

Smarter Innovation: Effective meetings: The heart of innovation (*Abstract*)

Editor's note: Robert Bogue discusses the adoption of innovation through meetings that are planned, transparent, engaging, and driving accountability.
-- Katrina Pugh, Columbia University

Innovation is the implementation of an invention or idea. Patience and persistence are necessary in implementing innovation. There must be a shared understanding and desire for implementation. Thus, innovations require buy-in from diverse participants in development and deployment. In order to gain buy-in, meetings are necessary.

Innovation simply cannot happen without meetings. Meetings carry the idea from one person to another and allow for the development of shared understanding (and communications structures) that carry the innovation through development and into to the market.

Even while the primary interaction vehicle for innovations is the meeting, we often see meetings to be ineffective and time consuming. Ineffective meetings lead to:

- Lower job satisfaction and higher turnover,
- Compromised employee engagement, and
- Over time, lower tenure in the organization.

In order to have more productive and efficient meetings you must first determine what form of meeting is appropriate. Is a face-to-face meeting necessary to communicate the information? The fundamental purpose of a meeting is to develop shared understanding. With the technology of today it is not always necessary to hold a face to face meeting. Emails, phone and video calls can also create shared understanding.

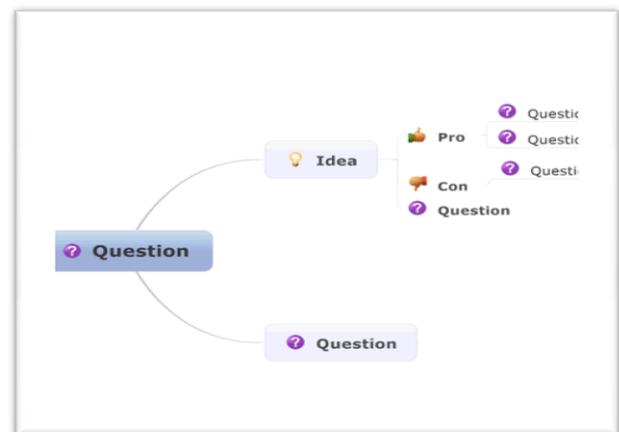
Here are five steps to achieving an effective meeting (regardless of the vehicle):

1. Preparing an agenda to be sent out prior to the meeting
2. Managing the physical aspects of the meeting

3. Facilitating vibrant interactions and sense-making
4. Recording and distributing meeting minutes
5. Holding attendees accountable

While these may seem like common sense, we fail to give them the attention necessary. For example, much time can be wasted due to last minute meeting relocations. Leaders fail to distribute minutes fail to lock in shared understanding. Holding attendees accountable often involves difficult conversations that we all too often avoid.

Dialogue mapping is a technique for sense making. With dialogue mapping, we use a shared display as a common anchor for the discussion. Dialogue mapping allows for deeper understanding than meeting minutes. It provides not only a record of the decision, but also a summary of factors that led to that decision. Below is an example:



By ensuring more effective meetings, businesses can increase innovation productivity: Great meetings reduce waste, improve engagement, and create a greater shared understanding.

Robert Bogue is the President of Thor Projects. He has authored a total of 24 books, including *The SharePoint Shepherd's Guide for End Users-2013*.