Effective Meetings for Auditors and Team Leads

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Meeting Agenda

Duration: 50 minutes

Presentation Goals:
• Identify 6 Meeting Types
• Discuss 5 Ingredients of successful meetings
• Provide 8 Tools you can use for successful meetings
• Q&A

Some slides are busy, but that was by design so you can use this presentation as a reference document.
6 Meeting Types

1. Status:
   - Share information, not problem solving or finger pointing.
   - Team Leader led for efficient 2-way communication.
   - Short duration, but can vary from 5 to 30 minutes.
   - Focused on key points.
     - Due dates, deliverables, action items.
     - Kick-offs, major milestone, project approval gates.
     - Recommendation approval requests.
     - Issue escalations to management.

2. Working:
   - Make decisions and create deliverables.
   - Interactive team-centric discussions facilitated by the Team Leader.
   - Often recurring and lasting an hour or more.
   - Detailed analysis, planning, etc...

3. Presentation:
   - Present information such as findings and recommendations.
   - Mostly 1-way communication to the audience.
   - Duration varies from 15 to 60 minutes.

4. Training:
   - Focused information sharing.
   - Instructor led.
     - Mostly 1-way communication to targeted audience.
     - 2-way communication for questions and validation of understanding.
   - Duration varies, but keep as short as practical.
     - Often an hour or less to cover the key points.
     - In-depth training can last for several days to weeks.

5. Audit / Investigator Meetings:
   - Subset of prior meeting types:
     - Status – Meetings with stakeholders on findings, timelines, next steps, etc.
     - Working – Planning, analysis discussion, report writing, etc...
     - Presentations - Project kick-offs and closures.
     - Training – Explaining new processes and regulations.
   - Get or validate information on processes, documents, decisions, roles, etc.
     - One or two time meetings with specific persons of interest or subject matter experts vs. recurring weekly project meetings. Shorter is better. Typically not over an hour.
     - Successful meeting rules still apply, perhaps with meeting notes taking a different form than traditional project meetings and can be more confrontational if a collaborative tone is not carefully coordinated.
6 Meeting Types (continued)

6. **Deadly:** (Unnecessary, poorly timed, or just should not happen)
   o Not well planned. No specified agenda, goals, etc...
   o Happens because “we always meet each ______”.
     - Kills enthusiasm, project momentum, and participation.
     - It is **OK to shorten or occasionally cancel meetings**.
   o Could have been resolved with fewer people:
     - Ask yourself if you would want to be at the meeting.
     - Respect participants time and they are more willingly attend your meetings.
     - Use sub-teams for specific issues requiring input from only part of the team. Provide updates during regular team meetings.
     - Could have been resolved using a phone call, visit, or short e-mail.
     - Topic is person specific, such as HR, that is better handled one-on-one.
     - Requires input from only one or two folks.
     - Simple information and document requests.
   o Delay the meeting or take a short break if tension is too high or external factors prevents the participants from focusing.
     - Just announced reorganization.
     - Key participant illness.
     - Need time to think objectively – respond not react.

Successful Meetings

Successful meetings are dependent on 5 key areas.

1. **Honesty and respect:**
   o Encourage everyone at the meeting to participate.
   o Actively listen to all ideas.
   o Before discounting an idea, state 5 reasons it could work.
   o Use people’s names and thank them of their input.
   o Make sure everyone can hear, including remote participants.
   o Be on-time.
     - If your meeting runs long, ask permission and let those that have to leave go.
     - Disagreement is fine, but crush disrespect and backbiting.

2. **Solid preparation:**
   o Written project charter and plan with specific project goals.
   o Specific meeting goals and action items linked back to the project goals.
   o Written meeting minutes distributed within 2 days of the meeting and read prior to the start of the next meeting.
3. **Positive perceived value:**
   - Look through your customer’s eyes. Understand what is important to them.
   - Ensure senior management support with objectives linked to their measurable business goals.
   - Help senior management gain a vested interest in your success.
   - Build middle management buy-in with concise, regular, and timely updates highlighting your project’s successes and benefits to them.
   - Communicate project benefits to participants. Explain how it helps them.
   - When changing tools or processes, emphasize how you are building on their good work. Clap for others and they are more willing to listen.
   - Keep the big picture in mind when defining scope. Avoid tunnel vision or boiling the ocean so you can complete on-time and in-budget.
   - Solve issues they can’t such as communication gaps between work groups.

4. **Active participation:**
   - Recruit the right folks to be on your team.
   - Ensure supervisor support. Have supervisors set expectations for their direct reports to attend and keep informed for added accountability.
   - E-mail a supervisor highlighting their team member’s specific contributions.
     - *You may be the only leader who publically recognizes the employee’s work.*
     - Helps the supervisor on their assessment reviews and builds team morale.
   - Give your team opportunities to grow, take ownership, and become leaders.
   - There are lots of fires to fight and meetings to attend. Make your meetings interesting and relevant.
   - Demanding people attend does not result in active or willing participation.
   - Dead weight can bring down a ship just like negativity.

5. **Commitment with follow-through:**
   - Do what you say you will.
   - Set a good example with a solid work ethic.
8 Meeting Tools

1. Written agendas to keep meetings on-track:
   o Specify meeting time, date, location, expected length, etc. Note next meeting and use reminders especially if there are changes from the normal format.
   o State meeting goal and 3 to 5 key discussion areas.
     ▪ Quickly review key issues, decisions, and action items from last meeting along with any major new developments to get your team focused.
     ▪ Get status on assigned deliverables.
     ▪ Separate informational from problem-solving or decision making issues.
     ▪ Start with easy issues to build momentum, then tackle more complex issues.
     ▪ Order issues that build on each other.
     ▪ Separate into smaller parts when needed to keep focus and manageability.
   o Note next status update date to keep a sense of urgency.
   o Plan around holidays and shift changes so your team’s progress continues.

