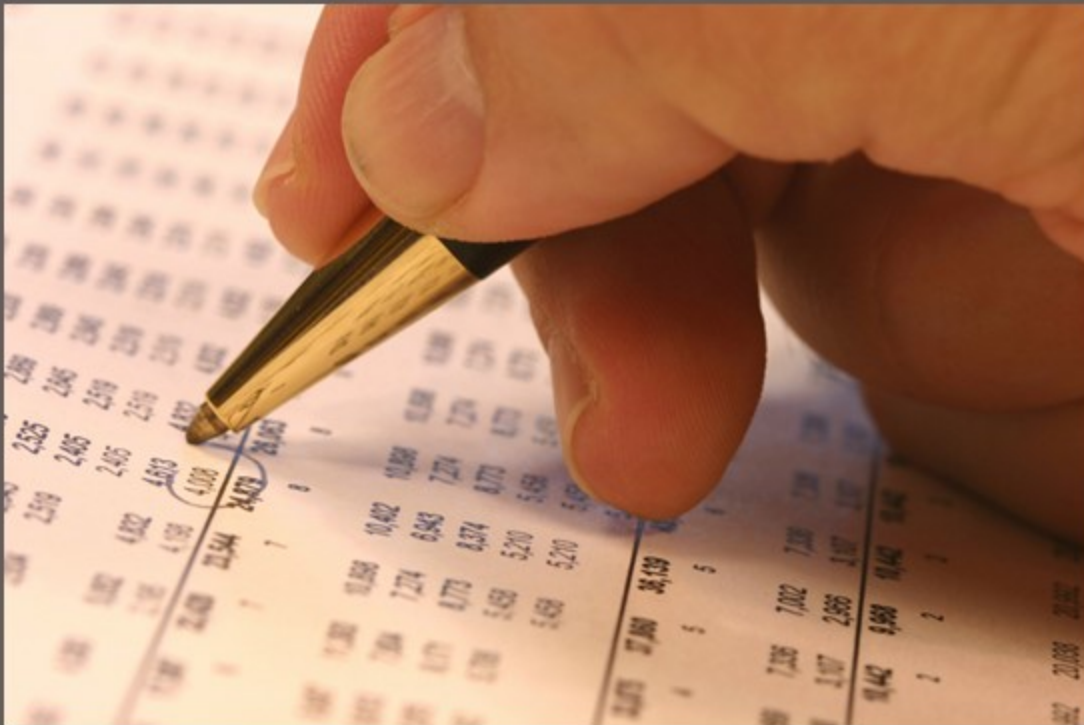


Personal Productivity and Organization



Ed Rehkopf



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The following eight articles touch on matters of personal productivity and organization. It is fair to say that any club department will only be as organized and productive as its leader. Some people are well-organized and productive by nature, but most of us need some guidance and reminders to function effectively and direct and motivate their staffs to do the same.

The Cost of Chaos

Common wisdom tells us that quality costs more, but according to one of the foremost experts on quality this is not the case.

W. Edwards Deming, statistician, professor, author, consultant, lecturer, a man who made significant contributions to Japan's reputation for high quality products and its rise to an economic power in the latter half of the 20th Century, wrote extensively about how a focus on quality actually reduces costs while providing a number of other benefits. Convincingly, his ideas and methods were proven true by numerous success stories – most dramatically the rise of Japanese manufacturing to world class status from the ashes of World War II.

How does a club measure or quantify the cost of confusion, mishandled or incomplete information and orders, time to investigate and correct errors, and member dissatisfaction? The bottom line is that poor quality and disorganization is a major driver of costs in club operations. Conversely, an improvement in quality not only lowers costs but also improves service. The combination of lower cost and better service attracts more member patronage which improves the club's bottom line.

Detailed organizational systems and processes allow the operation to function efficiently. When things happen consistently and routinely in all areas of the operation, employees have the time and the inclination to focus on quality and service. When everything is messed up all the time, employees will find it difficult to care.

So, help yourself and your employees by structuring the routine to happen routinely. This takes both the will and the organizational discipline to make it happen. When 80% of the operation functions routinely and efficiently, everyone can focus on the 20% that will wow your members.

