



MEETINGS

How to Run a Kick-Ass Meeting

Use these six steps and become known as someone who can manage conversations that are productive, inclusive, and gets stuff done.

BY RANDY FREE



Overview

How to Run a Kick-Ass Meeting Using *FOCUSS*

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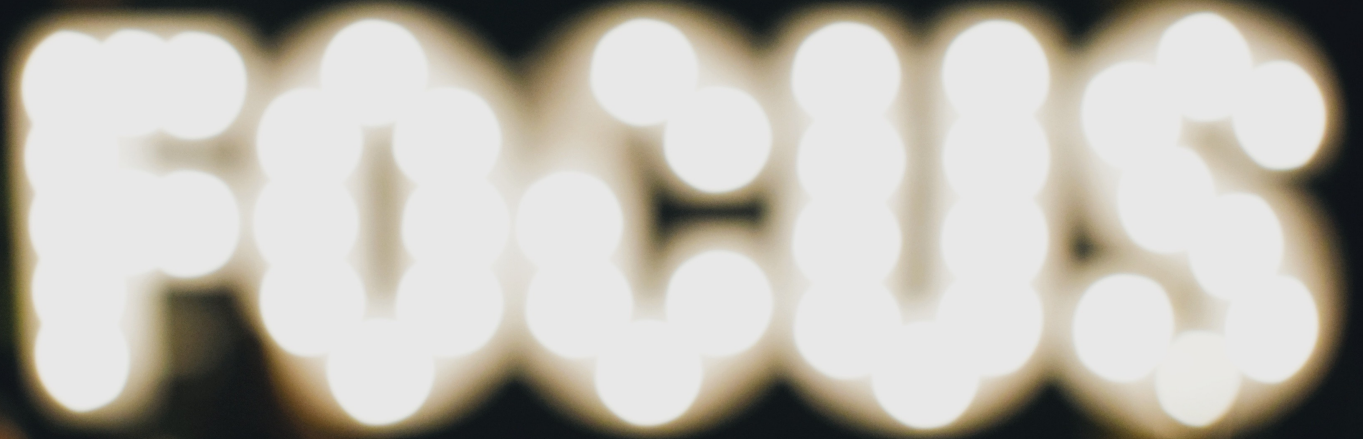
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The FOCUSS Framework

A Kick-Ass Meeting Requires

*F*ocus
*O*rganization
*C*onduct
U"You"
*S*tewardship
*S*olutions



About Me

Passionate Personal Growth Advocate

From humble beginnings in a rice farming community in Texas, Randy built his career as a tax partner through hard work and mentorship. After climbing the ranks to Partner status, Randy realized his true passion is supporting others in personal transformation.

He spent time during COVID, obtaining a MA in Counseling and Mental Health Sciences, which, combined with over 30 years of corporate success, makes him uniquely qualified to serve others as a Premier Executive Coach.

He has what most coaches do not, real-life experience and psychoanalytical training. Through his leadership, clients are empowered to develop executive presence, tackle challenging problems related to running a business, and unleash their true potential.



Part One

The Focus in FOCUS

The first question should always be, "Do we need to meet?". Information sharing should not be the focus of a meeting; send an email instead. Respect your colleagues by ensuring that meetings focus on discussions requiring real-time collaboration. Problem-solving, decision-making, and strategy sessions are valid reasons to call for a meeting.

If you are invited to attend a meeting, be your advocate. Ask for the agenda a week ahead of the meeting date. If the objective seems unclear, ask clarifying questions. In defining the agenda, you may determine that someone else is better suited to attend. Then use the pre-meeting time to prepare to address the topics.

Testimonial.

Randy is an exceptional leader who has helped me personally and professionally. With Randy's help, I could implement a step-by-step action plan and grow to be a leader in my organization... I highly recommend Randy to anyone looking to make lasting, impactful changes in their life. - Steven R.

How to Run a Kick-Ass Meeting

The Focus in FOCUSS

Connecting With Purpose

Simon Sinek is a British-American author and inspirational speaker. His book "Start With Why" states that most successful leaders think, act, and communicate inside out and start with why. Inside out refers to Sinek's Golden Circle framework where the outer circle is "What you do," the middle ring is "How you do it," and the core is "Why you do what you do." He argues that people connect more deeply and are genuinely inspired by knowing "why" you do what you do.

Deep engagement requires connecting with purpose and explaining why you are meeting. Clarify the reason for the meeting by tying the meeting's drive to the company's strategy. If you don't know your company's purpose, read Sinek's other book, "Find Your Why."

Here is an example using Sinek's golden circle framework. My church holds weekly life group meetings; this is "what we do." "How" we do life groups is based on building relationships, deepening our faith, and sharing the love of Jesus. At the core, our "Why" is the belief that no one should go through life alone.

Explain Your "Why"

Clearly explain why you are calling the meeting and why this meeting is essential to advancing the company's purpose. Your meeting attendees will connect more deeply with the purpose and be inspired to participate in the conversation.



The Focus in FOCUS

How will you inspire meeting attendees to connect with your meeting purpose?


