

School of Automotive Engineering

Engineering Business Skills -
Effective Meetings

Why hold meetings ?

The question is rarely asked

One should consider what to achieve by calling a meeting

☐ Meetings

- Involve a lot of people
 - Hence are expensive
 - Require suitable preparation
 - Can lift people
 - Can de-motivate people
-

Why hold meetings ?

Possible reasons for calling a meeting :

- Communicate

- Face to face contact is the best way of putting a message across
 - You can tell more about attitude, real meaning etc by being there
 - Read body language
 - Gauge the mood of the meeting
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Why hold meetings ?

□ Sharing

- It can be useful to be seen to be sharing messages rather than sending emails etc

□ Creativity

- Teams can brainstorm, mind map etc to become more creative than individuals
 - Particularly effective for concept design
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Why hold meetings ?

□ Synergy

- Combined abilities of team members will be more effective than individuals acting alone
- Failure mode effect analysis (FMEA)
- Design reviews

□ Motivation

- Messages and encouragement can be delivered more directly and can be aimed at individuals
-

Why hold meetings ?

☐ Bonding

- Helps bond people together
- Reinforce their common purpose
- Reinforce the sense of direction, esp if normally they work alone

☐ Teaming

- Helps to reduce the power and control of one person
 - (unless the plan is to support and reinforce)
 - Shares responsibilities
-

Questions for meetings ?

- ❑ Goals – objectives for meetings
 - What are we specifically trying to achieve ?
 - Deliverables not the allocated tasks
 - ❑ Alternatives
 - Consider if there is another way to reach the goal other than have a meeting
 - ❑ Attendees
 - Who is critical and for what aspects
 - ❑ Meeting type
 - i.e creative or analytical
 - ❑ Do I have the tools required ?
-

Roles and responsibilities

The person calling/chairing the meeting

☐ Reason

- Have a specific reason for calling a meeting
- What are we specifically trying to achieve ?
- Deliverables not the allocated tasks

☐ Alternatives

- Consider if there is another way to reach the goal other than have a meeting
- i.e. emails, questionnaires, 1 to 1's

☐ Timing

- Decide the date and timing for the meeting
 - High or low energy time ?
 - How long should the meeting last ?
-

Roles and responsibilities

The person calling/chairing the meeting

☐ Objectives

- List the objectives for the meeting

☐ Attendees

- Only invite people who are needed at the meeting
- Consider of all the people need to attend for all of the meeting – one hour not all day

☐ Cost

- Calculate what the meeting will cost
 - Either financially or in person hours
 - What is the opportunity cost ?
-

Roles and responsibilities

The person calling/chairing the meeting

□ Benefits

- Calculate the quantifiable benefits
- If we achieve this then.....

□ Agenda

- Prepare and circulate an agenda
 - Include timing, objectives, limit number of items
 - Split out objectives into timed slots
 - Ensure that attendees know what to prepare prior to the meeting
-

Roles and responsibilities

The person calling/chairing the meeting

☐ Venue

- Where should the meeting be held
- Is the atmosphere suitable
- Are the facilities suitable, projectors, phones etc
- Is catering required ?

☐ Records

- Ensure that someone will take the minutes
 - Ensure that SMART objectives are set and assigned to individuals
 - Consider legal implications of the minutes
-

Roles and responsibilities

Participants

☐ Attendance

- Do you really need to go ?
- Do you need to be there for all items ?
- Could someone go in your place ?
- Could you brief another attendee ?

☐ Agenda

- Have you 'properly' read the agenda ?
 - Do you understand the agenda and objectives ?
 - Ensure that you know when and where the meeting is
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Roles and responsibilities

Participants

- Preparation
 - What do you want to get out of the meeting?
 - Prepare your own contribution
 - Reports, presentations, knowledge briefings
 - What questions may you be asked- prepare answers
 - Actions
 - Have you completed all the actions required from previous meetings?
 - Make sure you get there in time
 - Ensure that you are in the right frame of mind
 - Dump mental baggage !
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Roles and responsibilities

Chairing a meeting

□ Starting

- Get a reputation for beginning on time, and finishing on time
- Otherwise you will start progressively later

□ Introduction

- Clearly state the purpose and objectives of the meeting
 - Introduce people if required
 - Follow through actions from previous meetings
 - Ensure there are no interruptions, phones etc
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Roles and responsibilities

Chairing a meeting

- Control the timing
 - Keep to the agenda
 - Maintain the pace of the meeting
 - Control the discussion
 - Direct discussion
 - Use flip charts, white boards etc to coordinate discussion
 - Be impartial
 - Encourage contributions from all
 - Actively seek different views, debate helps the decision making process
 - Don't let people take over, silence the gobby ones
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Roles and responsibilities

Chairing a meeting

- Control the mood
 - Keep in mind the feelings and objectives of the participants
 - Be aware of hidden agendas and 'the games people play'
 - Call breaks to improve attention
 - Call breaks to allow for informal discussion
 - Control the results
 - Sum up conclusions at each stage
 - Ensure that all items have been covered
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Roles and responsibilities

Chairing a meeting

☐ Finishing up

- Summarise decisions and actions at the end
- Ensure participants understand their actions
- Arrange date, time and venue of any further meeting

☐ Reflection

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the meeting
 - Assess your management of the meeting
 - Learn, strive for continuous improvement
-

Roles and responsibilities

Attending a meeting

□ Timing

- Get there on time
- Understand the timing and finish time

□ State of mind

- Decide to be mentally and physically positive and supportive throughout
 - Respect other peoples rights to their views
 - Determine not to be regarded as -ve
-

Roles and responsibilities

Attending a meeting

☐ Conduct

- Do not disagree aggressively
 - Or be overbearing or pompous
 - Be assertive not aggressive
 - Do not dominate others
 - Do not let yourself be dominated
 - Avoid wasting the time of the meeting
-

Roles and responsibilities

Attending a meeting

☐ Listening

- Learn to listen and not just to hear
- Welcome other views and consider them
- Don't interrupt unnecessarily

☐ Contributing

- Ensure your contributions are relevant and consistent with the meetings objectives
 - Be succinct
 - Reflect other peoples views when you speak
 - Be open to questioning/argument
-

Roles and responsibilities

Attending a meeting

- Discussion and decisions
 - Avoid win/lose situations
 - Avoid backing yourself into a corner
 - Be prepared to compromise
 - Recording
 - Take your own notes during the meeting
 - Write down what actions you are to take
 - Ensure these actions are clarified at the end
-

Roles and responsibilities

Attending a meeting

- Leaving the meeting
 - Ensure that your actions are SMART
 - Ensure you carry out actions before the next meeting
- Reflection
 - Did you listen well ?
 - Was your contribution appropriate ?
 - What improvements for next time ?

Remember : quality, not quantity, counts



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