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Hold Your Best Meeting Yet

Dr. Susan Cain, Ed. D | Corporate Learning Institute

Here are some great tips to use to prepare for your best meeting or presentation ever

- "Care to prepare"- use anxiety to drive preparation. Once at your meeting, drop your anxiety levels by telling the group that you will keep the meeting moving ahead, relying on eye contact with positive people, walking through the agenda steps and using a "parking lot" for longer conversations, telling a great story to set the meeting tone, or checking in with each person on how they are doing.
- If you are on time to the meeting, you are late: Schedule to arrive at the meeting 5 minutes before the scheduled start time. This will allow time to check in, settle down, and begin on time.
- Always have an agenda: An agenda is the blue print of the meeting. It allows the meeting holder to plan and defines the purpose and outcomes of the meeting. It also allows the attendees to come prepared for the meeting. Send out the agenda one week before meeting and ask for feedback. If you receive feedback, make the changes and send out one final time.

Tips to use during your meeting:

Here are some great tips to use during your best meeting;

- Assign a timekeeper or assure the group that you will keep time: keep the participants on track and on time. If the group is getting off topic, this individual will interrupt with a 1-minute wrap up warning.
- Use a **parking lot** or an *issue bin*: A parking lot is a sheet of flip chart paper that is taped to the wall. When an issue or topic is not getting the results or outcome you need quickly enough, the participants can choose to put it

on the parking lot. The parking lot lists the issue at hand, who needs to be involved, when it can begin, and what the ideal outcome is.

- An issue bin is similar, using a sheet of scratch paper, when an issue is not being resolved and it is not the main purpose of the meeting, the issue is written on a sheet of paper along with who needs to be involved in solving the issue, timeline, and what the ideal outcome is.
- Review the agenda with the group, and clarify the purpose and desired outcomes of the meeting with the group.
- Each individual should participate in the meeting, offer thoughts, advice, suggestions, and ask questions.
- Listen as much as you speak. Engage and challenge other people to discuss. Use phrases such as “Joe, what are your thoughts on this”.

Tips to use during the meeting wrap-up:

Here are some great tips to use during your meeting conclusion

- Give time for wrap up. Allow participants to give their final thoughts on the meeting.
- Debrief meeting: Allow participants to share their thoughts on the meeting and what they got out of it and what they feel needs to improve for next time, as well as reviewing unfinished business.
- Go over the action steps that need to be done before meeting again. Review who will be taking responsibility- use an action plan, if necessary.
- Review the parking lot and issue bin. Do these items need to be addressed before the next meeting?
- Schedule the next meeting while everyone is still in the room.

Use Steve Job's Tips for making better presentations and meetings:

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/carminnegallo/2012/10/04/11-presentation-lessons-you-can-still-learn-from-steve-jobs/2/>.

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