

Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events (T.I.M.E.)

Topic: \$\$\$, ROI, ROE, ROK and the Softer Side of Meetings

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WELCOME

This issue presents the circular relationship between budgets, effective meetings and justification for meetings. What comes first the adequate budget or measurements about a meetings' impact?

This issue of T.I.M.E. dissects the people costs (human capital impacts) implicit in meetings and meeting budgets. Hopefully, it will be thought provoking and give you some new ideas to use in your next budget discussion.

NOW HEAR ME SPEAK

We've had the chance to communicate via cyberspace via my written newsletter. Now hear me in person.

I am pleased to announce that several of my seminars are now available through the MPI Platinum Program:

- Communicating Effectively Across the Globe
- 180 Ways to Transform your Meetings
- Lights, Color, Sound & Action: Reaching a Jaded Audience
- What's Your EQ? - Exploring the Role of Emotional Intelligence

If you are a Meeting Professionals International member, bring me to your local MPI Chapter for 1-, 3-hour or customized program on these topics.

I will also be presenting at the ITME Motivation Show (September 24 –26, 2002, Chicago) on the following topics:

- Beyond Logistics: Becoming the Valued Knowledge Worker (in collaboration with Mike Hamilton of [Synchronicity](#))
- Exploring the Role of Emotional Intelligence
- Communicating Effectively Across the Globe

I love speaking and will happily create a seminar, presentation or speech for you and your organization. My areas of specialization: Creating Effective Meetings, Reaching the Adult Audience, Teams and Teambuilding, Humor in the Business World, Communication Strategies and more.

Now onto this month's issue

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COUNTING ALL YOUR PENNIES

Budgets are a reality of today's economy. Headlines announcing tight travel budgets, tight meeting budgets and generally tight budgets (period) are in trade journals of all types.

Line items are eliminated from budgets. Overall spending slashed by a certain percentage.

The flip side to this typical budget haggling is: WHAT ADDITIONAL DO WE NEED TO SPEND TO MAKE THE MEETING WORTHWHILE AND EFFECTIVE?

What will it take for the people attending to get something out of the meeting? Out of this training event?

Do you ever complain about attending meetings (no, I am not referring to the meetings you are responsible for)??

If the answer is yes, you are not alone. Marlene Caroselli writes in [Meetings That Work](#) that the Wharton Center for Applied Research found that excluding preparation time, senior executives spend 23 hours a week in meetings but consider only 58% of that time effectively spent.

THE NOT FLIPPANT LOOK AT THE FLIP SIDE OF BUDGETS

No organization has the luxury of the time or budget to waste their people's time or energy in sub-optimal meetings.

So at the risk of seeming flippant, it is important to stand up and ask for the budget that you need. The budget that is necessary for a successful meeting.

Poor meetings have costs. Here are 3 forms of cost that may give you the ammunition to argue for the budget you need:

Opportunity cost of your attendees' time. These people could have been doing something different; some thing probably more productive. That time cannot be recovered and is a true cost of the meeting. Although not a line item on the budget, the cost of the people sitting in the meeting is a significant cost.

Message Not Delivered/ Purpose Not Met. If a meeting falls short of getting the message out, not only do you have to account for Opportunity Cost but you have also spent whatever budget you have.

The Reverse Halo Effect. The Halo Effect generally states that your perception of something (X) is influenced by some other external factor (Y). For example, if you think highly of an employee (Y) and he or she generally does great work, when that person turns in a poor performance on a project you are less likely to think that performance is poor (X) because of your existing perceptions.

I believe that Meetings can have a Halo Effect. They can create a positive aura that is carried forward into other areas. Or poor meetings can have the reverse effect. Face-to-face meetings are a time to motivate, inspire, direct and involve your attendees. Poor meetings leave participants un-motivated, un-inspired, un-directed and un-involved. Doesn't matter whether the attendees are employees, association members or volunteers. Ineffective meetings are energy sappers and will wear on your attendees and trickle down to other areas.

OPPORTUNITY COST: BASIC ALGEBRA

Burke Marketing Research reports that an executive who earns \$50,000 a year earns \$20,621 of that amount sitting in meetings. He or she considers 1/3 of the time spent in meetings unnecessary. In total, those unnecessary meetings consume 6 weeks of the executive's working year.

How could that same executive better spend 6 weeks a year? That's the opportunity cost.

In addition, you may find it useful to place a dollar value of the "human capital" sitting in a meeting. The people cost of your meeting is:

Hourly salary of every attendee marked up for benefits
x
Number of meeting hours (you may also want to including travel)
x

Number of attendees.