BONUS
TIP

Consider: How you can you tie the focus of the meeting to the company's strategy? Jot down a few draft purpose statements and pick one that supports your focus.

Part Two

The Organization in FOCUS

Over 70% of survey respondents say that meetings are unproductive. The main culprit for ineffective meetings is a lack of meeting organization, planning, and pre-meeting preparation.

An easy way to think about this is 2X. If the meeting is thirty minutes, the organizer and members should spend an hour or more in pre-meeting preparation.

The organizer should send out a draft agenda at least a week ahead so that topics can be agreed. Getting input will increase meeting quality and buy-in.

Prioritize agenda items with those of higher priority appearing at the beginning. Each topic should have a time allotment and a sponsor. Items should be grouped by category so that discussions can be focused and robust.



Effective meetings require thoughtful planning beforehand and focused actions afterward.

How to Run a Kick-Ass Meeting

The Organization in FOCUSS

List of Things You Need to do Before the Meeting

- ❑ Circulate topics and purpose.
- ❑ Prioritize and group topics.
- ❑ Allocate time and a sponsor for each topic.
- ❑ Hold sponsors accountable for prep work.
- ❑ Decide who is critical to invite and who is not.
- ❑ Assign roles to attendees.
- ❑ Can the agenda be structured to allow for dynamic attendance?
- ❑ Set the meeting time as short as possible.

"I have only made this letter longer because I have not had the time to make it shorter."

— Blaise Pascal, mathematician and physicist.

The Critical Few

Determining who should be invited is critical. Careful consideration should be given to determine who is best suited to address the focus of the meeting. Meeting attendees may be subject matter experts, those currently engaged in the topic, and those who may be impacted by decisions made at the meeting. Remember that meeting efficiency is inversely proportional to the number of attendees. Keep the invites to as few people as possible. Assign the attendees roles and hold topic sponsors accountable for premeeting research and prep work.

Meeting Length

The human brain can only focus intently for fifteen minutes, and the rise of social media is shortening our attention span even more. Therefore, meetings should be as short as possible and broken up into twenty-minute discussions punctuated with brief re-focusing breaks. Shorter sessions will increase focus and reduce distractions. Some companies have moved to fifteen-minute meetings. Experiment and find your sweet spot.

Part Three

The Conduct in FOCUSS

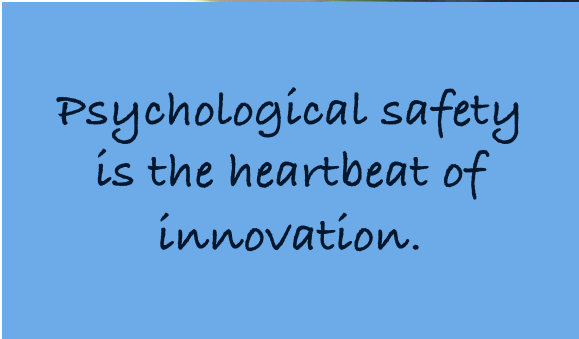
Meetings are where colleagues collaborate in problem-solving, develop strategies, and advance the company's purpose. These goals require a high level of innovation and the sharing of ideas. With the right environment, innovation thrives. However, an environment where the attendees feel unsafe, excluded, or lack trust will kill innovation.

To create psychological safety, consider the three “Ts”: teaming, trust, and transition.

- ❑ Teaming - Consider what personal bias and fears may be impeding Inclusivity.
- ❑ Trust – Overcommunicate that there are no wrong answers or stupid ideas.
- ❑ Transition – New members will need time to build trust before being able to be vulnerable in difficult conversations.

“A lack of psychological safety stifles productivity, creativity, and innovation”.

- Timothy Clark, Defining the Path to Inclusion and Innovation



*Psychological safety
is the heartbeat of
innovation.*

How to Run a Kick-Ass Meeting

The Conduct in FOCUS

Rules of Engagement

No technology devices	Everyone participates
There are no wrong answers	Bad behavior will be called out
There are no stupid ideas	We begin and end on time
We respect each other	No side discussions
Be present	Come prepared

Difficult Conversations

Here is a list of rules necessary to create a safe environment where innovation and creativity can flourish. Some topics will require difficult conversations. It will be essential for each attendee to know what they value to value trade when necessary. Most people want validation and respect from their colleagues. It is important to remember that validating another's perspective and showing respect is not the same as agreeing with them.

As the meeting leader, you are responsible for enforcing the rules.



PART FOUR

Part Four

The “You” in FOCUSS

*Are you the
HiPPO?*
↙

The leader sets the tone for the meeting. Therefore, it is essential to consider how you show up. Your presence will impact what others think, feel, and contribute. How you show up matters a great deal.

Be aware of the Highest Paid Persons Opinion, or HiPPO effect. If senior leadership is in attendance, they should speak last, speak less, and ask more

questions. Otherwise, members will be reluctant to share ideas or opinions that diverge from the HiPPO.

Self Awareness

Intentional presence requires self-awareness. Consider if your non-verbal signals, such as posture and facial expressions, communicate engagement.

