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Leading effective teams from home:

Meetings - Why bother?

By the Catalyst Research Team* on June 3rd, 2020



Meetings are expensive, so make them worthwhile. Treat them as investments in the project and the team.

Meetings are tools for enhancing team communications and decision making. In good meetings, work gets done – useful outputs emerge. Work also gets done between meetings. Team leaders pay attention to both those work zones.

For some purposes, meetings are essential; for some purposes, they are a waste. In an office or lab setting, meetings can be informal or formal, accidental or brief, planned, and lengthy. The same meeting design options used for face-to-face meetings are available for virtual teams but take a little more deliberate planning. Haphazard meetings usually waste resources. If two-way communication is important to project progress, plan a meeting with the essential member(s) participating. Do not meet when emails will do. Do not hold informational meetings that are just one-way communication.

Meetings are essential for decision making, problem-solving, innovation, and team building.

What kinds of meetings can you use? Formal work sessions or informal information sessions (e.g., agile standup meetings), problem-solving or reporting, email chains or conference calls, voicemails or texts, shared drives and whiteboards, or retreats. All of these options are ways of organizing a chain of interactions among members for clarifying the challenge, sharing key expertise, and defining the solution.

Where does the work occur?

Project work requires a range of settings from concentrated solo work to formal meetings of the whole team, from developing tools to developing solutions, from burning out prototypes to presenting the business case to upper management. A key role for the team leader is choosing the type of meeting and then planning and facilitating it. Leadership style in a meeting has a significant impact. A meeting leader with a personal agenda and a head of steam can silence the room and run a monologue – that may be the worst possible meeting – it not only wastes the time of members but erodes their morale. However, other meetings also destroy or waste resources.

Meetings, like other processes the team generates and manages, can be improved in many ways. From the select list of ways captured in the associated Factsheets in this series, pick one each week and try it. Keep the ones that fit your team or adapt the ideas and tools shared in the series to fit, so improvement is continuous.

Resources: Elise Keith of Lucid Meetings

<https://blog.lucidmeetings.com/blog/16-types-of-business-meetings>

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