

## Members Quarterly

Winter 2015 Edition

## Perspective

# Making Meetings More Productive: It's Easier than You Think...

*A simple tool that everyone can use*

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**H**ow many of us have sat through endless meetings that were going nowhere? It is comparable to being tortured. So much to do, so very little time to do it and then we waste our time in so-called "production meetings" that are the furthest thing from productive.

Nowadays we are still drowning in meetings but through different mediums. We have the in-person meetings, audio conference calls, videoconferencing and Skype options. With all this new technology available, have you noticed a great improvement in the outcome of your meetings? A number of us haven't and we're not alone.

I recently read an article by Joel Levitt about improving meetings with a very simple tool that anyone can use a simple checklist. Levitt found that executives spend typically at least 20% of their time in meetings with five or more people. Levitt also said that surveys indicate that a majority of these executives are dissatisfied with the value and outcome of their meetings.

When asked what disrupted their meetings, the executives listed things such as previous meeting still running in "your" conference room, conference room was messy, not enough chairs or electrical outlets, insufficient supplies such as paper and markers for easels and audio visual equipment not working. Other disruptions included handouts not done properly, critical people were no-shows, time and location not clear and no agendas. The worst was people who were not prepared and did not bring the required information. We have all experienced either one or more of these scenarios throughout our careers.

Levitt suggests developing a simple checklist to be distributed to everyone from the initial person who books the meeting to all participants and minute-takers along with the agenda for the meeting. You do not have to spend hours developing this checklist, but make it applicable to the specific event you are planning. The lead person for the meeting should plan to arrive early and ensure that all necessary equipment is there and in good working order.

Your agenda should not only include the items to be discussed but actually list the specific individuals involved who will be responsible for bringing progress reports, research and updates on each issue. For example, if you are working on a specific event such as an employee recognition event, don't just indicate recognition event on the agenda. Break it down into the related functions and indicate who will be presenting updates in each of the areas involved. That way, when you send the invitation or meeting notice, each participant will know what's expected of them and bring the appropriate reports. This elaborate agenda along with the checklist will enable participants to come prepared which will save time of running back to your office to retrieve reports, etc.

This isn't rocket science and should not be complicated. A normal checklist and agenda should take little time to prepare if you develop an easy template which your employees can adapt to

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suit their needs. We're not expecting Robert's Rules of Order here. If we as leaders can develop simple checklists and agendas to disseminate among our teams, just think how much more productive and concise our meetings will be in the future. Give it a try and see what happens next!

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