So, what things managers can do to better organize their operations? This short list is pure common sense:

- Prepare written procedures for all routine tasks – opening, closing, and cleaning procedures, conducting inventories, replenishing par stocks, making coffee and iced tea, and on and on. Since your staff does these things on an ongoing basis, take the time to write them down in detail so they can be used for consistent training and task completion.
- Prepare and use checklists for both training and accountability.
- Anytime you hold a training session, organize, and save the material. You'll certainly be using the same material again . . . and again!



- Review all activities and events after the fact and record your observations. You will undoubtedly hold the same or similar events in the future. Your notes for improvement will help continually improve the quality and execution of all you do.
- Prepare and use an ever-updated list of project work that can be used to assign to staff in slow moments when you're not prepared to send anyone home early.
- Train yourself in the techniques and disciplines of time management. Time management is not about managing time, it's about managing those task that use up your limited time. When you waste your time, you can't help but waste your employees' time as well.

Bottom Line: No one wants to work in a chaotic environment. If your department or section is well-organized, if everyone knows where things are, if employees are well-trained in opening and closing procedures, if everyone knows their responsibilities and is held accountable, the workplace runs almost effortlessly. Don't run off good people by putting them through the hell of a disorganized operation.

Personal Productivity

Club management is a demanding and time-consuming profession. Managers and supervisors at all levels too often find themselves reacting to events and constantly responding to the crisis of the moment.

What all this means is that to stay ahead of this never-ending press of daily operations and to attend to the many important issues of member service, organization and operating efficiencies, special events and activity programming, planning and review, staff development and training, and continual process improvement, not to mention personal sanity, a manager must be well-organized and highly productive. Below are some of the strategies and habits that can improve your personal productivity.

Annual Planning. Have an annual plan and timelines for your department or section. Put it in writing to commit to its accomplishment and review it monthly.

Work Planning. Your personal work plan will include what steps need to be accomplished to meet your departmental goals, but will also have personal goals, such as developing yourself and your skill set.

Use a Day-Timer (either hard copy or digital) to better organize yourself, your schedule, and your daily tasks. Use it to look ahead and plan.

Make Lists and Prioritize. Priorities change frequently – even daily – but keep a list of priorities (1. Critical – must be accomplished as soon as possible; 2. Priority – must be accomplished according to ever-changing priorities; 3. Routine – may be accomplished as time and resources permit).

Develop and Use Checklists. These pre-prepared lists for project work, such as organizing storage areas or deep cleaning workspaces, can be used to assign your employees recurring tasks when business is slow, but you are not yet prepared to send anyone home.

Plan. The planning horizons may vary from department to department, but you should always be looking ahead at least one month (and often 2 to 3 months) for special events, seasonal



activities, increasing or decreasing business levels, vacation scheduling, and any other events or activities that require advance planning.

Use a Personal Computer. The PC is a great productivity tool and standard business word processing, spreadsheet, and graphics software, such as MS-Office, will allow you to create professional-looking documents that can be stored for future use or modification, such as written standards, policies, and procedures; training materials; budgets and benchmarks; and room diagrams. Having these skills will not only make you more productive and help you communicate more professionally but will significantly enhance your career opportunities and progression.

Organize and Save Your Work. As you produce written standards, policies, and procedures; training materials; various communications; specialized spreadsheets; and any other intellectual material on the computer, save them for future use. Most of what you spend time to create you'll use again as you progress through your career, but you must be able to find it.

Benchmark Your Operation and Forecast Business Levels. Benchmarking will give you a deeper understanding of your business and its seasonality and will help you budget more easily and accurately for future years. It will also allow you to formally forecast upcoming business levels, allowing more efficient staffing. Both disciplines will help take some of the guesswork out of your business decisions.

Master and Delegate Routine Tasks. Routine tasks such as setting schedules, ordering consumable supplies, benchmarking, formal forecasting, and others can and should be delegated to competent and conscientious employees. You must still supervise the work and check its accuracy on a regular basis, but you'll save your own time while helping develop the confidence and abilities of one or more of your employees. Be sure the selected employees are also benefiting by the arrangement through genuine learning opportunity or possibly additional compensation for the tasks.

But before you delegate any task to another, make sure you have mastered the task yourself, have a complete understanding of all issues involved, and train the selected employee thoroughly – not just by showing him how, but by explaining why at the same time.

