


# THE SIX TYPES OF Meetings

HOW TO PLAN FOR SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS





Meetings represent a huge value to both companies and employees.

While every meeting is unique, being familiar with the six most common types of meetings can help you better identify the goals, structure, and activities best suited for your meetings.

This ebook provides you with a breakdown of the six most common types of meetings, and identifies best practices for each. We examine aspects like primary meeting goals, key participant roles, and common challenges. At the end of each chapter we look at how using meeting collaboration technology can dramatically increase engagement, multiply contributions, and save time in both in-room and remote meetings.

Being able to run efficient and successful meetings is great for your company and for your career.

## TABLE OF CONTENT

STATUS UPDATE MEETINGS .....	3
INFORMATION SHARING MEETINGS .....	7
DECISION MAKING MEETINGS .....	10
PROBLEM SOLVING MEETINGS .....	15
INNOVATION MEETINGS .....	20
TEAM BUILDING MEETINGS .....	25



# Meeting Type 1: Status Update Meetings

Status update meetings are one of the most common meeting types. This category includes regular team and project meetings, where the primary goal is to align the team via updates on progress, challenges, and next steps.

Open channels of communication are fundamental to keeping teams and companies on the same page. Unfortunately, creating this kind of company atmosphere is easier said than done, especially in large corporate settings where some employees may work closely with each other while others remain distant. Status update meetings can be an efficient and concise ways of communicating current updates and tasks among team members, and unite the team around it's shared goals. Commonly found group activities in these kinds of meetings are problem solving, decision making, prioritization, and task assignment.

## Primary Goals for Status Update Meetings

The primary purpose of status update meetings is to update and align a team or department on the current state of a project or overall direction of the group. Often this involves contributions from each participant which then leads to a group discussion involving any problem solving, decision making, prioritization or task assignment necessary to move forward.

It is important that meeting members make contributions not only when sharing their own information but also when listening to updates. Status update meetings are most effective when participants take an active role in aligning their individual goals, as well as the team goals, with the goals of the company. To do this, participants should listen closely to all other participants and ask questions or raise concerns when they arise. This increases mutual understanding and support throughout the group.

## Group alignment, across and within teams

Status update meetings are classified based on who the participants are. There are two general types: within group and across group. Status update meetings within a group involve all team members, focusing on reporting progress and aligning goals, timelines, and tasks relevant to their specific project or team.

Status update meetings across multiple groups involve team leaders representing and reporting similar things on behalf of their team to other representatives. Their overarching mandate is to inform each other and align the different groups' work with each other, as well as with the goals of the company. In large organizations, across group meetings are especially important. Without them, it can be extremely difficult for information to spread effectively. Not all meetings can be company-wide.

Depending on the size and structure of a company, within group and across group meetings can easily come to involve overlapping participants and discussions. It is a good idea to include anyone in a status update meeting who has useful information to share or would benefit from being involved in future planning. Avoid inviting people whose time is better spent elsewhere, or whose presence can compromise meeting efficiency.

### Key Roles in Status Update Meetings

Status update meetings have a broad category of potential participants. Depending on the size and structure of your team, different methods can be used to make sure information is being effectively communicated across the group, as well as up and down the company structure.

#### Team members

Everyone included in the meeting should be there for a reason. Each person has unique and potentially influential information to share with the rest of the group. In order for everyone to be on the same page, it is important that each team member share this information. Not only will this help align the goals of the team but it helps to build a sense of authenticity and trust among team members. In this way, people will feel more comfortable contributing to the conversation and will know that they are being heard. Great teams function as a result of these types of connections.

Sharing information  
with team members  
make them feel  
invested.

tweet this 

#### Meeting leader

While status update meetings – more than any other type – rely on contributions from all of the members of the team, there is a designated role for a facilitator of this information. It is the job of this person to promote individual sharing, keep the discussion on the topic at hand, make sure that the information being presented is relevant, divide the meeting into subgroups if necessary, and point the conversation in the right direction. Without this person, it is far too easy for status update meetings to get off track and end up being a waste of the attendees' time.

Knowing who the meeting leader is ahead of time is a great way to set any status update meeting up for success. The person in the position should add structure and depth to the conversation. Meeting leaders can also guide the direction of the conversation by asking specific types of status report questions relevant to various projects. Taking notes which can be sent out later is a great way to keep everyone on the same page about what their focus should be.

### Common Challenges in Status Update Meetings

A well orchestrated status update meeting can be as simple as having each team member state what milestones they've reached each week and what their goals are for the day. However, this is often not what ends up happening. Not only do status update meetings usually take much longer than they need to, they can also become so frequent that they end up taking up a large chunk of people's time.

