

DO YOUR MEETINGS NEED A MAKE-OVER?

So enough already - no more boring meetings! Let this be the year of your meeting make-over! We already know that people learn better when they are having fun. Doesn't it make sense to interject fun into your meetings? At monthly departmental meetings or conferences when people are given the opportunity to laugh, it's easier for them to settle differences, be more creative, leave more enthused and they are more likely to apply what they have learned. Here's some make-over moves you might want to consider:

Have a theme. The larger conference meetings usually center around a theme. After your employees have attended such a conference, use that theme back at the office. If you've had a great closing keynote that enthused everyone, take their theme or best funnies and build on them back at the office.

For those of you with regular monthly or weekly customer service/sales meetings, it isn't necessary to have a theme for each meeting. But every once in a while, throw in a theme to make it interesting. You might have the theme of New Year's Goals Bash or Customer Service-Mardi Gras. Provide celebratory beaded necklaces/horns and/or hats — take along items provide re-enforcement of meeting goals back at their desk.

Other suggestions might be:

- Kissing up to the Customer Contest (provide candy kisses to those who have exemplified great service).
- Cruising for Success (doing a cruise theme would be especially appropriate for a sales team who might be working to win a cruise/vacation).

When your company has reached a milestone, celebrate it!

Create the synergy. Tap on the funny bone to kick things off — note it doesn't have to be YOUR funny bone. If you are like most of us and feel you can't tell a joke, don't! Never *try* to be funny. Be sincere and take yourself lightly. A brief opening story can set the tone for the rest of the meeting. Self-deprecation is a huge winner and gives all the sense that you are all in this together. Everyone wants to know that you are human too. Another choice: start the meeting by asking everyone to share something that no one knows about them or what was the most embarrassing thing that happened over the Holidays. This gives the meeting attendees a chance to charge their funny bone and interact with one another.

Stay on track. If your meetings tend to wander or you have a person who rambles, this can be irritating to all who are present. Because it is necessary to be respectful of everyone's time, it might be necessary to take preventive measures. Appoint someone to be the "Agenda Enforcer." Explain before hand that it is not to offend anyone but to help you stay on track. The "Enforcer" is to make sure that everyone sticks to the agenda so the meeting can accomplish its goals. To turn it into fun so it doesn't offend anyone, provide the "Enforcer" with a fun tool (horn, foam hammer, noise maker).

Add Excitement; Charge the Motivation! Bring in outside presenters to give your team a boost. We're all like children in many ways. We can hear something over and over from Mom but it doesn't sink in until someone else new tells us, then it can change our life. Don't have a budget? Make one. Today many consultant/speakers will work on a retainer arrangement, giving you maximum value for a reasonable investment. By breaking dates down into several meetings, it re-enforces the message and enhances the results. To help put the investment into perspective: How much does a company spend on a new copy machine? How much would revenues increase if everyone increased sales by 33%? Did you know that 50% of the reason people buy is because they like the sales person? Would your business grow if people preferred working with you rather than the competition?

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