

The Power of a Great Meeting: Turning Time Together into Mission Momentum

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Nonprofit leaders spend a significant portion of their time in meetings - board meetings, staff meetings, donor briefings, and committee sessions. Yet too often, these gatherings drain energy instead of generating it. Running a great meeting is not just a logistical skill; it's a leadership discipline that reflects an organization's culture, values, and respect for people's time. When done well, meetings become a strategic tool to strengthen alignment, accelerate decision-making, and inspire action. When done poorly, they erode engagement and momentum. The difference lies in intentional design and disciplined facilitation.

Start with Purpose and Structure

Every meeting must begin with clarity of purpose. The organizer should ask, "What do we want to accomplish by the end of this session?" That objective should drive the agenda, shape who attends, and determine what success looks like. A clear agenda should link every topic to that objective, helping participants understand not just what they'll discuss, but why it matters. Each meeting should have a defined start and end time, honoring the commitments of everyone involved. Respect for time communicates respect for people, and it signals that the organization values efficiency and accountability.

The Role of the Facilitator

Every meeting needs a facilitator, someone responsible for guiding discussion, maintaining focus, and ensuring that all voices are heard. In a nonprofit setting, this might be the CEO, board chair, or project lead. The facilitator's job is not to dominate the conversation, but to manage it – to keep it productive, on-track, and inclusive. An effective facilitator balances listening with direction. They clarify objectives, move the group toward consensus, and ensure follow-through.

The Four Qualities of a Great Meeting

Whether it's a 10-minute huddle or a two-hour board session, every great meeting delivers four outcomes:

Key Information - Meetings should equip participants with the essential facts and context they need to make informed decisions. Distribute background materials in advance so the meeting itself can focus on discussion and action, not one-way updates.



Inspiration - Meetings should connect people emotionally to the mission. Sharing a client story, a recent success, or a reminder of the organization's "why" can reignite passion and purpose. Inspiration keeps participants engaged and reminds them that the meeting is part of something bigger.

Decision-Making - Every meeting should move something forward. Identify decisions that must be made and create space for healthy dialogue and resolution. Clear decision points give meetings direction and momentum.

Next Steps - End every meeting by summarizing agreements, assigning responsibilities, and confirming deadlines. Without clarity on next steps, even the best ideas fade quickly.

From Obligation to Opportunity

For nonprofit leaders, mastering the art of running great meetings is an investment in organizational effectiveness. A well-run meeting informs, inspires, decides, and acts - all in service of the mission. Whether it's a weekly team check-in or a quarterly board retreat, applying these principles transforms meetings from obligatory gatherings into opportunities for alignment, progress, and shared purpose.

Great meetings don't just happen. They're designed, facilitated, and led with intention. When that happens, the entire organization moves forward together.

For more information about Fulcrum Nonprofit Leadership, please visit our website at www.fulcrumleader.com or reach out to us directly via email at hello@fulcrumleader.com.