

Episode #33: Are Your Meetings Boring and Confusing?

Welcome to THE CAREER ACCELERATOR, the podcast where corporate managers will find tips and tools to deliver results through others.

Hello. Today I will share three tips to improve the effectiveness of your meetings.

I'm your host, coach Percy Cannon.

In our last episode I shared five areas which leaders are tempted to abdicate or delegate. They are:

1. Developing their leadership team
2. Managing their subordinates
3. Having difficult conversations
4. Running great meetings, and
5. Over-communicating to the organization

I invited you to pick the one area on this list where you think you have the biggest room for growth. Make a commitment to yourself, or to a coach, a mentor, or a trusted person to focus on it for the next few months. Develop a list of two or three specific actions you will undertake to move that area in the right direction.

Today I will take a deeper dive on item #4 from this list, running great meetings.

How do you rate your team meetings? Are you happy with the way they are run? Are they boring? Confusing? Do you want to try something different?

Team meetings are one of the most important activities within an organization, but typically one of the least favorites for leaders. Meetings set the stage for determining the organizational culture and direction of your team, whether you lead a company, a department, or a small group of entry-level employees. The quality of your meetings is directly proportional to the quality of the decisions you and your team make.

I'm going to share with you three suggestions that will help you lead and run great meetings:

1. **The first one is to avoid what Patrick Lencioni calls "meeting stew."** A stew is defined as "a combination of solid ingredients that have been cooked in liquid and served in the resultant gravy. Ingredients in a stew can include any combination of vegetables and may include meat." Do you start getting the idea of what a "meeting stew" is? It is trying to cover strategic, tactical, administrative, and any other type of discussions and decisions into a single type of meeting.

As a leader you should avoid meeting stews. The weekly or bi-weekly staff meeting is a prime example. Instead, your goal should be to hold single-ingredient meetings.

For example, a tactical meeting could last 60 to 90 minutes and be held weekly or every two weeks. The topics should center around the collective goals of the team, and where you stand on them, then zero in and focus on those KPIs that are underperforming.

If a strategic issue comes up and requires a longer discussion, it should not be discussed here. Instead, Lencioni suggests scheduling a separate strategic meeting for that topic and do so as soon as possible. If this strategic issue was important enough to have somebody attempt to derail the tactical meeting, then team members should do their best to make room for this discussion in their respective agendas.

The role of the leader is to keep tactical and strategic issues separate, not only on paper but during the meetings as well.

2. **The second suggestion is to ensure there is clarity across the team on what is tactical and what is strategic.** It is important that the leader ensures there is 100% alignment on what the strategic priorities are for the team, as well as the collective goal that is the most important for them at that moment. This is a key prerequisite to understanding the nature of tactical and strategic meetings and keeping them separate.

I will delve deeper on this topic in the next podcast.

3. **Last, but not least, the leader should generate healthy conflict.** At the beginning of the meeting, the leader should emphasize to the team members that they are the key decision makers, and that the outcome of the meeting will guide the rest of the organization in the right or wrong direction....

As key issues are identified, the leader should promote a healthy debate, with the full participation of every member. If somebody is not voicing their opinion, the leader should ask this person for it. If the leader senses that an issue is not being discussed with the right level of depth or the team is agreeing to a course of action without much debate, it may be a good idea to highlight opposing forces to generate some tension in the room.

The leader should make sure the meeting results in concrete next steps, not end with vague or unclear decisions. Even if an issue was not closed, there should be clear actions that will be worked on and reviewed in the next meeting. There should also be an explicit agreement on what message will be communicated to those employees not participating in the meeting and, what, if any, will be kept confidential.

Summarizing, I covered three suggestions that will help you increase the effectiveness of your meetings:

1. Avoid a meeting stew. Instead, hold single-ingredient meetings, especially between tactical and strategic topics.
2. Ensure there is clarity across all team members on what is tactical and what is strategic.
3. Generate healthy conflict.

Good meetings deliver good decisions. Bad meetings result in bad decisions. Follow these suggestions and your team meetings will move from boring and confusing to attention-grabbing and focused.

Count on my help as needed.

I hope you enjoyed today's episode. In the next one, I will dig deeper into how you can achieve intellectual clarity in your team.

If you like what you heard today, and depending on the platform you're using, let me ask you to please rate, subscribe or follow this podcast and share it with your coworkers and friends. Also, you can request a free coaching call with me by visiting my website at www.cannon.consulting, or if available in this platform, using the link provided in the notes section.

This is coach Percy Cannon, working to help you *make the rest of your life...the best of your life*®.

Percy's BIO

Percy has been helping hundreds of corporate executives and their teams boost their leadership and teamwork capabilities over the past ten years.

Before this, Percy spent close to three decades working for three multinational corporations, Procter & Gamble, IBM & Microsoft, in the United States and across several countries in Latin America.

Percy is a Certified Professional Coach from Wainwright Global, Authorized Partner for "The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team" and "Everything DiSC", a Certified Go-Giver Speaker & Coach, and a practitioner of several methodologies from best-seller author Patrick Lencioni (e.g., "The Ideal Team Player", "The 6 Types of Working Genius", "Organizational Health" and others).

He published his first book in 2012-13 in English (*The Business Apostolate: Insights to Define and Achieve Your Mission in Life*) and in Spanish (*El Negocio Más Grande de su Vida*).

Percy is a Consulting Partner with Grupo Azimuth and the Chapter Director for the COO Forum in Southeast Florida.

He has lived in 9 different cities and 5 countries, and speaks English, Spanish and Portuguese fluently.

Percy is married, has 3 children and 6 grandchildren, and is a passionate runner & reader.

He can be reached at percy@cannon.consulting.