



Leading Better Meetings

Are meetings draining your soul? Start leading life-giving meetings today!

There is a tension between meetings that generate momentum and unleash mission, and meetings that are out-of-control because of the need to control. Getting a grip on leading successful, life-giving meetings may be a leadership skill you are still developing but it could be more urgently needed than you think. Ask yourself three key questions:

- 1. Do you lead meetings to share information or to share in decision-making?** Think about it – people support what they help create. It might be time to come to the table with questions and a listening ear rather than a sermon.
- 2. If decisions are made at a meeting, does the decision stand?** If people walk out of the room thinking they have been part of important work only to learn later that someone or some other committee higher up the food chain have overruled their decision, what's the point?
- 3. What role does the most senior person in the room play during the meeting?** Facilitator? Decision maker? Inquisitor? Provocateur? Does this person create space for conflict or marginalize it? If the senior person makes all the decisions, then who needs a committee? On the other hand, if the senior person refuses to share his or her opinion then why would anyone else?

Once you start evaluating every meeting you attend or lead with a critical eye, you will discover a big part of the answer to the question, “Why don't people want to serve on this committee?” (The other half of the answer to that question has to do with the purpose, but that's another conversation.)

Lead life-giving meetings!

Life-giving meetings always have an agenda to manage expectations, time and effectiveness; agendas drive the meetings. Here are three easy ways to make the agenda everyone's work:

In-the-moment Agendas: Invite everyone attending the meeting to add an item to the agenda before the meeting starts by listing items on a clip board or white board. Start the meeting by prioritizing the list as a group with an awareness of the allotted meeting time, urgent items and those that may need more information before starting a discussion. Items that will take more time can be moved by agreement to a Strategic Meeting (see below). Items that are low priority can be managed by encouraging a conversation beyond the meeting between interested parties.

Email-in-advance Agendas: Invite agenda items to be emailed in on a designated day prior to each meeting so the meeting facilitator can craft the agenda. This is especially helpful for meetings with large groups.

Agenda Facilitator: Designate someone to manage the agenda and facilitate the meeting. This can be done with any size group and works well if the facilitator is skilled at decision-making inside the vision, mission and values of the faith community.

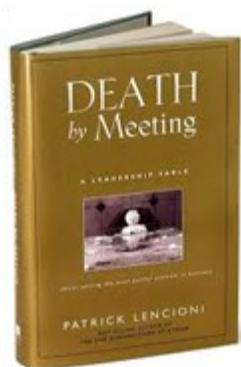
Hold the right “kind” of meeting for the right reason.

There are at least three different kinds of meetings that organizations use to effectively make decisions and connect with each other.

Weekly Tactical: 45-90 Minutes Review weekly activities, resolve obstacles, report on metrics.

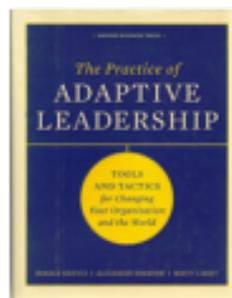
Quarterly Strategic: 2-4 Hours Discuss, analyze, brainstorm and decide upon critical issues affecting long term success. Limit to 2-3 topics, come with information and research, and engage in active discussion. The person with the passion, interest and responsibility for the topic can lead the conversation.

Leadership Retreats: 1-3 Days (away from the church office) Review strategy, trends, team development; take on topics that require in-depth conversation or outside expertise; and plan for key areas such as Faith Formation, Outreach, Evangelism or Worship. Maximize productive times of the day by using evenings for socializing. Make time for enriching spiritual life, team building and vision alignment.



(Adapted from *Death by Meeting* by Patrick Lencioni). Don't just sit there bored out of your mind! Christian leadership is important – too important to waste our time or to waste the time of others. The younger generations and those new to the church won't put up with this. Why should we?

For more information about *Death by Meeting*: <http://amzn.to/13aTri8>



Adapted from *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, by Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashaw & Marty Linsky, page 64-65).

For more information about *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*: <http://amzn.to/11dk2pR>