
The Mathis Group's

Messenger

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Happy Holidays! Have a Merry Meeting!

Roles For Productive Meetings

It's time to muster the reindeer! Prepare the sleigh! Load the presents! Check the list! It is time to have a meeting!

Productive meetings don't just happen. They require leadership and planning. People must be able to come together with a common focus on the purpose of the meeting. There must be a clear understanding as to the outcome goal of the meeting. Roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined and agreed upon.

There are four roles in an effective meeting: leader's role, participant's role, recorder's role and management's role. They all play an important part.

The leader's role actually begins before the meeting ever takes place. If you are the leader, you must prepare for the meeting. What is the purpose of the meeting? What is the problem we need to solve? What do we hope to accomplish? Why are we meeting? The leader will prepare for the meeting so that these questions are answered for all involved. A sense of purpose will be established, and value will be given to the time invested in the meeting. An agenda will then be prepared to document the purpose and order of information/discussion in the meeting.

The leader will start the meeting on time, creating an air of importance and urgency. You will follow the prepared agenda, keeping order in the meeting. You will encourage comments and discussion, clarify information, balance input, and seek consensus. Remember, everyone is on the same team!

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Communication In Meetings

It is crucial for there to be good communication between people in a meeting. Team members must be able to honestly and openly express their ideas and feelings to the team. Negative issues and problems must be addressed for the team to be effective. As everyone knows, many team meetings are called solely for the purpose of fixing something, and this can only happen if team members are able to voice what they really think. Everyone's opinion is important, and it is when all these opinions and ideas are laid out on the table that a solution can be found.

People are different in how they see things, and they will have different points of view. It is important to realize that we are not going to agree on everything, but we should be able to disagree agreeably and come up with the best solution. Try these techniques for disagreeing. Always respect the other person. Seek to understand. Ask for more information or details. Give reasons and data for your opinion. Accept that you disagree but do it agreeably. Examine other options.

In your team, be on guard that a disagreement is turning into a conflict. Look for these caution signs. One topic turns into many from the past. Voice pitch changes. Hurtful and sharp words are chosen. Anger increases.

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The participant's role in the meeting is just as important. Each person should value the importance of the meeting and be respectful by coming to the meeting on time. If a task has been assigned beforehand, be prepared. Do your fair share; take an active role. Remember to discuss issues, not people. Listen to the views of others. Demonstrate respect during and after the meeting.

The recorder's role in the meeting is important in the documentation. First, you should document who is attending the meeting. Then, focus on topics that are discussed. List who is responsible for what for the next meeting. Create, with the help of the team leader, the next agenda. Maintain a team notebook with minutes for a permanent record.

Management's role in a meeting is an active and important ingredient. Management must seek to motivate and support, not tear down with criticism. Management must help equip the people. They should function as a coach and a resource finder. They should help communicate upline as to what is happening in team meetings.

Each role is critical to the success of a productive meeting. What is your role?

*When you talk, you repeat
what you already know;
when you listen,
you often learn something.*

Jared Sparks, Historian and Editor

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If you sense communication is breaking down in your meeting, you must remain calm. Try to look at it from different viewpoints. Listen and ask questions for clarification. Don't interrupt or argue, but continue to gather details and make comparisons for validity. Examine the motive behind the viewpoint and try to validate the possible connection. Listen to their whole message. Everyone needs to feel that what they have to say is important.

It is often helpful to refocus the communication in a different direction. Surface a common goal or target for everyone to go after - get everyone back on the same side again. Have a clear-the-air session in which all team members can refocus on what they do agree on rather than on what they disagree. By re-establishing the purpose and commitment, the team will be ready to go!

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