

Energized and Effective Team Meetings
- 9 Keys to Success -
By Suzanne Black

Over the past several years I have organized and participated in many meetings in numerous dental offices and with my coaches. Here are some of the things that I have learned to help you have energized and effective team meetings.



Suzanne Black
President

9. Protocol

Meet with your team and determine your protocol for meetings. Most people don't know how to be in a meeting. We all need to be trained. Some key roles that should be rotated are:

- a. Meeting Leader – this person has the agenda and is listened to.
- b. Action Tracker – the person who records commitments
- c. FTA and Timer – this person keeps track of time and indicates when it is time to forward the action.

Some Key Agreements

- a. Be on time – the meeting starts on time and ends on time.
- b. If it isn't going to start on time there is a protocol to declare this.
- c. One person talks at a time. No side conversations. Use a talking stick, eagle or other symbol if people don't honor this protocol.
- d. In a discussion – if either no one is talking or you have a feeding frenzy – pair everyone up for two minutes each and ask them to discuss the topic and initiate 2 – 3 ideas or solutions they can contribute. At the end of the four minutes write the ideas on a flip chart, white board and prioritize the teams' favorites. You might be ready for a course of action or a bit more research with a due date.
- e. Agree to speak in a way that takes responsibility vs blaming for things that don't work. "It didn't work for our patients when we ran late. I know I did _____. What else can we do to make sure we are on time." "It doesn't really work for the practice or the financial coordinator if we schedule people without firm FA's. That happened yesterday and it wasn't the first time. What can we do as a team to always have FA's." Ask people to speak from the point of view of what they will do personally to rectify the situation.

8. Preparation

- a. Schedule the meeting in advance. Block off enough time so that it is valuable. For a weekly or bi weekly meeting 60 minutes – 90 minutes (not including lunch).
- b. Have an understood method to post the agenda and have ways for your team to contribute to the agenda ahead of time.
- c. If you always have a practice update have someone come to the meeting prepared to discuss the State of the Union – Production, Collection, New Patients, Growth etc.

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8. Preparation (cont.)

4. Have an agenda with some time frames attached and have your FTA person keep things on track
5. Speak with someone in advance and clear for the meeting. Don't talk about the meeting. Declare your intention for the meeting, what you want to have happen, your concerns. Only clear with someone who can hear you and will know that you are just doing some "brain rinsing".

7. Tone – Energy Level

1. Start your meeting off with a positive energy level. Use Welcome or "What a Morning!!" Some statement that says "we're going to get something done here that will make a difference."
2. As you move through your meeting, even if you are problem solving, keep the tempo up. Remember 2 minds joined in harmony = the mastermind. Anything is possible if you're coming from "we can work it out."
3. If you get bogged down use the paired share exercise. It will raise the energy level and get people participating again.
4. If it is a longer meeting – more than 2 hours – consider a walk talk for 10 minutes half way through.
5. Include a time for individual acknowledgements in every meeting. Get people in the habit of saying "thanks", "atta girl" and "You Da Woman/Man!".
6. End your meeting with the Action Plan and a positive statement – Great meeting, thanks for your input. You guys are the best, etc.

6. Participation

1. If meeting participants are participating they will learn more, have more to contribute and the meeting will be more valuable.
2. The Paired Share, Small Group Share, Mastermind for Solutions are all ways to get the team engaged.
3. Since most teams have DISC all represented, make sure to call on each person to
4. contribute so that the D's and I's don't dominate the whole conversation.
5. If you have a list of Do's and Don'ts or new procedure to review, give it to them in writing, have them take notes, let them know you will answer questions in a few minutes. Keep it to 10 – 15 minutes and then follow up with something participatory. If the procedure involves the lab or the computer – go to the lab, the operatory or computer. The new information will sink in much better.