Establish Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Seasonal, and Annual Habits. The above disciplines will be far easier to implement if you establish regular schedules to do some of the following:

- Daily – Benchmarking, forecasting, staff communication, continual ongoing reviews of your operation, monitoring payroll hours.
- Weekly – Payroll verification, staff scheduling, reviewing, and planning for upcoming events, real time accounting, coding invoices, ordering supplies and inventories, ongoing staff training.
- Monthly – Inventories, real time accounting, monthly review of operating statements and work plans.
- Seasonal – Event and activity programming, seasonal hiring and terminations, ordering seasonal supplies and inventories.
- Annual – Annual planning, budgeting, asset inventory.



Bottom Line. Your department's or section's organization and efficiency starts and ends with you. The efficiency of your operational area and your employee work habits will reflect your personal productivity. To the extent you are disorganized, undisciplined, and work without a plan, your area of the operation will follow suit.

Time Management Disciplines

Managers must use their limited time efficiently to be effective. Understand that time management is not about managing time. It's about identifying time-wasting personal habits and changing them to be more efficient. Here are some disciplines that will help:

Ensure your department or section is well-organized with detailed operating systems, standards, policies, and procedures. Without these, employees "freelance," requiring continual supervision and intervention to do things properly. This will eat up more of your time than anything else.

Plan ahead. Always be looking ahead for upcoming activities, events, projects, and tasks. Planning is near impossible if a manager always has his head down. By identifying upcoming tasks, the manager can review what needs to be done to prepare.

Make to do lists. Not only do lists help on a day-by-day basis, but they should also be made for upcoming events and tasks.

Establish priorities and continually review them.

Develop routines. Daily, weekly, and monthly routines help sort out what must be done and when.

Use checklists for routine tasks. Tasks such as monthly inventories, new hire onboarding, and benchmarking summaries should be detailed on checklists that can be used as necessary.

Develop and use meeting disciplines when planning and holding meetings.

Delegate routine tasks to properly trained subordinates.

Organize workspace, files, and records. An immense amount of time can be wasted by looking for misplaced items such as:

- Personnel files
- Departmental benchmarks
- Contact information for frequently contacted individuals
- Training materials and checklists
- Room and space diagrams
- Use a Day-Timer or Smart Phones to organize contacts, emails, and schedule.
- Establish office hours to avoid excessive interruptions.
- Set and keep a routine schedule as much as possible.



Keep track of those things that waste time. Review this list periodically and brainstorm ways to avoid “time wasters.”

Three Priorities for Prioritizing

In our business there is always more to do than time permits. Setting priorities, then, is a necessary discipline for all club managers. But when much needs to be done, how should we set our priorities? There are three principal priorities and techniques to get the most done:

1. **The Low Hanging Fruit.** Do the easy things first. The sense of accomplishment from these simpler tasks gets the ball rolling and gives you and your work team a sense of accomplishment.
2. **The Biggest Bang for the Buck.** Another means of setting priorities, especially in a tough economy, is to go after those things that don't cost much, thereby allowing the greatest accomplishment at the lowest cost. As with the Low Hanging Fruit, making progress and checking off accomplishments will create momentum and enthusiasm for more challenging tasks.
3. **The Pareto Principle.** Also known as the 80-20 rule, it says that for a wide range of events and activities, 80% of the results comes from 20% of the causes. This principle is named after Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto who observed in the early 1900s that 80% of the land in Italy was owned by 20% of the population. Other observations over the years such as 80% of crime being committed by 20% of the criminals, 80% of a company's business coming from 20% of its customers, and 20% of a hospital's patients using 80% of healthcare services have further reinforced what has become a common rule of thumb.

Busy managers should recognize and apply the rule to their operations. By focusing on the 20% cause, you can influence the 80% of effects. As an example, if 80% of your food and beverage sales comes from 20% of your members, you and your staff should make special efforts to meet the needs of this group. If 80% of your overtime comes from 20% of your team's tasks, focus on finding a less costly solution to completing those tasks. If 80% of your time is taken up with 20% of your work tasks, find another means of addressing those tasks, such as more efficient ways of completing them or delegating them to a properly trained employee.

Setting priorities will always be part of every manager's responsibility. Using these three simple means to establish priorities will allow you to get the most done in the quickest manner with the least effort.

