



MASTERING MEETINGS BEFORE THEY MASTER YOU

J. J. Turner, Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION

Most of us have heard or uttered statements like these:

- *Oh no, not another meeting.*
- *I'm tired of attending useless meetings.*
- *Our meetings are nothing but gripe sessions.*
- *Most of our meetings accomplish very little.*
- *I wish we could eliminate some of our useless meetings.*
-

Dr. Peter Drucker, the guru of American business training, wrote in his book ***Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices***: *There are a number of common symptoms of poor organization. . . . First, the symptom of too many meetings attended by too many people The human dynamics of meetings are so complex as to make them very poor tools for getting any work done (pp.548).*

Someone has said, *if you want to stall the success of a project call a business meeting*. Sadly, this statement contains a nugget of truth when applied to some groups, even congregations of God's people. Somewhere, at sometime, outside of biblical examples, we came up with the idea of "business meetings"; perhaps patterned after the business, military or sports model.

It would be a mistake to say that ALL business meetings are a waste of time; it is only those meetings that are poorly prepared and conducted without a specific agenda.



The Negative Side of Meetings

A recent survey showed that senior managers spend just short of half their time in meetings; a third of all meeting time is wasted. Here are some reasons why most meetings are a waste of valuable time, which is a stewardship issue:

1. There is no “burning issue” that needs solving or attended to.
2. There is no prepared agenda distributed before hand.
3. Attendees don’t know what the meeting is for.
4. No one is clear about what is to be accomplished in the meeting.
5. Meetings run to long and are boring.
6. Discussions wander and are unfocused.
7. Attendees tell “war stories” or “chase rabbits.”
8. There are too many items to be covered.
9. No one wants to talk about the real issues or problems.
10. Some who attend don’t want to be there.
11. There are too many distractions or interruptions.
12. People don’t cooperate.
13. There are no time limits.
14. Visuals and handouts are nonexistent or poorly done.
15. The decisions have already been made prior to the meeting.
16. People attack each other’s ideas and suggestions.
17. Some meeting are no more than gossip sessions
18. Meetings are used when other methods would be better.



A Basic Planning Guide for a Meeting

Planning is the key to conducting successful meetings. Planning is a matter of thinking things through: what (is the meeting for)? Who (should be there)? And how (should the meeting be run)? Here is a simple planning guide that may be used for brief or long meetings.

Meeting Planning Guide

Date of meeting _____ Time _____ Place _____

What is the burning issue for this meeting? _____

What do you want to happen as a result of the meeting? _____



Could that results be accomplished another way? () Yes () No

If yes, how?

___ telephone call

___ Fax

___ memo or report

___ E-mail

___ teleconference

___ stand-up brief meeting

___ Other _____

Who will attend the meeting?

Attendees:

Why? Role they'll play



How will the meeting be held?

What room layout will you use?

What is the best format for the meeting?

- presentation small group
- discussion combination
- creative problem solving other

What materials/equipment do you need?

- audiovisual
- handouts
- power point
- flip charts, chalkboard, etc.
- other

How will you evaluate the meeting? _____



JEREMIAH INSTITUTE

J. J. TURNER
jeremiahinst@aol.com
www.jeremiahinstitute.com

6

What do you project, if any, as a follow-up? _____

Who will record and distribute the minutes of the meeting? _____

** For additional information on how to conduct business meetings see *Leaders and Business Meetings* in my book ***Leadership Through Church Growth*** (pp. 94-101).



POSITIVE COMMUNICATION

Introduction

How important is to communicate effectively? It is the only link between people capable of creating rapport, trust, solving issues, sharing information, commitment, and so forth. When we communicate poorly or not at all, we create a cycle of (1) resistance, (2) resentment, (3) rejection, (4) reluctance, and (5) revenge. On the other hand, when we communicate effectively, we create a positive cycle of (1) clarity, (2) catch, (3) care, (4) cooperation, and (5) commitment.

Everything in life, regardless of the area, is tied to communication. Imagine the chaos a baseball team would experience without effective communication between players and coaches. How about a medical team in an operating room? Family's breakdown because of poor communication. Nations go to war because of faulty communication.

A rule in communication is, *you cannot not communicate!* But WHAT and HOW you communicate determines the effectiveness of relationships with others. Even communication with self through self-talk, cognitive reflections, neurological impressions, and the five senses demonstrate that each of us stay in a perpetual mode of communication; the challenges increase when add communication with others.

Few things in an organization, large or small, business or social, family or club, are more vital than clear communication techniques. This is also true in the church. The Bible has numerous things to say about communication:

1. *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath (James 1:19).*
2. *But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ (Ephesians 4:15).*
3. *And he said unto them, Take heed WHAT you hear... (Mark. 4:24).*
4. *Take heed therefore HOW you hear... (Luke 8:18).*



What is Communication?

