

## Conducting an effective court-convened meeting

### PLAN:

**Participants.** Make sure the right people are invited.

**Purpose.** Determine the overriding end result of the meeting - the purpose of the meeting. Brainstorming, sharing information, making decisions, or solving problems? Depending on the purpose of the meeting, decide if a better, more efficient result could be obtained by sending an email or meeting individually with someone. Consider if you might need an external trauma expert to participate if it would advance your purpose.

**Agenda.** Develop an agenda. Have columns for the time, item, decision, person, deadline. Think about how you label an event, so people come in with the appropriate mindset and an understanding of what will be addressed. Distribute the agenda beforehand.

**Materials.** Identify what participants may need to read prior to the meeting or bring with them for helpful resources during the meeting. Distribute the materials beforehand. Introverts (those who prefer to organize their thoughts internally) especially appreciate receiving the agenda and materials prior to the meeting.

**Visuals.** Think of ways to make the meeting more visually compelling - graphics, visual aids, PowerPoint (see box at the end of this document).

**Set-up.** Select location and proper room set-up. Brainstorming sessions may require something different (such as an off-site meeting).

**Notification.** Notify well in advance. Send a reminder the day before.

### AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MEETING:

**Starting.** Start on time. Don't wait for latecomers.

**Energy.** Welcome everyone. Model the kind of energy and participation needed by meeting participants.

**Agenda.** Ensure that everyone has an agenda in front of them.

**Purpose.** State the goal of the meeting and state the meeting end time. Start with the conclusion of the last meeting.

**Timekeeper.** Ask that someone be the timekeeper.

**Note taker.** Assign someone to take notes.

**Facilitator.** Assign a facilitator if not yourself. Whoever leads the meeting has the most power in the room. As a judge running a meeting, you have even more power. If you make your opinions known from the front of the room, you may find that no one else is talking. If you have strong opinions, you may want to have someone else facilitate the meeting. You may increase the energy of meetings if you rotate the responsibility of leading meetings with everyone on your team.

### DURING THE MEETING:

**Focus.** Redirect the conversation promptly if it gets off course. If an item comes up that is not on the agenda, schedule a time to discuss it at a later date. Or, assign a small group to address it. Topic drift will kill a meeting. Conduct "satisfaction checks" periodically. Use humor if the task at hand is veering off track.

**Engage.** Resist the temptation to lecture. Encourage participation from everyone but don't force it. Those who are extroverts (prefer to organize their thoughts by talking) may need to be reigned in enough to make room for others' contributions. Introverts (prefer to organize their thoughts internally) may need silent pauses to speak. Build consensus.

**Creativity.** Encourage creativity. Ensure a safe and open meeting environment that is supportive of all participants. Ask "what if" questions and promote speculative thinking.

**Question.** Ask open-ended questions. "How do you define quality?" "How would you tackle this problem?" "What do all of you think?" "What challenges would we have if we implemented this?" Ask questions to clarify and to make sure viewpoints are understood. Wait ten seconds after asking your questions. If there is no response, rephrase or ask your question again. Someone will feel compelled to speak, and then your discussion will take off.

**Something to think about: A word about drama during meetings.** While most meeting leaders tend to avoid tension, Patrick Lencioni, author of *Death by Meeting*, asserts that meetings are boring because they lack drama. He writes that resolving issues born from conflict makes the meetings interesting, fun, and engaging. It gives participants a reason to care. Tension may serve as a catalyst. He writes, "the only thing more painful than confronting an uncomfortable topic is pretending it doesn't exist."

**Listen.** Use active listening - hearing not only the words participants are using but the complete messages being sent.

**Observe.** Watch for body language. Assess how the group is functioning.

**Time.** Honor time limits.

### AT THE END OF THE MEETING:

**Wrap-up.** Summarize the key points as the meeting ends.

**Assign.** Capture and assign action items or next steps.

**Schedule.** Agree to a date and time for the next meeting.

**End.** Break the meeting on time and succinctly. Don't allow the meeting to drag on after the assignments are made. Thank everyone for their contributions.

### IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE MEETING:

**Document.** Type the outcome of the meeting, as well as assignments and timelines.

**Communicate.** E-mail a copy of this summary to all attendees.

#### **Basic problem solving for groups.**

- Pick one issue at a time.
- Understand the problem by detailing where things are going wrong. Don't place blame.
- Brainstorm potential solutions once the challenge is clearly defined and understood.
- Don't stifle creativity.
- Discuss pros and cons of each proposed solution.
- Ask again for other solutions - that maybe combine the best of the various suggestions.
- Seek consensus first. If not everyone agrees, make sure that everyone "can live with the final decision."

#### **Basic brainstorming.**

- Establish the rules of brainstorming with the team.
- Identify and review the topic of the brainstorming.
- Allow a brief period of silence for team members to contemplate the topic.
- Invite ideas. Record ideas (using the words of the contributor).
- Continue until several minutes of silence produces no more.

## PowerPoint

- Try to use only five or six words on the each slide. Slides should reinforce your words, not repeat them.
- Use pictures and graphics to illustrate the point. It is best to use stock photo images and not clipart. The slide should grab the participants' attention, so they will want to hear what you say to fit the image.
- There should be no need to print your slides for handouts because they will not make sense without the presentation (if you stick to the 6-word slides).
- Use only one layer of bullets. Excessive bullets take away from the point.

### Guy Kawasaki's (author and former Apple employee) 10/20/30 Rule:

**10** No more than 10 slides in the presentation -- very few people take away much more than one concept from a presentation, so all that other stuff is extra.

**20** The slide presentation should be designed to last 20 minutes, leaving room for ample questions/discussion between slides or after the presentation. Guy points out that the point of the presentation is typically to initiate a discussion. (Of course this may vary somewhat based on the amount of time allocated for the presentation.)

**30** Font size should be no smaller than 30 (Arial font). Guy says that audiences read faster than you can talk, so that while you are up there talking, they are trying to read your slides and not listening to what you are saying.

*"15 Best PowerPoint Presentation Design Posts for 2011"*

<http://www.presentationadvisors.com/best-powerpoint-presentation-posts>

This helpful site includes the presentation secrets of Steve Jobs, discussion of slide types, and how to reduce the amount of text on your slides.