Hi-jackers	“Don, thanks for your comments. If we’re going to get the results we’re after today, we probably need to talk about our second item on the agenda at this point.”

Discussion Motivators

Craft clear and simple questions for the team to discuss. The quality of the question can make or break a conversation.

Examples are:

- What are the benefits of deciding option A over B?
- What are the top 7 goals we should focus on this year?

Brainstorming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Don't evaluate ideas■ Quantity is the goal■ Wild is ok■ Record verbatim■ Tagging on or combined ideas are ok
Round Robin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Team members take turns responding one at a time. May pass if they are out of responses.
Small Group Break Outs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Break into groups no larger than 7■ Have them discuss one issue for a specific length of time■ Regroup and have each group present their responses

Brainstorming with Structure

- 1. Question:** Facilitator writes question on flipchart for group.
- 2. Write:** All write silently for 3 minutes and produce as many ideas as possible, one idea per sticky note. Write big.
- 3. Collect:** Facilitator picks up notes round-robin -- one idea per person – and asks that person to read their idea out loud.
- 4. Identify Like Ideas:** Facilitator calls for like ideas.
- 5. Create Clusters:** Facilitator clusters similar ideas on the appropriate flipchart, and, with the group's help, proposes a title for each cluster.
- 6. Move to Completion:** Facilitator moves to next person and repeats steps 2-5 until the group's ideas are all up on the flipchart and clustered.
- 7. Decide:** Use dot voting, hand voting, etc. to identify the top three ideas.

Decision methods

Consensus	“I may prefer to do it another way but I can live with the decision”
Multivoting	List potential solutions. Number each item. Decide how many votes team members can have. May use sticky dots or hand raising to vote for one or more options. Tally the votes.
Subgroup	Assign a subgroup to study the options and come back with a recommendation or decision.
One Person	It is an emergency, one person has the relevant information and is trusted by the team to make the decision.
Majority rule	“All in favor” vs. “All opposed”