



Collaborative tools, services and training

Meet smarter, not harder!

To lead people, walk beside them...

As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence.

The next best, the people honor and praise.

The next, the people fear; and the next, the people hate...

When the best leader's work is done the people say:

"We did it ourselves!"

– Lao-Tzu

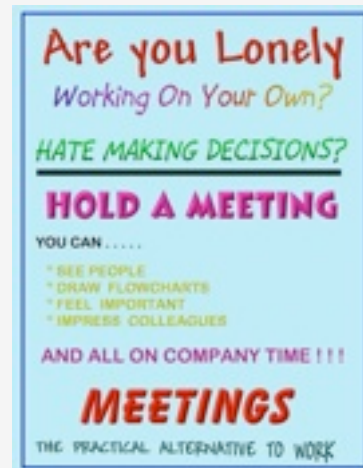
Towards worthwhile meetings

Here's a poster that ends with *Meetings, the Practical Alternative to Work*. It's a funny, fashionable stereotype. In reality though, this kind of learned cynicism can blind you to the possibility of genuinely productive meetings.

Get to the point

So, how **can** you make meetings worth while – for yourself and everyone else? I reckon it's like triage:

- **First**, no pointless meetings. If there's no discernible purpose, don't do it.
- **Second**, some meetings can basically manage themselves. The content is predictable, the process is well established, efficiency is high and good outcomes are routine.
- **Third** are those meetings where the stakes are high enough that you have to get it right.



Therefore, **why** are you meeting? What's the real **topic** of discussion? What research have you done to explore and validate it? Why would people want to come together and work with on that topic? What's in it for you and for them?

What's the **context**? What issues and/or opportunities are driving the topic? What events or forces are happening beyond the immediate concerns that make this topic important right now?

Who are the **stakeholders** – what are their needs and interests with respect to the topic? How do you find out about those needs and interests and take them into account? Which of those stakeholders will be part of the actual meeting?

What's the **time horizon** under consideration? A six month project? A ten year community development plan? What impact does that have on the other factors?

Getting clear on all this is often an iterative process. It does have to be done and it doesn't have to take a long time. It is definitely time well spent.

You can use the same tools and approaches to understand the terrain for a meeting as you use to make the meeting itself more effective. Practice makes perfect and it's more efficient too.

Finally, you have to approach meeting preparation with an open mind. Meetings are an opportunity to achieve something useful rather than gritting your teeth or running away (what ever form that takes). Don't blow that chance!

So, what's your experience of meetings where the point or purpose is clear and well defined? Please, go online and post a comment.

Go well!

David

David Jago
david@smartmeetings.com.au

training events coming up

Brisbane

Group Facilitation Methods

9–10 February 2010

Contact: Elaine Richmond
emr@iinet.net.au

Strategic Thinking & Planning

20–21 April 2010

Contact: David Jago
david@smartmeetings.com.au

Understanding & Leading Change

15–16 June 2010

Contact: Elaine Richmond
emr@iinet.net.au

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