

Guidelines for Holding a Meeting

Many of the tools for getting people involved have a few elements in common. Here is a tip sheet of things to consider when you plan a meeting that focuses on change. (These are pretty good ideas to use in other meetings as well.)

- Invite representatives from all groups that have a stake in the outcome of this change. When possible, invite everyone. If that's not possible, make sure all groups and interests are represented.
- Consider using a planning group made up of many diverse interests to help you plan the meeting.
- Pre-assign seats so that each table of eight to ten people is a maximum mixture of the whole. Every table should be a microcosm of the entire organization. Each table should include various departments, interests, and levels of the organization.
- Allow time for conversation. Don't try to speed things up.
- Emphasize conversation, not presentation. Except for an introductory presentation that sets the stage (and even that might not be necessary), don't make speeches.
- Before getting reactions to a presentation, make sure people are clear about what has just been presented. Ask for questions of clarification before you get people's reactions. If you miss this step, people will be responding from their assumption about what they think they heard, rather than responding to the actual idea.
- Invite resistance. ***Real Time Strategic Change*** uses a simple technique. After a proposal is made, each table is asked to respond to three questions: What makes you glad (about this proposal)? What makes you mad? What would you add (or change)?
- Tell people how you will use this information. And then keep your promises. If you say you'll get back to them within three days, don't miss that deadline.
- Stay awake. Meeting agendas are merely roadmaps. Actual driving conditions will vary. If it seems clear that people are resistant to something, take time to explore what's in their hearts and on their minds. I have seen good meetings disintegrate simply because the leaders felt compelled to get through the agenda in spite of what was occurring in front of them.
- Be honest. If some items are not negotiable, tell people, and tell them why. Don't pretend that everything is open for discussion if that's not the case. You may take some heat for this, but it will be far better than implicitly lying to folks.