5 Tips to Revamp Your Boring Weekly Status Meeting



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Team meetings are often the most telling sign of the culture of an organization. And who among us hasn’t attended the painfully dry and dull weekly status meeting? The format is predictable: Each person shares their work status and then ends up with a brand new to-do list by the end.

Status meetings can be useful. But most employees tune out of these meetings until it’s their time to speak. This defeats the whole purpose of sharing information and engaging in a meeting. This format couldn’t be worse for employee engagement and organizational morale. It causes employees to daydream, put themselves on mute, pretend they are taking notes on their laptop while perusing Facebook, browse other jobs on LinkedIn, etc. And with remote meetings, disengagement becomes even more

likely.

Unproductive meetings are more than just an occasional nuisance. According to research, the average employee spends 35% of their time in meetings, approximately 67% of which are considered unproductive. This results in a total cost of $47M per year in labor cost hours.

Do you want to transform meetings at your organization from a routine, unvaluable experience to a motivating and inspiring one? If so, start by addressing the following questions and using the tips below:

1. Are our meetings efficient and purposeful?

Do our meetings have a clear, specific agenda beyond updating each other on statuses? Are there topics spelled out ahead of time that need to be discussed? Are materials sent ahead of time to reduce time wasted in meetings? Are meetings facilitated strongly so that they don't stray off-topic?

Tip: Set context for the meeting beforehand by denoting specific areas that need to be discussed. Ensure that only employees relevant to meeting topics are required to attend, and keep it optional for others. Often, meetings can veer off topic by one or more attendees expressing other concerns. Ensure that the meeting leader is able to keep the meeting on course and make progress on the topic(s) at hand while making note of other issues for a follow-up discussion if needed. Try to keep to the scheduled agenda of the meeting and end on time. Keep meetings snappy and efficient.

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2. Are our meetings inspiring?

Routine meetings that occur on a weekly or daily basis can start being taken for granted by both leaders and employees. The meetings then have a tendency of jumping right into the weeds: current status updates and upcoming action items and steps. Do you take the time to inspire employees and keep them tethered to the big-picture goals?

Tip: We can make these meetings more inspiring by setting big-picture context at the onset and conclusion of the meetings: iterating the project vision, long-term goals and outcomes (and why they are exciting). Encouraging an attitude of innovation and openness to solve problems in new ways. Rather than jumping into the weeds right away, start the meeting by setting intention and ground rules that focus on inviting input, innovation and crazy ideas from all members of the team, regardless of level. Just voicing this intention can help inspire a mindset of openness and non-judgment across the team.

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3. Do our meetings foster inclusion and collaboration?

Do meetings maintain a clear hierarchy or differential in terms of contribution level? Is the meeting conversation dominated by one or two people? Is there enough space for each member to contribute not just status, but ideas as well?

Tip: One way to increase inclusion in meetings is to remember that not every individual communicates best through words and may find it difficult to voice his/her ideas in a group. Meetings often form a competitive and stressful environment in which every voice struggles to be heard, and the loudest and

most assertive ones usually win.

Consider other forms of gathering input from all members: menti.com is a great tool for polling and crowdsourcing ideas or using chat features on Zoom. If you want to be more creative, lead a drawing/diagramming exercise in your meeting, where each individual is able to pictorially show their vision and ideas and share them with the group. Look for parallels/synergies between ideas to create a collaborative whole.

4. Along the same lines, do our meetings give space for conflicting ideas?

Are meetings dominated by groupthink, or are team members empowered to speak up in disagreement? Often the quietest members in a meeting are the ones who aren't quite on board, and these are the individuals that may need to be heard from.

Tip: One of the most important points for a meeting leader to remember is that silence does not necessarily equate to agreement. A valuable skill of a leader is a keen awareness of the collective field of the team and each individual. If a participant seems less engaged or enthusiastic, as a leader, it behooves you to encourage and support that person to speak up – even if, and especially if, he/she has a differing viewpoint. Addressing individuals by name, you may say something like, "Kate, it looks like you might feel differently. What are you thinking?"

5. Are our meetings appreciative?

Do we show recognition and appreciation to individuals for successes big and small by naming them in meetings? Do we thank all members of the meeting for their unique

contributions?

Tip: To foster a healthy organizational culture, remember to celebrate both financial and non-financial successes. Emphasize all of the goals of the organization (e.g., diversity, collaboration, acts of kindness) – not just those directly related to financial gain. Often, the simple act of showing you noticed good work is enough to boost morale.

Truly constructive company meetings depend on both clarity of agenda and cross-functional and cross-organizational openness to sharing ideas and opinions. These are the types of meetings that everyone in the team looks forward to attending each week. They know they will have a chance to be heard and introduce something new. Aim to use new facilitation techniques and collaborative technology to revamp your company's meetings. Then watch your employee engagement, innovation and performance dramatically boost.

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