

TOOL: THE CHAIRPERSON'S SPEECH

Background

The research of Robert Kelly indicated that one of the most critical factors determining a leader's credibility and level of influence was the manner in which they conducted meetings. When leaders run effective meetings, they telegraph that they are interested in using participant time effectively, listening to the ideas and concerns of others, and making things happen. Improving a leader's skill in running a meeting is one of the easiest and effective ways to building credibility with followers.

The Chairperson's Speech is based on the work of Roger Mosvik at Honeywell. Consistent implementation of this tool resulted in significant reduction in meeting time. It is an easy way to boost employee productivity and morale.

Process

Meetings often go awry because their leadership/ownership is unclear. The chairperson is the individual who may have called the meeting or is the one with the greatest stake in its outcome.

Prior to the meeting

The chairperson works with the facilitator of the meeting to ensure the participants understand what is to be accomplished. The chairperson creates a one to two minute speech that outlines the answers to the following questions:

1. Why is this meeting important? What is the issue that needs to be addressed?
2. What do you expect the outcome of this meeting to be?
3. How do you want the participants to contribute?
4. How much time will be devoted to this?
5. What process are we going to use?

Practice this short presentation with another person. At the conclusion of your practice presentation ask the meeting participants:

1. Was the identification of the issue clearly understood?
2. Will the participants understand what they will be required to do?
3. Will the speech energize the group to participate?

At the meeting

Present the Chairperson's Speech at the beginning of the meeting. At the conclusion of the Chairperson's speech, the facilitator asks the group if they have questions.

The facilitator ensures the group stays focused on the task as outlined in the speech.