How to Run a Kick-Ass Meeting

The “You” in FOCUSS

Use Your Voice

Your voice is an effective tool to manage the energy and emotion in the meeting. We tend to have a natural speed and volume at which we speak. However, you can shift the volume, velocity, or both to create an effect and grab attention. The power is in the transition. For example, speaking more slowly with high energy signals power while speaking faster with low energy can create suspense. Speaking fast with high energy conveys excitement and speaking slowly with low energy brings vulnerability. Use your voice to grab their attention when presenting a critical point.

Manage Yourself in the Moment

I once had a boss that was a poor manager of his emotions. It was typical for him to explode upon hearing unpleasant news, appear very upset, and calm down much later. The staff learned to keep certain information from him to manage his emotions for him. We have mirror neurons that enable our brains to scan the environment and respond to danger in seconds. In ancient times, mirror neurons helped to keep us safe. Unfortunately, today, they can get us into trouble.

Imagine, if you will, that a dad is entering the living room where his teenage son is sitting. The father is unaware that he is making an agitated face after getting an unexpected bill in the mail. The son's mirror neurons pick up on dad's signal and mirror his anger. Because of his mirrored emotion, the son says something snarky, and an anger vortex ensues. Neither the dad nor the son understands that mirror neurons have gotten the best of them. Your colleagues are watching you and may be prone to mirror your perceived attitude and emotions.



Become known for your ability to manage engaging and productive meetings.

Part Five

The Stewardship in FOCUSS

As the leader, you steward the participant's time and experience. No one wants to have their time wasted. If you routinely run kick-ass meetings, your value in the company will rise.

Stewarding time and talent is the most critical aspect of running an effective appointment, and as such, it requires considerable people skills, emotional intelligence, and practice.

When properly applied, the skills I am going to teach you will increase participant engagement, Increase productivity, and your value will grow within the organization.

How to Run Kick-Ass Meetings

The Stewardship in FOCUSS

List of Things You Need to Think About

- Create transition – use music, snacks, and games to help attendees to become present.
- Create mindset – remind them of the focus, the “Why”.
- Create psychological safety.
- Keep the discussion on track and on time.
- Practice active listening.
- Use pauses to allow for note taking, brain rest, and re-energize.
- Use linking to create connection – point out commonalities.
- Spark innovation with mini-lectures by subject matter experts.
- Actively encourage debate.
- End by defining next steps, assigning responsibility, and expected outcomes.

Active Listening

Meeting participants will want to feel heard and understood. Your understanding of what's been shared can be communicated through reflection. The leader, or any member, can provide a summary of what another member has just said to signal they heard and understood what was said. It is also essential to draw out silent members early in the meeting. The longer they remain silent, the harder it becomes for them to join in the conversation.

Cutting Off the Chronic Talker

When one participant dominates the meeting conversation, the leader must cut them off. Cutting off may sound rude; however, if the rambler is not stopped, other members will become angry and disengaged. There are three ways to cut off.

- Cut from the topic but stay with the person.
- Cut from the person and stay with the topic.
- Cut from both the person and the topic.



Part Six

The Solution in FOCUS

Before the meeting ends, the team should decide what solutions require action. Solutions should be agreed upon, assigned a sponsor, and expected outcomes should be set. You can set a timer so that five to ten minutes can be reserved at the end for solution work.

We discussed spending twice the meeting time in pre-meeting prep. Similarly, a work period at least twice the time allotted for the meeting may be needed to work on solutions. Many companies have established meeting-free days during the week, and these days make good days for intense focus on solution work.

Solutions should be SMART: specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and timely. There should be an expectation that the sponsor will action solutions before the next meeting. If the sponsor is having difficulty, they should talk with the meeting leader. Speaking up about potential delays will allow the action item to be re-prioritized or reassigned.



Bonus Material

How to be a Teleconference Superstar

Virtual meetings can kill your executive presence without intentional planning. The tips I share on the next page will ensure that you come through like the superstar that you are.

Bonus Material

How to be a Teleconference Superstar

Best Practices for Virtual Meetings

- Record the meeting so others can speed through and watch relevant parts.
- Allow for dynamic attendance. Build the agenda so that some participants can dial in only for specific parts.
- Start with upbeat music to create a fun sense of transition.
- Do a quick round-robin check-in to build engagement.
- Assign participants different tasks to keep them engaged.
- Keep all microphones live, so attendees are forced to be present, it also allows for greater spontaneity.
- Don't allow multi-tasking, find a humorous way to penalize offenders.

Own Your Presence

- Pretend you are entering someone's physical space, act accordingly.
- Stand, don't sit, in front of the camera to create positive presence.
- Set the camera two feet from you, elevated to standing eye level and slightly tilted down.
- Place the light source behind the camera, directed at you.
- Don't multitask or fidget, it distracts from the speaker.
- Fully use non-verbal signals, act alive, not slumped on the couch.
- Wear a solid color that contrasts with the background.



Stay In Touch!

Thank you for downloading this eBook! I am certain that if applied, your value will rise within your organization.

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