

Teamwork and Team Building

The Traditional Team

There are several characteristics common to traditional teams.

- A team gains a shared understanding and purpose among team members, as distinguished from a group.
- Teams require mutually agreed-upon operating principles such as agendas, procedures, and decision-making processes.
- A team is interdependent; everyone works for the good of the team, not for oneself.
- Effective teams distinguish task from process. How they do things (the process) is just as important, if not more important, than what they do (the task).

Setting the Time and the Place

Giving thought to time and place considerations for a team meeting can go a long way toward producing a more effective meeting outcome. Below are some elements to think about.

- Is the location convenient for participants?
- Quiet. Is the meeting going to be held in an open environment? Near the plant?
- Is this an e-team meeting? Or a meeting with members in remote locations or different time zones?
- What time of day is best?
- Are there time zone considerations for e-teams or remote participants?
- For what other interruptions and distractions can you anticipate and plan?

Trying the 50-Minute Meeting

In some companies, meetings are stacked up on the hour like planes in the landing pattern at O'Hare Airport. The 50-minute meeting concept is simple; instead of a full 60-minute meeting, why not give people time for a bio break, a fresh cup of coffee, and "commuting time" to the next meeting?

50-minute meetings also help manage:

- Overload of information that the mind can absorb at one time
- Wandering attention spans
- Potential health problems from sitting too long

You can't always have a 50 minute meeting, but if you're meeting will run several hours, you could have a connected series of 50 minute meetings. The extra 10 minutes in each hour -- set at a consistent clock time such as 50 minutes after the hour -- could allow for stretches, breaks, or a quick e-mail session.