2. Meeting notes to document key results and action items:
   o Complete in 2 business days and bold names in notes to highlight as needed.
   o Use discretion to maintain honest and open sharing of ideas.
   o Summarize key points and decisions.
   o Share notes with stakeholders and those who could not attend.
   o Set the expectation the notes are read and timely input provided before the next scheduled meeting.
   o List Open Actions Items in meeting notes or link to a separate log if too long.
     ▪ During a Harvard meeting course, I heard a powerful statement: “Meetings without a written action plan means the action items have no life outside those at the meeting.”
     ▪ Some people conveniently forget they were assigned actions unless documented.
     ▪ After closing an item, take it off the list in the notes to save space.
     ▪ Many use unique action item numbers, but some restart numbering in the notes.
     ▪ Some list action categories in next steps to help with short term goal setting in addition to a detailed action item list.
   o Use a template to save time and maintain consistency.
     (See next slide for examples.)
8 Meeting Tools (Continued)

Results of audit meetings often go directly into electronic work papers with built-in templates. There are examples of generic meeting notes templates.

### 3. Management Skills:
- People skills are 80% of success, 20% is tool use.
- Eliminate excuses and remove roadblocks.
- Communicate in the media and format your stakeholders use.
  - Audience not writer based.
  - Short and to the point.
  - Use a central document repository like SharePoint for team notes, analysis, briefings, etc.
  - Embed links to key documents saving time and preventing 5 megabyte meeting notes.
  - Time communication to receiver’s needs when possible. Sometimes less is more.
- Look for projects that overlap with yours.
  - Attend staff meetings.
  - Have lunch with different groups to build a network and ask questions.
  - Merge teams and consolidate when possible to avoid duplication of effort.

### 4. E-mail Distribution List:
- More efficient.
- Keeps people from being accidently left off distributions.
5. Meeting Logistics:
- Who, where, when, why, and how long.
- Use automated calendar invites with 5-10 minute reminders.
- You may need to change your schedule to accommodate the team.
- Agree on the type of meetings.
  - Virtual works best if the group has met before or are geographically dispersed.
  - Face-to-face builds relationships faster, enables better communication because you do not lose non-verbal cues, limits multi-tasking, and critical for sensitive issues.
- Determine room size and seating arrangement.
  - Round tables de-emphasize hierarchy while rectangular stress structure.
  - Arrange tables so you can see each other to encourage free exchange of information and opinions. Informal settings can sometimes help.
- Determine what kinds of equipment and network connectivity is needed.
  (Telephones, video, projectors, white boards, LAN access, etc.)
- Invite participants based on meeting goal. Consider group dynamics, such as number of participants, personalities, corporate culture.

6. Meeting Ground Rules:
- Everyone participates.
- Everyone is responsible for reading meeting notes.
- Respect participants, ideas, and confidentiality.
- Set time limits.
- Agree on how decisions will be made.
  - Leader decides based on participant input.
  - Majority vote builds a sense of fairness, ownership, and teamwork
  - Consensus takes the longest, builds support through discussion and understanding, and helps in times of shared sacrifice or major change.
- Define roles and responsibility.
  - Your actions and positive attitude can determine whether people are encouraged to contribute or fall silent in frustration.
  - Leaders highlight areas of agreement, build consensus, keep meetings on track, and should not dominate the discussion.
  - Leaders may need to add humor to relieve tension and sometimes apologize.
  - Consider rotating scribe, facilitator, timer roles.
7. Understand Stages of Team Development.

- Stages can start over with changes in membership and each project phase.
  - Forming:
    - **Symptoms:** Confusion. Defining relationships, roles, and team purpose.
    - **Leader Actions:** Written project charter, clear scope, visible management support, and well planned meetings.
  - Storming:
    - **Symptoms:** Conflict. Push to just do it and get done. Resistance to change.
    - **Leader Actions:** Avoid short cuts. Meeting agendas with action items. Brainstorm and discuss differences to building consensus/buy-in.
  - Norming:
    - **Symptoms:** Communication, respect, and idea sharing.
    - **Leader Actions:** Build on decisions and integrate tools. Highlight accomplishments.
  - Performing:
    - **Symptoms:** Commitment with personal ownership in the team’s success. Lots of forward progress towards achieving project goals/deliverables.
    - **Leader Actions:** Meeting agendas with timelines to keep moving forward. Avoid group think. Use data driven decisions. Keep asking questions, especially does this make sense or are missing something.

8. Addressing Conflict / Managing Personalities

- Leaders are not passive, they act. Do NOT ignore bad behavior or it gets worse. Address it head on with respect and privately when possible.
- Acknowledge input of “know-it-alls” who want to jump to action and not waste time analyzing.
  - Give examples of how data analysis helped other projects find solutions that were not readily apparent.
  - Simply say “really” or “why”, then wait quietly.
  - Ask for input from other team members, noting all were chosen for specific skills.
  - Establish eye contact with those who have not given input, facing away dominators.
  - Reiterate meeting rules.
- Acknowledge the feeling then say “Let’s table that for now and move to agenda item…”
- Sometimes a short break is needed to cool down and think objectively.
- Before giving assignments to someone that has too much on their plate or does not follow-through, ask if they will need help and give them permission to reconsider. Thank them for their enthusiasm, but share the work load across the team so all can grow.
- Redirect complainers and “it will never work” people by reminding them how fortunate they are be the ones solving the problem.
- Refer back to decisions documented in notes and hold people accountable.
- Ask people who refuse to make a decision what points are they unsure about and what data they need to decide.
Questions