In a linguistic sense communication involves sending out word symbols from your mind to another person's mind with the desire that when A is sent it will be received and understood as A, not as B or C. Communication in a practical sense involves the following factors:

1. We communicate to INFORM in a timely manner.
2. Communication involves: (1) body language, (2) voice tone, and (3) word choices.
3. To draw minds together in agreement and understanding.
4. To clear up any misunderstandings or prevent misunderstandings.
5. To instruct and share vital information.
6. To eliminate doubt or confusion.
7. To confer value (You are somebody).
8. To listen for information and heart messages.
9. To get things done in an orderly manner.
10. To build awareness and acceptance.
11. To keep the frustration level low or non-existent.
12. To glorify God AND His kingdom (Eph. 3:21).

Various Modes of Communication

There are numerous modes of communicating with others. Some of these are simple and some are complex or technical. Here are a few of these modes:

1. Face-to-face exchange of words, etc.
2. Telephone (conference calls, one-to-one, etc.)
3. E-mail via the computer
4. Use of Fax machines.
5. Letters (Postal services or carriers).
6. Memos (brief documents stating major points).
7. Voice mail (Leave messages).



8. Phone trees (automatic sending of messages).
9. Pager (beepers).
10. Reports (Longer documents delivering vital information).
11. News letters (Weekly, monthly, etc.).
12. Flyers and bulletins.
13. Placards or signs.
14. Inserts in other documents (e.g., flyer in song books).
15. Bulletin boards (In high traffic areas).
16. Power-point presentations for audiences or groups.

How to Determine Which Mode to Use

Since there are many modes of communication, how do you know which one to choose? There are several factors that determine which mode would be best in communicating your idea or message. Here are some ways to determine which mode to use:

1. First, clearly define **WHAT** needs to be communicated.
2. Second, clearly define **WHY** this needs to be communicated.
3. Third, identify to **WHOM** this needs to be communicated.
4. Fourth, **WHAT** results are you expecting from this communiqué?
5. Fifth, **WHAT** are the time limitations?
6. Sixth, **HOW** are you expected to be answered (If an answer is needed)?
7. Seventh, **WHICH** of the modes will be best for your objective? **WHY**?
8. Eighth, **WHAT** will happen if you don't communicate this issue?
9. Ninth, **WHAT** are the absolute essential in this communiqué?
10. Tenth, **WHO** may need to be involved in forming the communiqué?



Beware of Communication Blockers

It is obvious that since communication is so important, there are various things that may block an effective communication. Here are a few of these potential blockers:

1. Ignorance about the importance of communication.
2. No agreed to set of communication guidelines.
3. Don't know what is or what is not important.
4. Lack of delegated authority.
5. Sidetracked with other issues.
6. Poor communication skills.
7. Personal agenda gets in the way.
8. Fear of failure.
9. Laziness or procrastination.
10. Not totally committed to work.
11. Assuming because you know everybody else knows.
12. Choosing wrong mode of communication.

Major Benefits of Positive Communication

There are numerous benefits when positive communication takes place within any system involving people. Here are few of these benefits:

1. You help eliminate miss-information.
2. You correct misunderstandings.
3. You "provide things honest before all men."
4. Build credibility with others.
5. Resolves conflict and improve problem solving.
6. Improve and facilitate teamwork.
7. Build consensus for making decisions.
8. Conduct and participate in more effective meetings.
9. Give and accept appropriate advice.
10. Improve peace of mind and work satisfaction.
11. Lead others to mutual benefits and goals.
12. Create a positive environment in which to work.



13. Encourage others to be better listeners.
14. Will lead to accomplishing more objectives.
15. Will create clarity and brevity.

Summary of Effective Steps to Communication

“GOD’S TEAM”

KINGDOM DREAMERS PLANNING SESSION

AGENDA

INTRODUCTION

We are here for one major purpose: *To begin creating a multiple-years dream for our congregation, which centers in glorifying God (Eph. 3:21).* As Kingdom Dreamers we must be committed to **advancing the kingdom on all fronts** (Isa. 2:2-4; Matt. 6:33).

What is the burning issue? Each team member must identify it for himself, as well as state why it’s a burning issue and what are some possible solutions.



KEYS TO SUCCESS

1. “A mind to work” (Neh. 4:6).
2. Each man doing his part—self-starter (Eph. 4:11-16). “A doer of the word” (Jas. 1:23).
3. Communication is essential.
4. A workable game plan toward identified faith targets.

INDIVIDUAL MINISTRY GOALS (What?)

1. Each elder
2. Each deacon
3. Each preacher
4. Each ministry leader

THIS IS A BEGINNING DREAM SESSION

1. A one-year calendar set of events. (Easy).
2. Five-year faith targets.
3. Ten-year faith targets
4. Fifteen-year faith targets
5. Twenty-year faith targets
6. Twenty-five year faith targets.
7. **The vision driven church (handout).**

FOLLOW-UP

1. “Rome wasn’t built in a day.”
2. Church didn’t pop into existence overnight.
3. Takes long and prayerful hours of work to cast an enduring and attainable dream.