Delegating and Designing System Solutions

Delegating can be a tremendous training tool for talented individuals who want to learn and do more. Consider the following:

Melinda was hired as a temporary administrative assistant to help open an upscale, private golf club. I expected that we would need her for less than six months, but she quickly demonstrated extraordinary abilities. She showed tremendous initiative in tackling assignment after



assignment; she showed great attention to the many details we faced; she was unafraid to make decisions; and, she had a knack for working with and supervising others.

As I became busier and busier, I began to rely on Melinda more and more. Delegating to her was easy because I always knew she would do an outstanding job. Within months she was supervising housekeeping and maintenance, establishing standards and policy, dealing with member issues, and attending various committee meetings.

Based upon her value to the team, I promoted her to Clubhouse Manager later that year. Her efforts and contribution were evident to all who knew her. Looking back on that challenging time, I can honestly say that I could not have done it without her. The next year, our management company offered Melinda her own club. In less than two years she had progressed from a temporary administrative assistant to General Manager of a prestigious private club.

While Melinda was always gracious in crediting me for her rapid rise, I will attest that the mentoring process went both ways. I will always be grateful for the many hours of hard work she spared me during the opening of that club, as well as the opportunity to observe first-hand her talent for directing others while gaining and maintaining their trust, respect, and dedicated efforts.

Delegating duties to employees makes sense for three reasons:

- It frees up your time for other matters,
- It develops employees to take on broader responsibilities, and
- It prepares others to step into your position should you move on.

Practice delegation by selecting one or more employees who show both the aptitude and the interest to take on expanded duties. Your role towards these individuals should be that of a mentor.

When mentoring staff, in addition to showing them what to do, you need to explain in depth the reasons behind various duties. If they are to grow into broader responsibilities, they will need to have knowledge, not just technical experience. While mentoring takes time, it will ultimately free up your time. Your employees will appreciate both the interest and effort devoted to their development, and your career and personal development will be advanced by the additional time you have to focus on other issues and initiatives.

Be aware that:

- Unless you try to provide employees proper direction, feedback, and ongoing growth opportunities, delegating may alienate them. In other words, don't take advantage of them. You need to put effort into their growth and make it worthwhile for them as well as for yourself.
- If you put employees in a supervisory role, pay close attention to how they interact with other staff. The critical aspects of supervision are directing and motivating employees. Many first-time supervisors have difficulty with the more subtle aspects of directing employees and may end up alienating their team.



- When you delegate the authority to do something to a subordinate, you still retain the responsibility that it is done correctly. Never use the excuse that you told a subordinate to do something, and he or she didn't do it.

Delegating requires extra effort on the part of a leader, but ultimately it is one of the most rewarding things you can do. Not only will you have more time to concentrate on projects and details, but you also help others grow personally and professionally – certainly a win-win scenario for everyone.

Designing System Solutions

Quick fixes usually do not address the underlying causes of problems. By examining, improving, and documenting the process, you can establish underlying systems that will routinely handle situations. When the bulk of situations in a club are handled routinely, more time is available for member service and attention to details.

Attempt to follow the Pareto Principle. If you have established routine system procedures for your operation, you are able to devote 20% of your efforts to effect 80% of the operation. Look at how one recurring problem was solved with the development of an efficient system.

Joanne was the beverage manager in a high-end golf club. One of her responsibilities was the beverage cart service provided on the golf course. The challenge presented by this service was a lack of inventory control over readily consumable and easily pilfered snack items. Predictably, the club had ongoing problems. After continually suspecting employees and worrying about unidentified losses, Joanne designed a system of checks and balances.

The beverage cart attendant was required to draw inventory from the golf course snack bar. The snack bar attendant completed the inventory issue sheet and noted all issues as well as turn-ins at the end of the day. The beverage cart attendant kept track of sales on an inventory sold sheet. Both forms were turned in to Joanne daily, giving her an easy way to compare both sales and inventory consumption.

The system was not foolproof, was subject to daily counting errors, and could be overcome by collusion among employees. But for the most part, it worked well and gave Joanne a routine tool to monitor beverage cart sales. Systems don't have to be perfect or highly complicated; they just have to work.

Implementing Initiatives with Incremental Progress

Club managers involved in turnaround or renewal situations will have a lot on their plates. Whether you are intent on the implementation of the full infrastructure laid out in the *Remarkable Service Infrastructure* or want to begin enterprise-wide benchmarking, institute a program of real time accounting in all departments, or develop a more formal training program, there is much to be done. Factor in the efforts involved in any new initiative with the already busy pace of ongoing operations, and you certainly face a major challenge – but also one that is often used as an excuse not to press forward.

