

Make Meetings Matter with Mindfulness

According to a recent Bain & Company study, managers spend 50% or more of their time in meetings. No big revelation for you readers, I'm sure. However – and, here is the frightening stat – two-thirds of meetings end before important decisions are made. No wonder 85% of executives are dissatisfied with the efficiency and effectiveness of their meetings (***Decide & Deliver: 5 Steps to Breakthrough Performance in your Organization***, by Blenko, Markins and Rogers).

Here is how mindful leaders lead meetings to achieve sound decisions. They:

Send an agenda prior to the meeting that includes a clear, succinct statement of the decisions to be made during the meeting.

Open the meeting with a clear objective – The purpose of this meeting is to decide...and the ground rule is that *we make decisions based on what we know now with the understanding that we can always modify our course if new information comes to light later.*

Ruthlessly refuse to discuss topics unrelated to the stated purpose. A parking lot (visible spot where topics are captured and put aside for discussion at another time) is ideal for this purpose.

Ensure that all have an opportunity to clarify their understanding of the decision(s) to be made.

Encourage questions for clarification, but do not allow participants to disguise their questions of clarification as objections or topic jumps. ***This is crucial!***

Either propose a decision or ask a participant to propose a decision. Mindful leaders listen to proposals carefully and do not permit the proposer to “sell” his or her proposed decision.

Ensure all get their questions of understanding answered by the proposer. It is ok for the proposer to respond with “can’t answer that question” or “I don’t know”.

Proposer can modify his or her recommended decision based on questions of understanding.

Allow an “objection” round. Those who object must do so by stating how the proposed decision needs to be modified to get the best possible outcome.

Following each objection, the proposer responds by answering the question: *Will the proposed modification achieve the best possible outcome?*

Do not allow members to spend time “agreeing with” or “disagreeing with” proposed decisions. Unless there is an objection, it is not necessary to say anything.

Mindful meeting managers keep meetings focused on the here and now vs. on the mights and maybes (which typically drain energy and deter decision-making). They know how to facilitate discussion, ensure that objections get heard, responded to, and integrated to reach a decision.

About the author: Rosaria (Ria) Hawkins, PhD, is president of Take Charge consultants and has studied mindful leaders and their approach to change.

The information above also employs an integrative decision making process designed by Holocracy One™.

Take Charge provides leadership development and consulting solutions that help organizations build mindful leaders – that is, leaders who transcend previous performance levels, establish strong productive relationships, maximize business results and successfully navigate complex environments . For more information about Take Charge’s leadership development programs, or for a free consultation give us a call 610-380-09870 or visit us on the web

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