Harnessing the Power of Meetings

Planning

The key to a productive meeting is planning beforehand. If people leave your meeting thinking "This could have been an email" they are less likely to be engaged going forward. Some things to keep in mind during the planning process are:

- **Meeting Purpose:** Clearly define the goal (decision-making, brainstorming, information sharing, etc.) to keep the meeting focused.
- **Agenda Building:** Draft a structured diverse agenda with key points and allocate time for each topic. Distribute it a minimum of a week beforehand.
- **Who to Invite:** Ensure participants are relevant to the agenda to keep the discussion productive. Have their names on the agenda with assignments, keeping them connected.
- **Meeting Audience:** Keep in mind how participants will be impacted.
- **Technology Needs:** Identify required tools (e.g., Zoom, MS Teams, whiteboards) and test equipment in advance for smooth execution. Tricks of the trade: Make sure it did not update over night!

Communicating

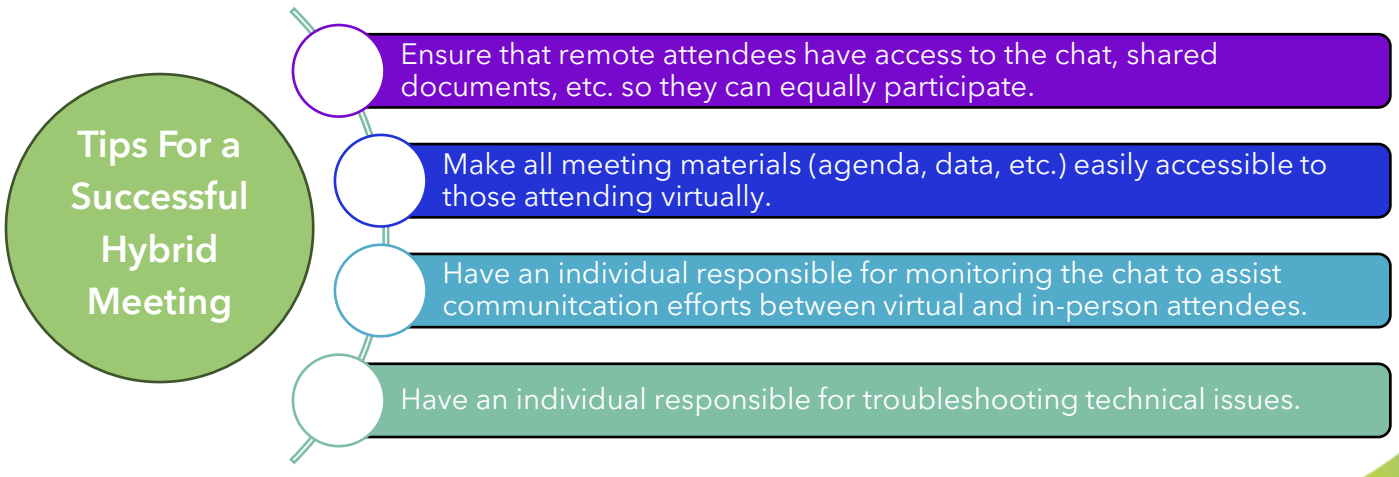
Communication is key to having a successful meeting, in addition to ensuring that the work continues. Communication should highlight the importance of attending the meeting by emphasizing the value of their input. Using phrases like "Your insights are needed to…" or "We need your voice at the table to…" help people understand that their feedback is valued.

Meeting Invitation Checklist:

- ☐ Concise, easily understood language
- ☐ Includes the time, date, and location
- ☐ Includes warm and inviting language
- ☐ Includes a digital calendar invitation
- ☐ Outlines the meeting purpose
- ☐ Outlines expectations
- ☐ Provides an agenda
- ☐ Provides any other details needed for attendees to be able prepare

Technology

Hybrid or fully virtual meetings have many benefits, if they are well thought out and executed correctly. Knowing how to use the tools (whether it be Zoom, Teams, or another platform) is key for the meeting's success. Identifying a person who is responsible for the technical needs during the meeting will help the meeting run smoothly and allow the facilitator to focus on engaging everyone at the meeting.



Facilitating a Successful Meeting

Inclusivity: Ensure all voices are heard by inviting quieter participants to share and moderating dominant voices. Chat bursts on Zooms are a great trick for getting everyone to chime in!

Time Management: Stick to the agenda and gently steer discussions back if they go off-topic. Start with an icebreaker or engaging activity or add one in the middle, and watch out for the weeds!

Flexibility: Be prepared to adjust the agenda based on emerging priorities during the meeting.

Table Appropriately: Delay non-urgent topics for a later date to focus on more pressing issues.

Voting: Use clear voting methods (polls, show of hands) and ensure everyone understands the process. Honor By-laws or policy and procedure.

