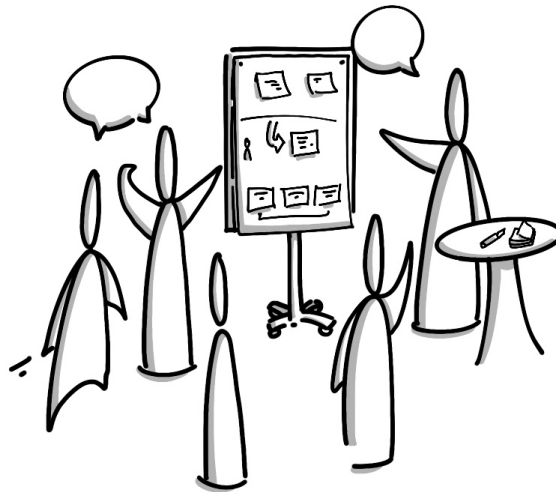


Reinventing “meetings”: towards a new level of efficiency.



The term “séance” in French, “Sitzung” in German, often conjures up a static, ponderous image. The very origin of the word carries with it connotations of passivity, long duration and, often, ineffectiveness. But what if we rethought not just the name, but the very essence of these meetings? How about “Decision Room” or “Strategy Room” to energize and transform our perceptions?

Preparation: the key to success

Preparation is the most crucial phase of any meeting. It determines not only the effectiveness of the session, but also its real usefulness.

1. Clear objectives: Define specific, measurable objectives. Every meeting must have a clear purpose that justifies the time invested.
2. Structured agenda: A well-structured agenda, sent out in advance, enables everyone to prepare properly. Prioritize topics according to importance and urgency.
3. Preparatory documentation: Provide the necessary documents in advance. This allows participants to familiarize themselves with the topics and come prepared to discuss them productively.
 1. Limit the size of documents. One A4 page (double-sided if necessary) per topic should be enough to present the essential elements.
 4. Intent and impact: Each item on the agenda should be accompanied by a reflection on the intention behind the subject and the expected impact. This guides the discussion and keeps the focus on concrete results.

Invitation: who should attend?

The choice of participants is crucial. Too many people can make the meeting ineffective, while too few can limit perspectives and ideas.

1. Key participants: Identify the people who are essential to the discussion. Their presence should be justified by their expertise or decision-making role.
2. Limit participants: Limit the number of participants to keep the discussion fluid and focused. Effective meetings often involve between 5 and 10 people.
3. Diversity of perspectives: Ensure that participants represent a diversity of viewpoints to enrich discussion and decisions.
4. Impact of participation: Choose participants whose contribution will have a significant impact on the decisions and actions to be taken.

The art of conducting a meeting

The way a meeting is conducted can make the difference between a productive “session” and a waste of time.

1. Follow the agenda: Follow the agenda strictly. Avoid digressions and refocus the discussion if necessary.
2. Time management: Respect the time limits for each item on the agenda. A stopwatch or dedicated timekeeper can be very helpful.
3. Active involvement: Encourage the active participation of all participants. Ask open-ended questions and invite everyone to have their say.
1. Computers and cell phones: are they useful and important, or should they be left at the office or in the briefcase?
4. Intention and impact in action: Every intervention must be guided by the intention and the desired impact. This keeps the focus on the concrete results and implications of each decision.

Follow-up: the importance of the post-meeting phase

The work doesn't stop at the end of the meeting. Effective follow-up is essential to ensure that the decisions taken are implemented.

1. Detailed” minutes: Draw up a clear, detailed record of the meeting, including decisions made, actions to be taken and who is responsible for each task.
2. Action tracking: Set up a tracking system to check the progress of agreed actions. Project management software can be very useful for this.
3. Feedback: Gather feedback on the meeting to improve future sessions. Identify what went well and what could be improved.
4. Impact and intent: Every action taken should be reassessed in terms of its impact and original intent. This ensures that efforts are well directed, and that expected results are achieved more quickly and efficiently.

Location: where is the best place?

Do we really need to sit down for a meeting? And where should the meeting take place?

1. State of mind: Please consider the overall state of mind within the team or company. If you notice any tension, stress or gloom, you need to take this into account in the preparation and running of the meeting.
2. Options available/possible: To cut down on meeting time, you can hold your meeting standing up around a high table, for example, or in an “agile” or “creative” room. Another option, this time to channel stress, is to hold the meeting in a neutral location, outside the company, in the countryside for example, or why not try a walking meeting.
3. Recordings: In the case of meetings taking place in settings other than the usual meeting rooms, it is sometimes difficult to take notes or minutes. In such cases, don't hesitate to record short memos or film certain sequences or a person explaining a theme, a decision or a lesson. Afterwards, it will be quite simple to either transcribe the memos or the video content. IA software tools make this possible in a highly professional way.
4. Purpose and impact: In all cases, focus not only on the purpose of the meeting, but also on the collateral impact on people's health, well-being and engagement that it may have.

Online meetings: challenges and opportunities

With the rise of platforms like Zoom, Teams or Google Meet, online meetings have become commonplace. However, they present specific challenges.

1. Presentation techniques: Use interactive presentation tools to keep participants engaged. Live polls and virtual whiteboards can be very effective. The visual animation techniques used in face-to-face sessions with Flipcharts can also be used on a Tablet (iPad or other).
2. Clarity and conciseness: Be even clearer and more concise in your communications. Online meetings can suffer from distractions and technical problems, so clarity is paramount.
3. Visual engagement: Encourage the use of video to maintain a visual connection between participants. This helps keep attention and promotes engagement.
4. Digital intent and impact: In online meetings, clarify the intent behind each point and the expected impact. This helps to overcome the barriers of virtual communication and achieve concrete results.

In conclusion, rethinking our sessions, from their name to their conduct, by integrating the notions of intention and impact, can transform their effectiveness and impact. By adopting rigorous preparation practices, wisely selecting participants, dynamically conducting meetings and ensuring rigorous follow-up, we can turn each “session” into a genuine decision-making and strategy workshop, suited to both face-to-face and virtual settings. So, we do less, do it faster, and get better, more concrete results.

And finally, if someone arrives at the meeting unprepared, how will you react?

Are you consistent and will you ask the person to leave the room, or will you simply make a remark or say/do nothing?

This is also an important point in the usefulness and impact of our meetings!