

*Dear Michelle,  
I have an important meeting to lead next week.  
How do I make sure it goes well?*

I chose this question because we've been teaching a lot of Presentation Skills and Meeting Facilitation seminars lately. There is strong demand around the U.S. for training that helps people run meetings more effectively. Hallelujah! This delights me, as it should you, because we've all felt the pain of a meeting that isn't going anywhere. Every day, everywhere, meeting participants invest time in gatherings that could be truly useful, but unfortunately fall flat.

Wasted time in meetings is a part of life that we never get back.

To make your time count, I suggest an audience analysis. This means doing the research necessary to know your participants' job titles, skills, opinions, what you have in common with them, what they hope to get from the meeting, and then planning for robust participation.

At GC, we take our meetings seriously and often end up having a lot of fun as a result.

I asked my team to weigh in with tips I hope will be helpful to you:

*"Great meetings don't just happen, they require forethought. Know your desired outcome and address hijacking attempts. Have a goal and don't let someone prevent the group from attaining it. Idea Trees or Parking Lots capture thoughts when there isn't time or purpose to pursue them during the meeting."  
(Michele Hill, Director of Process Improvement)*

*"Make sure everyone has a chance to speak. If someone hasn't said anything, possibly because of introversion or others being dominant, ask for their thoughts."  
(Tim Jones, Project Manager)*

*"Meetings with visuals can be more effective in message delivery. Imagery, doodles, sticky notes, and idea mapping can challenge participants to think in a new way. This boosts engagement and can enhance post-meeting follow-through."  
(Heather Shively, Visual Designer)*

*"Meetings benefit from an environment where people feel comfortable saying what they need to say. Humor is important. A facilitator can lighten the mood after intense discussion."  
(Elyse Bultemeier, Research and Training Associate)*

*"Embed questions throughout your meeting. Don't leave them for the end. Challenge participants to suggest solutions. Leaders don't have all the answers."  
(Kristen Schenkel, Research and Training Associate)*

*"Be a listener and think critically, welcoming all points of view when possible. Everyone has something to bring to the table. Keep conversation moving forward."  
(Jason Swisher, Graphic Artist)*

Getting good at leading group interaction means allowing yourself to practice. This quote from author Edward Abbey reminds us to pursue A+ meetings but to prepare for constant tweaking:

*"The function of an ideal is not to be realized, but like that of the North Star, to be used as a guiding point." Keep pursuing the ideal meeting, and you will bring value to everyone around you.*

**Are you dealing with a communication challenge?**

**If you've got a question, write to [Michelle@GladieuxConsulting.com](mailto:Michelle@GladieuxConsulting.com) for consideration.**

**Questions remain confidential and anonymous when published.**

# COACH'S CORNER

