

Miracle Meetings

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The typical Monday morning meeting becomes a productive result-oriented affair instead of a drudge when leaders manage participants effectively. Karen Anderson in her book, *Getting What You Want* (Dutton Book, 1993) identifies six types of people who may adversely affect a meeting and offers communication tips for controlling them. If care is taken in managing them, meetings miraculously turnaround. The six types are as follows:

Dominators:

These are aggressive people who want to take control and focus the meeting on their personal agendas. When dealing with Dominators, the manager should:

- Stay calm.
- Allow the Dominator to ventilate without interrupting. If the person seems to go on and on, the leader should wait for a break, then, jump in with an acknowledgement or thank you to regain control.
- Assure the person their ideas or concerns will be considered. Write them down to demonstrate you take them seriously. Then, call on others by name for their opinions. This will shift the focus away from the Dominator.
- Mirror the body language and tone of voice of the Dominator, gradually getting softer in tone.
- Avoid emotion-laden words or putting the person down.

Know It Alls:

These people have an answer for everything. With Know It Alls, it is important to:

- Allow them to save face.

- Acknowledge what they know and be profuse about it.
- In addition to recognizing their accomplishments, mention the fine work of others in the group so that the Know It Alls hears what others are contributing.
- Bridge from what the Know it All says to the issues of the entire group.
- Ask the Know It All to spearhead further investigation on a particular issue and report back at another meeting. This will make the person feel valued.

Agreeables:

Agreeables are people who want to please but don't necessarily keep their commitments. To manage Agreeables effectively:

- Be specific in your expectations.
- Query them for alternative suggestions or additional ideas. People take more ownership when ideas are their own.
- Tie your expectations to the Agreeable's value system. Stress the importance of follow through on the entire group.
- Ask questions to see whether the person understands.
- Set definite deadlines.
- Set up a time table for periodic updates and ask the person to suggest the way he or she will follow up. Then, write it down. Seeing it being written down will make the Agreeable more cognizant of taking action.

Nay Sayers:

Nay Sayers reject new ideas quickly. These are typically people who are not team players and often exude negativity. They complain either directly or indirectly. Nothing is ever right with the organization as far as they are concerned.

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- Listen to their complaint. Acknowledge their feelings. Then, stress the benefits on the entire group for trying the new idea. Also, stress the importance of everyone being a team player.
- Discuss your recommendation in factual, non-emotional language.
- If you are interrupted or criticized, ask the person to allow you to finish.
- Ask the person what solutions he would advocate and then try to move the person from complaining to action.
- Compliment the person any time he is willing to try something he is against.
- Compliment others who are being team players.
- Minimize the Nay Sayer's contact with the rest of the group if you feel the person won't adjust. Let the person know why his involvement with the team is being limited.

Bumps On A Log:

In every group, there are people who rarely participate.

- Ask the Bump on a Log directly what his views are or what his expectation is for a meeting to force him to define his viewpoint or needs publicly.
- Use silence. Do not over talk.
- Be clear about your expectation that everyone participate.
- Make the Bump on a Log responsible for an action item or for chairing a committee. Sometimes people who don't participate feel that no one values their opinions.
- Force participation by giving the Bump on a Log a choice between two options.

Jokers:

These are really snipers in disguise. They pretend to be joking but aren't. They undermine your credibility by belittling your ideas.

- Do not allow them to take potshots at you or members of your group.
- Confront the Joker about any comment that you do not find amusing.
- Ask the Joker to keep her comments to herself using a non-emotional tone of voice.
- If the sniping continues, use the broken record technique.

In every meeting situation, there are people that process new ideas or changes differently. Instead of letting them dismantle you, adjust how you communicate with them by practicing the communication tips suggested by Anderson. You will feel more in control, and your team will be better able to focus on the business at hand without distraction. Your meetings will seem like miracle meetings.

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