### How to Host a Successful Status Update Meeting

Great status update meetings not only keep everyone informed and on task, but they can also save valuable work time, and reduce frustration among team members. Keeping a focus on participant engagement and meeting efficiency is key to successfully using status update meetings as a vital communication channel for your team.

More information is always better than less. When people know the reason things are happening, even if it's bad news, they can adjust their expectations and react accordingly.

tweet this 

#### *Engaging the whole team*

Because status report meetings often have each participant share their current progress, it is easy for members who have little to share to lose interest in the meeting. This is a problem because the purpose of the meeting is not just to share but to align with other aspects of a team, project or company. Gaining insight into group mentality is more effective for alignment than asking for opinions only from those directly working on a particular task within the project.

#### *Keeping meeting structure consistent*

Status update meetings are the most common kind of meetings, and each group member is likely to give several status reports a week. Using the same outline for a weekly update meeting can help participants know what

is expected of them and when they should be ready to contribute.

### ***Documenting and sharing outcomes***

One of the reasons for having frequent status update meetings is the need for sharing information and staying up to date on relevant progress and changes. Recording meeting notes and outcomes, and sharing these results among a team, holds participants accountable for the goals and tasks that they put forward. It is also a great way to update team members and other stakeholders who were not present at the meeting.

#### **STEP IT UP: Better Status Update Meetings with Meeting Collaboration Technology**

With MeetingSift, all participants report digitally and concurrently which saves time and adds to the contribution level of the meeting. Plus, MeetingSift displays a visual overview of the group inputs, minimizing the time spent going around the room for opinions. Something as simple as having an organized agenda for the meeting to follow can be a huge step for meetings that are generally inefficient.

### ***Effectively tap into your team's knowledge and experience***

Using interactive MeetingSift activities such as rankings or evaluations let each team member contribute their knowledge and expertise, and works great with those who normally don't like to speak up in groups. Anonymous participation allows for vital candid feedback that can greatly improve processes and outcome.

### ***Efficiently structure meetings***

Including MeetingSift tools throughout the meeting, as well as for feedback activities at the end, can be a quick way of getting a group consensus. For example, a one-minute brainstorm of goals for this week or next week can be a great first or last exercise that can help generate company or team alignment quickly. Using MeetingSift meeting agenda templates not only saves time but also provides weekly data on the same questions and topics. Having data like this can give you great insights into team progress.

### ***Automatically share outcome reports and task assignments***

MeetingSift not only records meeting data, but also sends out automatic reports of meeting content to both participants and other relevant parties. If activities such as brainstorms have been included, sharing these results among a team holds participants accountable for the goals and tasks that they put forward.

## Meeting Type 2: Information Sharing Meetings

Presentations, panel debates, keynotes, workshops, and lectures are all examples of information sharing meetings.

The primary goal of these meetings is for the speaker to share information with the attendees.

At information sharing meetings attendees have historically been passive listeners. With new interactive technologies, taking advantage of personal smart devices and cloud computing, attendees can easily be engaged with the speaker and the subject in a variety of ways. This takes attendees from passive spectators to active participants, making the meeting more engaging, enjoyable, and effective for all.

### Primary Goals for Information Sharing Meetings

Depending on the setting, there are several goals that would lead you to choose an information sharing meeting format. Sometimes the presenter is presenting information in order to persuade the group, while other times the intention might be more educational. Meeting goals may also differ based on the content and provider of information. Often the setting is a larger group, like a conference or a panel discussion audience, where the primary goal is to educate the audience on a topic relevant to them. Other times the setting is smaller groups, like workshops and training sessions.

### Key Roles in Information Sharing Meeting

While there are several types of information sharing meetings, they usually feature two main roles: the presenter(s), and the audience members.

#### Presenter

Often, the presenter is in a position of authority, like a manager passing on information or instructions to subordinates, or a subject matter expert sharing her knowledge with those present. The role can also fall on a keynote speaker, members of an panel, or project leader, to name just a few.

Presentations aren't about the presenter. They are about the audience, and their needs.

tweet this 

### Audience members

Audience members make up the bulk of participants in information sharing meetings. Depending on the meeting size, there may be as many as hundreds, or even thousands, of audience members present. Their level of interest, and motivation to absorb the information shared, is highly dependent on their motivation for attending. In some cases they have chosen to attend out of their own interest, while in other cases they are required to attend by their employer, professor, or other authority.

### Common Challenges in Information Sharing Meetings

The biggest challenge in information sharing meetings is to keep audience members engaged and involved throughout the presentation, so they take in the information being shared and learn from it. Various techniques and technologies can be used to engage and involve audience members in a presentation.

The brain doesn't pay attention to boring things.

tweet this 

Another key challenge is finding the proper dynamic between presenter and audience. Often, there can be a disconnect between the two. This can be caused by the presenter not knowing enough about his or her audience, causing issues like presenting content that is either too complex or too basic, or focusing on issues that are less interesting to the audience, while not going in depth on the issues that truly interest them.