One resource suggested that the cost of a \$40,000 employee including fringe benefits plus meeting materials plus prep time was equivalent to \$200 per hour. A Human Resource expert in your organization will be able to share more specific fringe benefit rates with you.

MESSAGE NOT DELIVERED/ PURPOSE NOT MET

If a meeting falls short of getting the message out, not only do you have to account for Opportunity Cost but you have also spent whatever budget you have.

Organizations seek ways to quantify the success of a meeting or event. Many disciplines including training, software purchases, and general budgeting for projects attempt to arrive at a Return on Investment (ROI). All these disciplines are plagued by similar difficulties in calculating ROI for meetings:

- Measuring changes in behaviors
- Calculations that rely on estimates (WAGs at worst) -- email me for a definition :)
- Quantifying the many soft variables (productivity, improved customer service, ease of use)

That doesn't mean that ROI isn't worth pursuing. See the October 2000 issue of T.I.M.E. for a list of variables and metrics that you can utilize in building ROI. Click her to see the issue: [Evaluations and \(freebie\) sample evaluation questions](#) And I plan on writing an issue devoted exclusively to ROI later this year.

However, another viable measure is Return on Objectives (ROO). What are your objectives and how can you measure them. Cornell University's William Trochium developed this approach.

Verizon uses this measure in evaluating their training. Before Verizon begins any training initiative, the team conducts a 15 to 20 minute interview with a key executive involved in the learning effort. Based on their person's expectations (the person also holding the purse strings), specific objectives are established.

Yet a third measure is ROK or Return on Knowledge. This approach may be appropriate for a meeting where information is shared or transferred. A product launch or training meetings are good examples. What is the bottom-line benefit that results from your participants having this knowledge?

THE REVERSE HALO EFFECT

You want and need your attendees to feel good about the company or the organization. You want them surrounded by a halo of positive energy, motivation, productivity, new knowledge, new contacts generated by a meeting.

If not...

Association attendees have a simple action - they will vote with their feet. They will not attend the next meeting.

Non-profit organizations are competing for a share of people's volunteer time. They cannot risk volunteers who comment, "If I have to sit through another meeting like that. I'll"

Employees too can vote with their feet; in today's tight employment market they are less likely to leave but worse they will stay around being unhappy, disgruntled, and unmotivated.

This soft, feel-good stuff should not be discounted. People feeling good, informed, productive, and in sync with the company is called "human capital management". According to Merrill Lynch, effective human capital management will be the single most important point of differentiation for businesses in the 21st century.

More than 70% of Fortune 100 CEOs now view human capital as a strategic part of their business. That puts you as masters of meetings in a key role in human capital management.

Ultimately, poor meetings and all they represent will cause turnover. In the corporate world, turnover is tied to significant costs:

- Replacing worker
- Stress on the organization while position is unfilled
- Can trigger turnover in other positions (especially true the more senior the person)
- Creates a loss of intellectual and developmental resources
- Disrupts and weakens customer relationships
- Disrupts a succession strategy

"Retention of customers and employees is the hallmark of most successful companies. Retention is the most critical driver of profit expansion. The cost of replacing lost customer and employees is astronomical." (Incentive April 2002)

William Sebra, CEO of Knowledge Workers, Inc. stated in Human Capital magazine (May/June 2001) "Without the right people to execute the business play, a company is headed for eventual failure."

Human capital management is a serious strategic element to success.

THREE TIPS

The three forms of cost (Opportunity, Lack of ROO, ROK, ROI and Reverse Halo) I outlined can help you justify your budget. The three metrics (ROI, ROO, ROK) can help you justify your budget. And consideration of these elements will lead to more successful meetings.

I have worked with organizations in many ways to improve the effectiveness of their meetings. In my seminar, 180 Ways to Transform a Meeting, I provide a handout that documents 23 different areas to make meeting more effective.

However, in the broadest sense of fulfilling a Return on Investment, a Return on Objectives or Return on Knowledge, here are my suggestions for creating the return you and your management is looking for.

Tip # 1: Tie Your Meeting To The Company Objectives

Your company is not in the business of producing meetings – they produce a good or service. The more you can tie your meeting directly to the objectives, goals and direction of your organization, the more successful your meeting will be. Coincidentally, you will be more successful and you are likely to have an easier time when it comes to getting funding!

Tip # 2: Keep Them Customer Focused

Research by the Boston Consulting Group found that “more than 95% of in-house activities (including meetings, and the swapping of email and memos) add little value in terms of the deliverables that make a difference to a customer.”

Whether your customer is internal or external, make the customer the focus of meetings. Keep a picture of your customer in mind and tailor all that you do in such a way that will result in a happier customer.

Tip # 3: Create Action Oriented Agendas

We all know that it is important to spell out the objectives of a meeting. And meeting agendas are the bare minimum for having an effective meeting.

