

Team Meetings

A team meeting is a special moment in the existence of the team. It is where the strengths and weaknesses of the team, and the culture and nature of MSF can be expressed. A team grows through gaining an increased collective conscience as its achievement record builds up.

MEETINGS ALLOW YOU TO:

Produce together, for instance by solving together problems / difficulties that are common to the group.

Mobilise the team, over time, and optimise contributions to thinking and doing.

Strengthen individual motivation through a feeling of belonging to a strong collective force

Team meetings can also:

- motivate the team to become involved - through the clarity of the expected results, and the quality of the contributions from participants
- encourage the team to take part in the reflection - through listening, valuing everyone's contributions, etc.
- involve everyone - through joint definition of rules, of the action plan and the distribution of roles and individual objectives
- create team spirit, for instance by setting shared and stimulating objectives
- develop a feeling of shared responsibility - through regular progress review meetings, acknowledging individual contributions and group successes
- coordinate and follow progress of the contributions from all in the team in order to ensure they remain aligned with the objective.

PREPARING MEETINGS

A team meeting needs preparing as soon as the previous meeting finishes, not at the last moment before the next meeting.

The TOPO CARD¹ we introduce overleaf helps you to reflect on the four key priorities for effective preparation:

1. the TOPIC: the main and only motive of the meeting
2. the OBJECTIVE: the expected result of the meeting
3. the PROGRAMME: consists in the agenda of the meeting, clearly indicating who is putting the item on the agenda and will lead the discussion over it. In one column will appear the estimated time for the items on the agenda.
4. the ORGANISATION: it covers all logistics, place, time, participants...

The back of the TOPO CARD can be used for very concise minutes, which will include:

- actions to follow after the meeting
- names of those responsible for the actions which were agreed
- ...deadlines

¹ 1 La fiche TOPO in *Le temps choisi*, J.L. Fessard, Ed. Gualino

TOPO CARD

Date of the meeting:

Topic of the meeting:

Objective (expected result):

Programme (agenda):

Who

Time

Organisation of the meeting:

From:to:

Place:

Participants:

WORK MEETING

(Preparation by the chairperson/ observation of the chairperson's actions)

Quick and energetic introduction of the objective of the meeting and the time frame (writes on paperboard)

Invites each participant to make a statement.
Listens and rephrases without taking a stand.

Let participants do the work.

Takes a note of decisions made on the flipchart (or delegates this clearly).

Summarises only when sees it necessary.

Finishes on time with a recap on decisions made.
States what will happen next.
Thanks participants.

Resource: 8 Tips for Improving your Meetings

1 Set the agenda and circulate it

Before the meeting: list all the items that you wish to discuss, and identify the question that needs addressing for each item. Also determine how long should be spent on each item. Circulate the agenda if possible 48 hours before the meeting. If you feel it is necessary, add a brief reminder of the conclusions of the last meeting held. Refreshing people's memory in advance saves time / avoids confusion during your meeting.

During the course of the meeting: stick to the agenda, going through the items in the order in which they were planned. Being clear about the purpose of each agenda item will help participants follow the meeting and reduce the risks of discussions going off track. It also helps the person chairing the meeting to remain focused on the goal (whether it is you or a member of the team who is chairing).

2 Start and finish on time

Your time is very precious and so is that of your colleagues. Never punish those who are there on time. Make an effort to start and to finish when you say you will.

3 Manage everyone remaining focused on the subject

Stay focused on what is essential and avoid as much as possible anyone going off the subject. If you chair the meeting, do not hesitate to bring people back to the agenda as often as needed. If new and important items are brought up which were not planned for discussion, they should become part of a separate meeting. After all, if they were not mentioned earlier it is unlikely that they are such crucial issues.

4 Prevent personal attacks on people

A meeting should allow you to solve significant problems, share information or make decisions, not be a public space for people to settle scores. Again, do not hesitate to remind people about basic rules. The meeting will produce better results.

5 Criticise in a constructive way

Encourage everyone to listen attentively to what others have to say; be curious to understand others' intent and be clear about your own; suspend judgement until

this is needed; offer alternative views if these are held and remain focused on the goal of the meeting.

6 Set clear objectives to be reached and action points

Upon finishing the meeting, everyone must leave knowing without fail where they are heading to, what they have to do and by when.

Following the meeting, send each participant the minutes with items discussed and actions agreed. This will give everyone an overview of the next steps in the overall action.

7 Switch mobile phones off

...or set them on buzzer mode.

8 Celebrate team work

There again, it may sound trivial, but as the manager, it helps greatly if you acknowledge the team's interest in finding solutions and being creative together.