Encouraging Discussion: Ask open-ended questions to foster diverse perspectives.

Managing Flow: Use ground rules (e.g., one speaker at a time) and manage interruptions.

Stay Mission and Vision Focused: Place Vission and Mission statements in an easily visible area so that attendees can be reminded.

Follow-up

Communicating with those who attend your meeting afterwards is another essential piece of keeping attendees engaged in the ongoing work and efforts of the group. This also provides an opportunity to engage those who were unable to attend the meeting by keeping them updated about current progress.

What does follow-up communication consist of?

Taking Minutes: Capture key points, decisions, and action items with assigned owners and deadlines.

Thank You's: Send a follow-up email with a summary, action items, and a thank you note to acknowledge participants' contributions.

Connect in-between meetings: Relationships are key an connection is essential. Actively connect in-between meetings.

What is Your Color?

This activity can be used as an engagement tool, but also as a tool that helps identify strengths for your group members. Follow the directions below to utilize this tool.

Step 1

Score each group of words on a scale of 1-4 based on which are the MOST like you. (Meaning 4 = Most like you; 1 = Least Like you)					
	A Active Opportunist Spontaneous	**B** Parental Traditional Responsible	**C** Authentic Harmonious Compassionate	**D** Versatile Inventive Competent	**E** Curious Conceptual Knowledgeable
	F Unique Empathetic Communicative	**G** Practical Sensible Dependable	**H** Competitive Acts quickly Impactful	**I** Loyal Conservative Organized	**J** Devoted Warm Poetic
	K Realistic Open-Minded Adventuresome	**L** Theoretical Seeking Ingenious	**M** Concerned Procedural Cooperative	**N** Daring Impulsive Fun	**O** Tender Inspirational Dramatic
	P Determined Complex Composed	**Q** Philosophical Principled Rational	**R** Vivacious Affectionate Sympathetic	**S** Exciting Courageous Skillful	**T** Orderly Conventional Caring

Step 2

Add up the corresponding numbers (1,2,3,or 4) that you assigned to each letter together in each color below. The color with the highest ranking is your color.

ORANGE
A, H, K, N, S

YELLOW
B, G, I, M, T

BLUE
C, F, J, O, R

GREEN
D, E, L, P, Q

Step 3

How to succeed with your Orange friends:

- Be active & don't slow them down
- Be spontaneous and fun, not heavy
- Compete in fun, when appropriate
- Be energetic, adventurous, and optimistic
- Delegate non-repetitive tasks to them

How to succeed with your Green friends:

- Be aware of their curiosity
- Challenge their problem-solving abilities
- Respect their need for independence
- They may not show their feelings easily
- Respect their inventions and ideas

How to succeed with your Blue friends:

- Spend quality time with them individually
- Be sensitive
- Praise their creativity and imagination
- Be supportive of their endeavors
- Listen to them as they listen to you

How to succeed with your Yellow friends:

- Remember to be on time
- Try to be efficient and organized
- Be dependable
- Respect their need for security
- Understand they may see things one way

Engagement Tools

DICEBREAKERS

This is an engagement activity that can be used at any point in a meeting to break the ice, debrief, or increase engagement in a discussed topic. The facilitator provides a dice and a list of pre-determined questions associated with a number on the dice. Depending on what the dice lands on, everyone in the meeting answers the corresponding question.



Ice Breakers	Engagement	Meeting Debrief
What is the best $100 you have ever spent?	What is your dream project that we could work on?	Name one thing you learned at the meeting today.
What is the best conversations you have ever had?	What learning opportunities would you suggest?	Acknowledge someone for a job well done.
What is one thing you are really good at?	What would you like to contribute to this meeting?	Describe a good idea you heard.
If you could choose a unique superpower, what would it be?	What did you accomplish since we last met that you are proud of?	Describe something that recently pushed you outside of your comfort zone.
What is your favorite game to play?	What issue are you most concerned about?	What part of our work are you most excited about?
What is the most creative thing you have ever done?	Who else could we invite to our group?	How will you apply what you learned today?

The 4S Technique

This is another way to do a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) with your group. To be successful, the facilitator should make an effort to include everyone at the meeting and give all ideas and input equal consideration. Make sure that someone is assigned to take notes!

Strengths

- What is working?
- What have we accomplished?
- What is the data showing us?

Struggles

- What are the challenges?
- What do we wish was different?
- What are our blind spots?

Supports

- How do we build capacity?
- Who is needed at the table?
- How do we honor who is involved?

Sparks

- What are the "even better if's?"
- What is beyond what we have done so far?
- Idea burst.

Center for Community Engagement at Chestnut Health Systems

STATEWIDE ROSC

These services are funded in full or in part through a State Opioid Response Grant (TI085769) to the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery, from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.