

The Importance of and How to Standardize Repeated Processes

Your fast growing company will only get more complicated and move even faster. The cost of 're-inventing' the wheel each time you face common issues is wasted time and energy. Standardize your approach to repeated processes and issues. The result is improved consistency, effectiveness, efficiency, and quality of your leadership.

Start with standardizing the following:

- 1) Communications and meetings framework and cadence
- 2) Meeting norms
- 3) How we communicate between ourselves
- 4) 1:1's (see separate FourBridges tool on Impactful 1:1s)

Then add these:

- 5) Presentations
- 6) On-boarding
- 7) Board Meetings
- 8) Management training modules and delivery process
- 9) Employee satisfaction surveys

In the following pages, we provide an example of a 'Communications and Meetings Framework' and of a 'Meeting Norms Agreement' so everyone knows the cadence, purpose, and expectations for repeating events. Key points for how to effectively implement this kind of plan:

- Post visibly and distribute widely.
- Assign the CFO, COO or VP of HR to insure discipline, or rotate quarterly.
- Involve others to lead individual standardized procedures; make it a company-wide initiative.
- Revisit these rules quarterly and revise as needed.
- Consider handing over portions of meetings to emerging leaders to help groom them for the next leadership position, and to free your energy up from highest and best use.

Meetings Framework and Cadence

EXAMPLE

Event	Frequency/Time Commitment	Who/Leader Responsible
Executive Team Meeting	Weekly/3 hours	C-Level/CEO
Management Team Meeting	Monthly/3 hours	Top level functional leaders/COO
All Hands Meeting	Every 2 weeks/1 hour	Entire company/CEO
Quarterly Kick-off Meeting	Quarterly, 2 nd week of ea. Qtr./3 hours	Entire company/CEO
Department Heads Meetings	Weekly/2 hours	Department leader and direct reports/Dept. leader
Department Business with TQR review and setting	Quarterly/1 full day	Functional Leaders/CFO
Management Training	Monthly/2 hours	Current training class/COO
Executive Team Strategy Offsite	Quarterly/4 hours	Exec Team/CFO
1:1's with direct reports	Weekly/45 minutes	Leaders and DR's/DR
Board Meetings	Monthly/2 hours	Exec Team/CFO

Meeting Norms

Effective meetings have clear and adhered-to norms. Norms are the behaviors you expect at your meetings, and are asking the team to hold each other accountable to these. Start with the example statements below and then refine to fit your culture and style. See how impactful this is on your ability to run effective, productive meetings.

When you do share these expectations, make it clear that you are on the warpath to hold effective meetings EVERY TIME.

The dysfunctions of meetings are a rich topic because most companies fall down here. We will address this further in future posts. The current post is a short cut to immediately implementing meeting 'best practices'.

EXAMPLE

- Clear meeting cadence (how often) and timing (e.g. set schedules well in advance)
- Clarity on meeting purpose. If not the same every time, send this purpose out ahead of time so others can be prepared and understand what you need to accomplish. Meetings can have a variety of purposes, some examples are to:
 - Resolve an issue or issues
 - Brainstorm
 - Share information/ update
 - Discuss strategy
 - Deliver training/education
- This meeting is absolutely the best way to address the purpose
- Agenda always sent 12 hours ahead of time
- All attendees on time. Five minutes early is on time
- Every attendee is 100% present and focused; phones and computers own
- The right people are in the meeting. Everyone has a purpose.
- Role clarity. Who wears what 'hat'?
 - Meeting leader, time keeper, scribe (for follow up)

- Clear on how decisions during the meeting made. Who decides whether to pursue an issue or put it in the parking lot for later discussion?
- Elephants on the table. No withholding
- Notes follow always. Assigned scribe communicate to others immediately following meeting. Determine how and to whom the key decisions or actions of the meeting will be communicated
- End of meeting evaluation. (30-seconds for each person); 1 good thing we should continue; 1 thing we could have done better.
- Every leader has the responsibility to model, teach and enforce these rules.
- Post these Norms in every meeting place. Train everyone on the Norms

Communication Expectations

How do we communicate outside of the meeting? Let's agree on that too!

We are constantly in danger of talking 'at' each other by defaulting to email. The hierarchy for effective communications is what we suggest agreeing upon:

First: Face-to-Face.

Get up from your desk and talk to the other person! Use video conferencing as default if you are remote. Evidence shows the ability to see the other person's facial expression and body language dramatically improves your ability to communicate meaningful information and reach agreements.

Second: Phone.

Pick up the phone and talk to the other person. Use video conferencing as default.

Third: Instant Message / Text Message.

It's for a quick response or information sharing

Fourth: E-mail.

This is the most inefficient and abused form