Instead of a typical agenda, create agenda's with action built into them. For example, use verb-spurred agendas. Instead of the typical agenda items:

Items for Discussion:
ABC System
2002 Budget

Create agendas with verbs associated with them:

Examine need to build ABC System

Recap and *assign* tasks

List problems with 2002 Budget

Approve steps

Taken from [Fat Free Meetings; How to Keep Them...](#) by Burt Albert.

Another idea for more action-oriented agendas is to keep the “vision”, the “mission”, the “goal” always in front of the audience. Each meeting should support the direction you are headed. If your goal is to “Be the Market Leader in Product X” keep the goal front and center. Write it on the agenda. Include it on staff meeting agendas. Write it in positive language that is oriented toward action for today. Treat your meetings as steps to realize your goal.

I have also found practical suggestions for meetings in Roger Mosvick and Robert Nelson’s book, [We’ve Got to Start Meeting Like This: A...](#)

Other books on meeting skills and effective meetings can be found through this link:

[Additional Books on Effective Meetings](#)

HUMOR & FREEBIES

America leads the world not in steel or textile but in meetings. The problem is how do you export meetings? Robert Half

Budgeting is not only an Excel spreadsheet. Managing a budget involves negotiation, listening, and persuading. If you would like some suggestions and new perspectives on crunching budgets, email us with the words BUDGET in the subject line.

ARE YOU AT THE END OF YOUR ROPE

We still have openings for our experience-based learning program on Wednesday, June 5. Join us in an outdoor setting as we will take a group through a series of outdoor learning initiatives. By participating in the program, you will:

Discover more about the use of outdoor learning experiences

Gain personal insight to your own behavior in groups and teams

Improve your contributions to teams to which you belong

Gain knowledge to share back in your organization or with your customers (internal or external)

If you know someone who should receive an invitation, email us and we will insure they are included. If you are interested, you can obtain a registration form here [Registration Form](http://members.aol.com/sealinc/Registration.doc) (<http://members.aol.com/sealinc/Registration.doc>)

T.I.M.E. GONE BY

Past issues of T.I.M.E. can be downloaded as a MS Word document. Here is an index of topics and “freebies” offered in the past:

May 2000:	Teambuilding And (Freebie) New York Times Reprint On Teambuilding
June 2000:	Green Meetings And (Freebie) Resource List Of Exercises
July 2000:	American (Values) And (Freebie) Meeting Analysis
August 2000:	Minimum/Minimal Meetings And (Freebie) Web Winners
October 2000:	Evaluations And (Freebie) Sample Evaluation Questions
November 2000:	Politics
December 2000:	Toys And (Freebie) Brainstorming Ideas
January 2001:	Sales, Award Presentations And (Freebie) Sales Tips
February 2001:	Change And Communicating Change And (Freebie) Change Bombs
March 2001:	Open Space Technology
April 2001:	Adult Learning Styles And (Freebie) Learning Style Questionnaire
May 2001:	Trade Shows And (Freebie) Trade Show Timeline
June 2001:	Emotional Intelligence And (Freebie) EI Quiz
July 2001:	Presentation Skills And (Freebie) Speaker Introductions
August 2001:	Ice Breakers And (Freebie) Resource List
September 2001:	Facilitation And (Freebie) Problem Personalities In A Meeting
October 2001:	Humor And (Freebie) The Benefits Of Laughter
November 2001:	Customer Care And (Freebie) Complaints
December 2001:	Slack And (Freebie) Quiet Time
January 2002:	The Many Faces Of Teambuilding And (Freebie)
February 2002:	Promotional Products And (Freebie) Case Study
March 2002:	Multicultural Communication And (Freebie) Multicultural Meeting Tips
April 2002:	Outdoor Learning and (freebie) Justification Checklist

FUTURE T.I.M.E.

How can I help you in the future? Will we meet face-to-face? Here are ways that I can help you out in the future:

- Provide Facilitators
- Customize a Teambuilding Program
- Reprint past newsletters for further distribution (Past clients have used my issues for Internal Speakers, Trade Shows, etc.)
- Provide Links/Articles for your web site

- Preparation for Internal Speakers
- Training and Seminars (Development and Delivery)
- Meeting Management Consulting

I am an Interaction-ary. We specialize in providing interaction and boosting the effectiveness of meetings. Networking and education are top priorities of employees and association members. Interaction enhances both networking and education. Call us to talk about what SEAL Inc can do for you in Teambuilding, Icebreakers, Training, Speaker Preparation and other meeting content related areas.

In the meantime, I would really appreciate it if you would forward T.I.M.E. onto your colleagues, associates, and clients. Just press the forward button.

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