



## **Better Meetings!**

**Hello Friends, Clients and Colleagues, and welcome to our new web site!**

You'll recall that the last letter was a summary of *Chindia* about our challenges from China and India. Black & Veatch CEO Len Rodman offered these helpful thoughts in response to my notes about *Chindia*:

*"Thanks again for the summaries. I would add that our experience is that a very large advantage for these countries over the US and Europe is the drive and loyalty of the working professionals. In many ways we find that today's young engineer in India or China is much like the US engineer of 30 to 40 years ago from a company loyalty perspective combined with the entrepreneurial drive of today's most ambitious MBA. My usual comment is that US and European professionals today are looking for "work-life balance." In India and China their counterparts "live to work." When you layer that with the strong technical skills and lower salary structure, you have competitive advantage, possibly sustainable."*

... Len Rodman, CEO, Black & Veatch

### **This Month's Topic is "MEETINGS"**

**Meetings, meetings, meetings ...**

**Doyle and Strauss observe that meetings are like rabbits: they get little work done, but lead to more meetings (rabbits)!**

**We've had several client groups who've focused on really developing their executive/leadership meetings, including BWSC Consulting Engineers and Danis Building Construction.**

**Even churches, colleges and consultants often struggle with meetings. We believe there's a real payback there.**

**Hopefully the following will be useful to you in this matter of better meetings!**

**Regards,**

***Mel***

**Mel Hensey, PE, F.ASCE**  
**Management Consulting Engineer**  
Hensey Associates  
8220 Riversedge Cir., Maineville, OH 45039  
513/919-7672, [MHensey@aol.com](mailto:MHensey@aol.com)  
[www.henseyassociates.com](http://www.henseyassociates.com)

## FOR SHORTER AND BETTER MEETINGS

There are so many helpful tools and guides for improving management meetings that **can** help if used! And do we **need** to use them? ... yes!

Doyle and Strauss (authors of the classic *Manage Your Meetings*) studied hours of management meetings on video. Conclusion: time-wasting, demoralizing, non-productive, and result in **more** meetings. Yuck!

Several “team” studies reveal that very bright business people (IQ of 140 to 160) have a collective or **group IQ** of perhaps **16** ... due to ineffective meetings!

35 years ago, a P&G colleague stunned me when we left a management meeting. He very seriously observed: “I just wasted two hours of my **life!**”

Here are just a few of the ways you can **painlessly improve** your management meetings:

- ☑ Use “**ground rules.**” This idea came from a UC colleague many years ago. Attached is a recent version I like to offer. But better yet, have your team invent their own!
- ☑ A clear **purpose** of the meeting is more important than an agenda, so say Doyle and Strauss. An agenda is helpful as well.
- ☑ Have the **right people** there for your purpose! Too many and you’ll waste people’s time; too few or the wrong ones will lead to poor results.
- ☑ Use **small** groups to do **creative** work; use **large** groups only to offer opinions and to review the work done by the small groups!
- ☑ Press for **brevity** and **results** in your discussions. Any result that calls for follow-up action needs a **name** to go with it.
- ☑ For “Report-outs,” use the ECIR model to save time and sharpen results:
  - **Exceptions** to goals and plans
  - **Causes** of those exceptions
  - **Impacts** of those exceptions
  - **Remedies** for the causes!

This is especially valuable when a lot of folks have lengthy reports!

There are **many** more tools and tips, but these will fix 90%-95% of the many problems we have with meetings!



*Mel Hensey, PE, F.ASCE*  
Management Consulting Engineer  
Hensey Associates, Maineville, OH

[MHensey@aol.com](mailto:MHensey@aol.com), [www.henseyassociates.com](http://www.henseyassociates.com)

## GROUNDRULES FOR GREAT MEETINGS!

---

1. Stick to **one topic** at a time and avoid tangents.
  2. Use time well; limit your talking to **2 minutes per turn**.
  3. Be **open, candid and honest**; it saves time and builds trust.
  4. **Listen carefully**; hear from everyone; keep an open mind.
  5. **Avoid** side-bar conversations and other interruptions.
  6. When brainstorming, **avoid criticizing** ideas.
  7. **Expect disagreement**; focus on issues rather than personalities.
  8. Don't railroad decisions; play **win/win** for all participants.
  9. Keep a **visible record** of group agreements on a flip chart.
  10. Maintain **confidentiality** of discussions with the group.
- 

*The courage to speak must always be balanced by the wisdom to listen.*

... Ben Franklin

*Effective groups have lots of issues and they work on them. Ineffective groups have truckloads of issues, because they avoid working on them.*

... Wilfred Bion



Mel Hensey, PE, Management Consulting Engineer  
Hensey Associates, Maineville, OH

[MHensey@aol.com](mailto:MHensey@aol.com), [www.henseyassociates.com](http://www.henseyassociates.com)