DTD Episode 91 Show Notes
Do You Really Need a Meeting?

7 Good Reasons to Have One

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Many of my clients struggle with the drama created by meetings. Either they have too few and there's constant chaos. No one knows what's going on, miscommunication is rampant, the world of assumption is thriving and none of the employees know or trust each other.

Or, they have too many meetings. They read a book or blog post once that said they should have a meeting once a week so they have it. They come up with an agenda last minute, struggle for content, hope people will go on tangents so the time will be filled up, spend lots of time complaining or eating cake but little time doing anything productive. The team grumbles about the waste of time or relishes the "free" time the ineffective meeting represents.

Do either of these sound familiar?

Meetings are essential! You just have to do them well. The key to a great meeting begins with its purpose. Never meet just to meet. Know the purpose so you can evaluate whether or not you need to have it. Some things you are doing in a meeting now could be done more effectively another way.

Here's some motivation for you. Have you ever stopped to think about how much a meeting costs? Look around the room and estimate the hourly rate of each employee. Divide by 60 to get the rate per minute. Now multiply by the number of unproductive minutes. Yep, it's

costing you or your employer a pretty penny! And if they are causing drama that extends beyond the meeting it's really a waste of money!

So, ready to evaluate your meetings now?

Look at the reason for the agenda item. I'm going to share a list of what I think are good reasons to meet.......at times. It's not a 100% comprehensive list but I think it covers a lot of the most popular reasons for meeting. And your objective should drive the content, the feel, the flow, everything. A meeting can have several objectives. Just make sure they are clear to you and your participants.

1. **Connecting:** you want employees to know one another as humans. Trust comes form time spent together. Time to connect and know one another is a great reason to have periodic meetings.

2. **Sharing information:** you may need to have a meeting to share information but you might be able to share in a more efficient way. Often I find my clients are sharing basic information in a meeting as a way to hold assure they are receiving it so they can be held accountable. There are other ways to achieve the same objective. Send via email with a deadline for reading. Create a subject line that alerts them and put the deadline right there. Have them reply back or fill in a poll or initial a document once they've read it over and KNOW what's there.

   If the information will require a Q & A period, extensive explanation, might be met with some push back then, yes, pull everyone together so that all hear the same facts and can benefit from the same Q & A.

3. **Decision making:** this is a great reason to have a meeting if you need to negotiate, discuss, share perspectives. You can explore digital idea generation and opinion

sharing but in person or digital meeting is usually a great way to go. Just make sure that the actual decision makers are in the meeting so you don't have to rehash a conversation to make something happen.

4. **Creative Planning:** if you need input, differing perspectives, idea generation I would call this a great way to spend time in a meeting. You get that added collective brain as people bounce ideas around. Whether your pulling together during a project or coming up with the next great product for your business, pulling the team together for this work is a great use of time. I just caution that you always want to end a generative discussion with a plan for action after. How will you assure some momentum forward. It's fun to brainstorm but then make sure you do something with it. Who needs to make a decision or take some action after the meeting?

5. **Resolving Challenges:** whether they are process or people challenges, yes, you need to pull people together for some good communication that includes verbal and nonverbal cues. A meeting is key to resolving issues.

6. **Questions:** if there are indications that your team is confused, bringing everyone together is a great way for all to benefit from hearing the information together. Many will share the same question. If, as a leader, you can anticipate the questions, an FAQ emailed out or placed on your intranet might also do the trick without a meeting.

7. **Education:** this is another great way to spend meeting time. Whether it's pulling everyone together for a webinar or to have a co-workers teach a new technique, learning with your team is an important activity. Let everyone hear the information together and benefit from questions, participation and group practice activities.

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