So, what strategy can be adopted that will allow progress toward ultimate goals without degrading operations, member engagement, and service delivery? A proven strategy that has worked for me as a general manager in two club openings and two hotel turnarounds has been that of incremental progress.



Incremental progress allows forward movement on any significant plan by means of small steps taken daily or weekly that in total will bring you and your team to the desired goal. But to be successful there are some specific steps that you must take:

- Call a meeting of all affected department heads to lay out your agenda. Explain fully the benefits of the initiative and your desired implementation date. Allow department heads to express concerns or objections. Engage them in discussion to fully explore any opposition and the exact reason for their concerns. Take these into account and adjust your plan or desired completion date accordingly.
- Explain the necessary steps to implementation and require department heads to provide you with a detailed implementation plan and schedule of milestones for their tasks to be completed.
- Appoint a project manager to the overall implementation or reserve this task for yourself (the larger the project the more compelling the reason for the general manager to lead the effort). Using the Critical Path Method to plot all tasks that have required antecedents (such as the controller preparing the real time accounting binders for all departments prior to implementing Tools to Beat Budget), develop a master timeline with actions steps and milestones for each affected department head.
- Schedule a series of meetings to monitor progress toward completion of individual tasks. Depending upon the implementation timetable, you may use the Monthly Review of Financial Statement meetings to review individual progress toward implementation.
- Encourage your subordinates to accomplish their action requirements in small steps – that is accomplishing something every day. If you sense any department head is waiting until the last minute to complete any action item, counsel them that this approach often leads to sloppy, poorly executed implementation and, in fact, may jeopardize the timetables of other department heads or the project as a whole.
- Use weekly staff meetings for quick updates on project progress, thereby continuing to monitor the project momentum. Work with or counsel lagging subordinates as necessary.
- The bottom line for using incremental progress to move an organization toward the implementation of any significant initiative is the persistent involvement of the general manager to ensure that all subordinates stay focused on the larger task while continuing to run their operations. This focus requires ongoing steps to move the project forward.

Once your management team has completed a significant project using the concept of incremental progress, they will find it much easier to tackle other large projects. Remember that Jim Collins in *Good to Great* spoke of the need to push persistently in “a consistent direction over a long period of time” to build momentum and achieve breakthrough.

With everything else your management team must focus on, addressing your large initiatives in small, consistent steps is the only logical way to move forward while maintaining the ongoing pace of operations.



Meeting Your Communication Needs with Meetings

Common wisdom says that everyone hates meetings. But what everyone really hates are pointless meetings that drag on and on. Beyond such mismanaged gatherings is the absolute need to communicate, pass on important information, and keep all managers and staff informed.

This is especially critical in the club business where there is so much detail for everyone to know and communicate, yet with the press of operations, long hours and days, and multiple shifts, it is difficult to gather staff, exchange ideas and information, and get the word out.

- The first and most basic step in improving communications is a consistent service-based approach to leadership among the general manager and department heads with its emphasis on the open flow of communications throughout the organization. This alone will uncover issues, keep the staff better informed, and ensure that everyone knows what's expected and what's going on.
- The second requirement is that everyone responsible for holding meetings understands and consistently applies proven meeting disciplines to ensure meetings are on time, on topic, on purpose, and efficiently run with the minimum investment of everyone's precious time.

With these two requirements in place, the following is a list of ongoing operations meetings (excluding club board and member committee meetings) that are considered essential to a well-run organization. While there may be other meetings the general manager would like to see from time to time, these may be scheduled as necessary with desired attendees:

1. **General Manager's Staff Meeting.** A weekly update meeting for the general manager and department heads, including the controller, HR manager, facility manager and heads of all operating departments. The purpose is to bring everyone up to speed on what is going on in their areas of responsibility and to give the general manager an opportunity to give group direction, discuss issues and concerns, and review any significant club events and activities for the coming week.
2. **Weekly Food and Beverage Meeting.** This meeting goes over all F&B activities and events for the coming week and is usually held early in the week to allow time for menu changes, revised guarantees, and any last-minute details that will affect the smooth functioning of the F&B department. The meeting is usually chaired by the F&B director or executive chef and includes the catering director, dining room manager, and any other F&B managers or supervisors who have a need to know.
3. **Monthly Golf Operations Meeting.** This meeting allows the golf course superintendent, head golf professional, and general manager to discuss any issues relating to the golf operation and ensures the general manager is well-informed on events, issues, and concerns relating to the members' golfing experience.
4. **Departmental Daily Huddles.** These brief meetings at the beginning of the day or before each shift give the department head or supervisor the opportunity to meet briefly with staff to discuss the day's business, review activities and events, reinforce the organization's culture and service ethic, go over member preferences, recognize outstanding performance, and remind staff of important service issues.



