EPICENTRAL

A Newsletter from Epicenter Development Group
highlighting ideas that improve organizations

Welcome to Epicenter Development Group's newsletter, EPICentral. The purpose of this newsletter is to highlight fundamental ideas that have helped organizations develop and maintain great manufacturing and service operations. We hope that you find our EPICentral newsletter helpful, and we would welcome your comments on its content.

Who Called This Meeting? - Why Some Meetings Go Horribly Wrong

Meetings cost a <u>lot</u> of money, but we rely on them to share information, solve problems, generate solutions and make good decisions. Unfortunately, studies have repeatedly shown that many meetings are simply not effective and, in fact, are considered a **big waste of time.** In this newsletter, we will summarize some of the biggest culprits that lead to meetings that fall short their intended goals.

Multi-Tasking

Studies estimate that up to **92%** of meeting participants multi-task during meetings by checking texts and emails or working on other items. This trend seems to be growing as people are busier than ever and continue to be more "plugged in" through their phones, laptops and even their watches! How do we handle this?

- **Get unplugged** - Consider meeting "ground rules" that limit or ban the use of cell phones and laptops during a meeting.

- **Set roles** - If a person is in the meeting, they should be given an active role whether as a Facilitator/Chair, Recorder Keeper, Sergeant at Arms or Active Participant. All participants should, at least, be following and participating in discussions.

- **Un-invite** - If a person only needs to be informed of information shared or decisions made in the meeting, they should not be invited into the meeting and should, instead, be sent a meeting summary after the meeting.

Lack of Planning

Just like you wouldn't hold a wedding reception without a plan, you shouldn't hold a meeting without completing some upfront planning. In general, good planning leads to shorter, more-productive meetings that meet the objectives most of the time (and visa-versa).

- **Why are we here?** - Try to clearly identify the purpose of the meeting before setting it up. Do you want to make a decision, problem-solve a situation, disseminate information or develop solutions?

- **Who should I invite?** The meeting purpose or objective is the foundation for who should be invited to the meeting and their roles. Are they a decision-maker, presenter or source of information or is their buy-in required for moving forward with a new initiative? Identify the people that are critical for meeting the objectives and verify that they (or a proxy) will be able to attend before finalizing the schedule.

- **How should the attendees prepare?** How often do people come to a meeting unprepared to present information or to make a decision? Once the meeting objectives are set, it is important to communicate the meeting expectations to the attendees. For example, should they be prepared to present information, actively discuss a specific topic, or make a decision?

Lack of Structure

Have you ever been in a meeting that seemed to go nowhere? Structure is what sets the "flow" of a meeting, and it can have a profound impact on the efficiency and results of an event. Some general considerations for meeting structures are as follows:

- **Introduction** - Start the meeting by reviewing the objectives, agenda and any ground rules that have been set for the meeting. In addition, remind people of their meeting roles and responsibilities (not just passive observers).

- **Track Meeting Progress** - To ensure that the meeting objectives are being met, make sure to track the completion of each objective during the meeting. If the goal is to educate a group then this might mean "checking in" with people on their understanding before moving to another topic. If the goal is to make a series of decisions, this might include clearly stating the decision made with affirmatives before moving to the next required decision.

- **Assignments** - I have gone to a number of meetings where attendees "forget" assignments made during a meeting. To handle this, I hold time at the end of each meeting to review all assignments made and include the assignments in the distributed meeting minutes. Remember that assignments should be clear, have a specific deadline, and be assigned to a specific person.

Other Thoughts

- **Who Enforces the Rules?** I have had good success in the past assigning a person to the role of "Sergeant of Arms" to enforce the meeting ground rules (even better if it is the worst rule breaker). Positive meeting "etiquette" is a learned, cultural behavior which must be fostered and reinforced.

- **Meeting Follow-Up.** I have found that it is important to distribute meeting minutes to summarize decisions made and assigned action items. The minutes document decisions made and also becomes the foundation for reviewing assignment progress for the subsequent meeting.

- **Other related EPICentral Articles** include Getting More Done with S.M.A.R.T Goals (September 2009), The Fairly Obvious Secrets to Successful Presentations (May 2014), and The Top 10 Presentation Tips (June 14).

- If you would like more information about how to hold effective meeting or would like to work with Epicenter to enhance your team meetings, please feel free to contact Bill Proctor at wproctor@epicentergroup.com or 216.702.0952.

Next Steps

If you would like more information on this topic or other similar types of tools, please contact Bill Proctor with your request at wproctor@epicentergroup.com or 216-702-0952. You can also find previous issues of EPICentral at Newsletters.

Mr. Proctor also speaks on a variety of problem-solving and system design topics that can help companies significantly increase the success and profitability of their businesses. If you are interested in having Bill speak at one of your upcoming meetings/events or would like more information on any of the speaking topics, please visit Speaker Services or you can email sales@epicentergroup.com.

Epicenter Development Group is a unique consulting firm that seamlessly integrates the disciplines of Systems Engineering and Organizational Analysis & Development to create practical design solutions to your toughest challenges. It is on the cutting edge of problem-solving solutions and the creator of a unique process called GreenRoom Engineering. This process adds greater value and cost savings for clients as compared to traditional engineering methods.
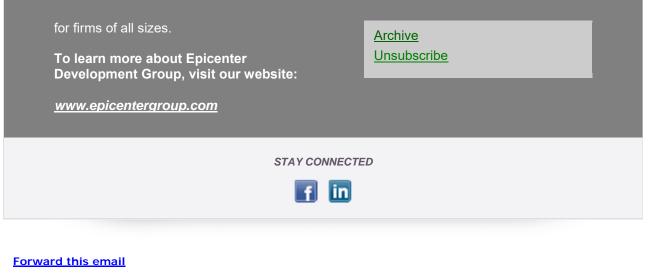
William Proctor, Epicenter's founder and president, has provided services around the country to more than 100 companies consisting of a variety of organizations; and Epicenter continues to grow as a resource

Epicenter News

Epicenter is excited to be working with Chore-Time on a facilities planning project.

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