

Effective Meetings

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Academic Chairpersons Conference, Houston, February 2019

Our Goal

To provide positive and instrumental approaches to meeting planning and management that will allow you effectively address challenging situations with confidence.

Department meetings as “sacred times”

“if they are regular, frequent, and not unpleasant”

(Shah Hasan, ACC 2019)

Imagine these situations

Faculty meeting = gripe session?

All too often your department's faculty meetings disintegrate into a gripe session where faculty use the time to vent about various issues that may or may not be on your meeting agenda. What are the pros and cons of allowing faculty time to express their concerns? Is this an effective use of meeting time?

Missing, uninformed faculty members

As chair, you have struggled to find a meeting time that works for all of the faculty in your program. However, regardless of when the meeting is called, there are always certain faculty that are either absent, late to arrive, or early to leave. These people, in turn, complain about not knowing what is going on in the department. How do you go about finding a good meeting time and getting people there and productively engaged?

Opinionated Senior Faculty

Your department has three opinionated tenured full professors who have each been in the program for over 20 years. They are resistant to any discussion of change or new ideas and will sabotage a faculty meeting with interruptions and comments that attempt to de-rail the meeting. Younger faculty members are intimidated by their senior colleagues and often don't share their ideas openly in meetings due to fear of retaliation. Most recently, these older faculty members have been meeting privately outside of the departmental meetings, attempting to find ways to thwart any discussion of new ideas. What can you do to insure that your meetings are a place to grow and develop new ideas?

Innuendos

Your program has recently hired two new minority faculty into a department that is predominantly white and male. These two faculty members have privately spoken to you as chair about racist and sexist comments and innuendoes that they have overheard in passing. While the older faculty are professional and cordial in the meetings, your younger faculty members do not feel empowered to speak out and express their feelings, which might be in conflict with their colleagues. How do you face the racial and sexual discrimination issues that are prevalent in your department and meetings?

What do you do?

Meeting Planning Self-Assessment

1. It is important to get people in the habit of regular meetings, so I schedule meetings at regular times and expect everyone to be present.
2. I make sure there is a clear goal or set of goals for every department meeting.
3. It is most productive to have a few multi-hour meetings rather than more, shorter meetings.
4. I distribute an agenda in advance and invite input and additional agenda items.
5. Voting should be public instead of by anonymous ballot.

6. I make a list of action items after each meeting.
7. Our faculty meetings are for discussion and debate, not for decision making. Faculty members serve as advisors to the chair.
8. When someone attempts to seize control of a meeting to assert his/her own agenda, it is the responsibility of the entire group to insist on keeping with the agenda.
9. I use email to conduct minor business so I can save face-to-face time for more important tasks and issues.
10. I prefer to operate with one executive committee that advises on a variety of issues and serves in a variety of roles (e.g., promotion and tenure, budget, hiring) rather than establish multiple small committees.

What the research literature tells us

The psychological science of workplace meetings

(Mroz et al., 2018)

Clear Purpose for Meeting

Will the meeting offer an opportunity...

- ...to share information?
- ...to solve problems and make decisions
- ...to develop and implement department strategy
- ...to debrief after a “performance?”

What we know: Meeting design

- Attending many meetings increases stress, fatigue, and perceived workload
- Groups with diverse functions generate better solutions
- Meeting quality and discussion are improved when attendees prepare

What we know: Actions and interactions

- Late arrivals cause negative reactions and reduces meeting quality
- High-performing employees participate more than low performers
- Humor and laughter stimulate positive behaviors and group performance
- Groups with complainers perform poorly
- Making meetings relevant, short, and participatory fosters engagement

What we know: Outcomes

- Meetings help set strategic directions
- Positive team interactions are related to organizational success.
- Satisfaction with meetings is associated with overall job satisfaction.

Guidelines from Meeting Science

Questions? Ideas?

Thank you for your attention and engagement

Follow-up

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