5. **Monthly Review of Operating Statement** and Department Work Plans. When the monthly financial statements are completed, the controller will schedule a series of meetings for each department head to meet with the general manager and controller to review departmental performance and progress toward work plan milestones and completion. Department heads will bring their real time accounting binders to the meeting, along with their departmental benchmarks, and be prepared to respond to any questions from the general manager.
6. **Monthly Facility Maintenance/Housekeeping Meeting** for the facility manager and head housekeeper to brief the general manager and discuss all concerns relating those areas of the operation.
7. **Monthly Membership Marketing and Relationship Management Meeting** to allow the membership director and general manager to review marketing efforts and any member issues.
8. **Periodic All Hands Departmental Meetings** held monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly as the need requires and the pace of operations allows. These meetings allow department heads to inform all staff of important issues and concerns, reinforce mission and vision, clear the air, and give staff the opportunity to ask questions.

The bottom line is that in the detail and labor-intensive business of club management, thorough communications among management and staff is a must to promote the quality and efficient operations expected by members and the board. Without ongoing meetings, these expectations are seldom met!

Conducting Meaningful Meetings

Meetings are often thought of as the bane of a businessperson's existence, but meetings are an important means to communicate information and serve a useful role in any enterprise. The reason that meetings often get a bad rap is that they can seem endlessly boring when the person leading the meeting has not taken the time to define its purpose or established ground rules for its conduct.

Meetings can serve various purposes, such as disseminating information and keeping different areas of the club informed about projects, progress, decisions, changes, or new initiatives. They can be used to brainstorm and solve problems. They can be used to coordinate the activities and efforts of different parts of the organization. They can also foster good two-way communications between managers and staff. But in all cases, it's up to the person who called or leads the meeting to define its purpose and rules of conduct, as well as control the meeting.

There are four general types of meetings that serve to improve communications:

- **The Update Meeting** – This meeting is used by management to allow managers to update their boss and peers on their initiatives and progress. The primary example of an update meeting is the general manager's weekly staff meeting. Its purpose is to allow the department heads and the general manager to bring other members of the management team up to speed on various projects, issues, and efforts of general importance. Its purpose is general in nature, and it should not to be used to solve



complex problems or address controversial issues that cannot be resolved quickly or easily.

Each department head should take a few minutes to tell the other managers what is going on in his or her area. It's an excellent opportunity for the controller and HR manager to cover any issues of concern with accounting or human resources. The general manager will usually use the opportunity to bring up issues of general concern that affect multiple departments. Should discussion lead to disagreement or controversy on any subject, the matter should be tabled for discussion at another meeting called specifically to resolve the issue.

The central elements of the update meeting are brevity and generality. The valuable time of a lot of busy people is being used in this meeting and everyone has a responsibility to arrive on time, be brief in their presentation, and cover information that is general and broad-based in nature.

- **The Employee Meeting** – This meeting is used by managers to communicate important information to their staff. Such information can include new or changed policies and procedures, discussion of new initiatives, ongoing or refresher training material, and anything else of importance to the department. As with the Update Meeting, should a controversy or an issue affecting only a small number of employees come up, the matter should be tabled and dealt with in another meeting called solely to deal with that issue and the few employees involved.

Department heads should call employee meetings on a periodic basis. The meeting time should be set when the greatest number of employees are available to attend. Off duty employees are expected to attend but may be excused by the department head.

Every employee meeting should include ample time for employee questions. Allowing employees this opportunity will allow managers to take the pulse of their department's attitude and morale, may uncover previously unknown issues, defuse potential blowups, and foster better understanding and teamwork in the department.