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5. Respect / Safe Environment

1. Agree with your team to stop gossip about team members. All promise to leave what is discussed in the meeting within the practice. If a personal issue comes up – ask the team to honor confidentiality.
2. Remember to use I statements vs. You statements. (Everyone on the team)
3. Schedule a time (4 – 5 hours) with a facilitator or on your own, to do a team communication exercise. Use these 4 questions and pair everyone up so that each team member gets 15 minutes with each and every other team member.
4. What I know I could do in my job to make your job easier.
5. What you could do in your job that would make my job easier.
6. What drives me crazy and what I wish wouldn't happen is_____.
7. What I appreciate about you?
8. This is just one idea of a great exercise that I have done with many teams. Call if you would like more ideas – Suzanne Black 877.632.6224. Suzanne@thecoachingcenter.net.
9. If your team is not used to meeting – they will be “Pent Up”. This means they will have a lot to say and say it all at once and the leader will probably feel attacked. This is a normal occurrence with teams who have suppressed communication. When you get in the habit of meeting regularly and providing a generous listening to your team, this will dissipate.
10. If one person verbally attacks or accuses another in a meeting ask them, “It sounds like you are unhappy with the situation – what suggestions or request do you have?” Even if you agree with the attacker, if you let this happen, you will lose the respect and the safety of the group.

4. Types of Meetings

1. Huddle or Stand Up meeting
2. Weekly Update and Practice Management Meeting
3. Training Meeting
4. Quarterly or Annual Review

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3. Dental Practice Department Meetings

1. Leadership Meeting
2. AR Meeting
3. Scheduling Review – Assistant and Scheduling Coordinator
4. Hygiene Meeting
5. Assistants Training and Coordination Meeting
6. Supply Cost Review
7. Front Office Team Coordination Meeting
8. Marketing Meetings

2. Team Member Evaluations

All team members want a formal time for feedback. Schedule 1 – 2 times per year for evaluations. To do an effective evaluation, each team member must have an active job description. The job description can even be the tool for the evaluation. Always set goals for the next period during the meeting. Make sure both parties have a copy of the goals. Follow up formally six months later. Call one of the coaching team for more ideas for evaluations.

1. Fun Celebrations

1. Take your team to the park for a picnic to celebrate spring.
2. Birthday Celebrations
3. Anniversary Celebrations
4. Assistants Appreciation Week (select a different department 2 months later)
5. Laser quest
6. Go Carts
7. Road Rally's (scavenger hunt in your car)
8. Progressive Dinner
9. Secret Pal
10. Dr's serve the team lunch (with Aprons and everything!)
11. If the team has a lot of kids – have a Halloween Party.

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1. Fun Celebrations (cont.)

12. Team "Lock In" at a fun location
13. Team Retreat in the Mountains or at the Beach
14. Shopping Spree
15. Pot Luck's
16. Swimming Parties
17. Recipe Swap, Cookie Swap
18. Night at the Ball Park, Night at the Theatre
19. Ice Cream Sunday Party
20. Barbeque with a Band (like Hailey)
21. Pumpkin Decorating Contest
22. Celebrate your biggest check

Team meetings are an integral part of any office, and can be occasions for fun, training, and empowerment! Having them be that way is a function of knowing how to have meetings, a skill that can be learned and mastered. Practice, have fun, and if we can help do not hesitate to contact us!



With a Masters Degree in communication, Suzanne began her career helping build one of the largest personal development training company's in the world and later became a protégé of the late Walter Hailey. Today, as President and CEO of The Coaching Center Suzanne has over 20 years experience consulting and training over 300 different businesses and leads the most qualified case acceptance team in dentistry. Having successfully dealt with every challenge imaginable in the dental office, Suzanne speaks around the country on topics such as Leadership, Case Presentation and Stopping Cancellations and is a keynote speaker at Dental Meetings and Conventions. Her on-stage style, humorous anecdotes and ability to always deliver a relevant and personal message makes her a winning, engaging and unforgettable seminar leader. Suzanne is one of the main faculty for the Dental Boot Kamp Continuum, which has proudly been delivered across the United States and Canada for the last 20 years, graduating over 35,000 dental professionals. Suzanne can be reached at suzanne@thecoachingcenter.net