- **Issue Resolution Meeting** – This type of meeting is called specifically to resolve an issue. Only those individuals who have a direct bearing on the matter are invited to the meeting and its sole purpose is to solve the problem. In some cases, the problem will not be solved in one session and may have to be continued to a further meeting with the possibility of others being included.
- **Coordination Meeting** – This type of meeting should be held whenever there is the need for close coordination between various club departments. A good example of a coordination meeting would be a weekly food and beverage meeting with the front- and back-of-house supervisors that covers all catering events for the coming period. Another example would be a meeting called to cover the particulars of an important event such as a large wedding.

As with anything else in business, the quality and efficiency of the meeting is only as good as the effort put into it by the person leading the meeting. The success of any meeting can be attributed to the prior preparation of the person responsible for calling or running the meeting. Various methods for running effective meetings are discussed below.



- **Establishing the Purpose of a Meeting** – When calling a meeting, the person responsible should, in addition to setting the date, time, and place, make it clear what the meeting is about, who will be attending, and the type of meeting to be held (update, informational, issue resolution, or coordination). Participants should also be told of any information, research, presentation, or materials they are responsible for bringing to the meeting.

For example, a meeting called by the general manager with the kitchen and dining room managers to address slow food service would be described as an issue resolution meeting including the executive chef and the dining room manager. The dining room manager may be asked to bring member comment cards complaining of slow service and the chef might be asked to query the kitchen staff to get their thoughts and opinions.

- **Setting an Agenda for a Meeting** – Given that every meeting should have a purpose, the person calling the meeting will prepare an outline of the discussion points to serve as an agenda for the meeting. The agenda should then be provided to each participant so they may better prepare for the meeting. The format for an agenda is simply a listing of the topics to be covered or addressed.

Regularly scheduled update meetings of standard format usually do not need an agenda so long as all participants are familiar with the format and requirements of the meeting. If in doubt, prepare an agenda. It never hurts to make participants aware of matters to be discussed.

- **Meeting Time Management** – Long, pointless meetings are detested by everyone. Setting an agenda will hopefully focus the meeting on a topic or issue, but unless the person calling the meeting exercises leadership and control, the meeting can easily be sidetracked into tangential issues. This is where strong leadership is required to keep the meeting on topic.

While always sensitive to participant's input and feelings, the leader should intervene when discussions get off topic or wander into the wasteland of irrelevancy. By gently urging the participants back to topic or to quickly get to the point, the leader manages the meeting. In some cases, such as update meetings, participants should be given time limits to update their areas. Time limits may inhibit issue resolution meetings and should be used with care in that setting.

- **Preparing Meeting Minutes** – Minutes are required anytime an important meeting is held where committee decisions are made. The prime example of this would be in various committee meetings make decisions regarding how the club operates. The minutes serve as a record of discussion and voting and may be used to inform the membership of important decisions.

Minutes are not usually required in managers' update meetings, employee meetings, coordination meetings, and issue resolution meetings unless a higher authority desires that minutes be prepared. For instance, a general manager planning a vacation may direct subordinate managers to solve an issue while he or she is gone and provide a record of the meeting.



In the absence of minutes, all participants are expected to bring pen and paper and to take notes on any important matters covered. For instance, all department heads attending the general manager's weekly update meeting are expected to brief their staffs on any important issues or information discussed in the meeting. Without taking notes, they are unable to fulfill this requirement properly.

- **Summarizing Decisions and Action Items** – In any type of meeting where decisions are made, the meeting leader should summarize what decisions were made. This is important because often the discussions leading to a decision are far ranging. Without a clear statement of what course of action has been determined, some participants may leave without an understanding of what was decided.

Similarly, if participants are assigned action items (that is, are assigned specific tasks to complete), they also must have a clear understanding of what they are to do and when it must be accomplished.

Bottom Line

Most of the foregoing material regarding meetings is plain common sense. Once again, the most important factor in productive meetings is the preparation and leadership of the person calling and running the meeting. While preparing an agenda and setting the ground rules for the meeting may seem like a nuisance, the productivity of many very busy people can be enhanced dramatically by this simple discipline.

About the Author

Ed Rehkopf is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy and received a Master of Professional Studies degree in Hospitality Management from Cornell's School of Hotel Administration. During his long and varied career, he has managed two historic hotels, managed at a four-star desert resort, directed operations for a regional hotel chain, opened two golf and country clubs, worked in golf course development, and launched a portal web site for the club industry.