This disconnect can cause the audience to become disengaged and bored, which in turn frustrates the presenter.

### How to Host a Successful Information Sharing Meeting

Old fashion information sharing meetings, where the presenter does all the talking and the audience is passively listening, are only successful if the presenter is a good speaker with a charismatic presence, or the audience is extremely interested in the information being shared. However, by engaging the audience and making the presentation dynamic, you increase the success of any information sharing meeting. Even something as simple as polling the audience on their interest in the topic, or adding a brainstorm activity where they can submit which words they associate with the topic, can help make the meeting much more engaging. Asking the audience to rank which issues they would like to hear more about, or having them suggest future topics and speakers, can provide valuable insight for planning the next meeting. This is true for all information sharing meetings, regardless of the content.

Power is gained by sharing information, not hoarding it.

tweet this 



### ***Engaging the audience***

Without audience engagement, information sharing meetings can easily become boring and tedious. Involving the audience as active listeners by providing channels for them to ask questions and give feedback is an excellent way to make sure the group is engaged and paying attention. Audience members are often quite knowledgeable, or at minimum very interested, in the subject being presented. Taking advantage of the knowledge in the room, by collecting input and feedback, both engages the audience members and helps the presenter gain important information about the audience's background and interests. Collected feedback also helps the presenter evaluate the effect of the meeting and identify improvements for future meetings.

#### **STEP IT UP: Better Information Sharing Meetings with Meeting Collaboration Technology**

MeetingSift offers a diverse collection of activities that can get your audience excited and engaged. Specially designed functionalities supporting moderated Q&A sessions, and interesting visualizations of audience input and feedback, informs the discussion and creates a dynamic dialogue between speakers and audience.

### ***Engage the audience***

With MeetingSift's activities, the job of the presenter becomes much more rewarding, and audience members are much more engaged, increasing the success of your information sharing meeting. By gathering feedback from the group, the presenter can gain important information about the audience's background and interests, as well as their response and feedback to the information being shared. Not to mention, using MeetingSift also keeps the audience members feeling that they are actively contributing and being heard.

### ***Quickly and easily gather input from everyone***

Audience members are often quite knowledgeable, or at minimum very interested, in the subject being presented. Take advantage of the knowledge in the room by collecting input and feedback. MeetingSift lets presenters ask their audience relevant questions to the information being shared. This both engages the audience members and provides opportunity to systematically gather their input and feedback, which can help the presenter evaluate the effect of the meeting and improve future meetings.

### ***Share engaging real-time results***

When using MeetingSift to engage the audience you can display the results of their input in real-time, as dynamic visualizations. These visualizations are extremely enlightening, and can spur further discussion. The information can later be used to generate reports that can be shared with participants and other stakeholders.

## Meeting Type 3: Decision Making Meetings

The vast majority of business decisions are made in meetings. While small decisions are made in all kinds of meetings, the more important decisions often get their own dedicated meetings.

There are different types of group decision making processes, and care should be taken to choose a process that best matches the situation. A decision making process can include group activities like information gathering and sharing, brainstorming solutions, evaluating options, ranking preferences, and voting on the final options. Below are the most effective ways of running decision making meetings.

### Primary Goals for Decision Making Meetings

Goals for a decision-oriented meeting can vary a little based on the type of decision being made, but they are always centered on coming to a consensus about a future plan. It is important to remember that the goal of these meetings also includes planning how to best execute the decision that has been made.

### *Make the best possible decision*

By involving a group in making a decision you can rely on collective intelligence; knowledge beyond what is possible with individual decision makers. Because each participant has unique information and perspectives, combining group information leads to more informed decisions. However, it is important to use meetings designed specifically for group decisions efficiently, to not waste the group members' time.

Most discussions of decision making assume that only senior executives make decisions or that only senior executives' decisions matter.

This is a dangerous mistake.

tweet this 

If all planning decisions were made by one person, not only would the choices be uninformed, there would also be little unity around team goals and direction.

### **Planning for execution**

When individuals feel that their opinion has been considered in the group planning, they are more likely to embrace the decisions and work to carry out those goals. Participatory decision making leads to increased

team productivity and likelihood of goal execution, because team members feel ownership and responsibility for the decisions made.

Addressing both short term and long term goals at your decision making meetings is a great way to make sure team members leave with a direction and know the next steps.

The short term plan can be as simple as outlining action items and assigning tasks. In the long term it could mean setting a timeline of general dates and milestones. Initial

planning can be an effective way of aligning the group and cementing the decision that was made.

### **Key Roles in Decision Making Meetings**

The participants in decision making meetings may play different roles. Understanding the distinctions between these levels of involvement is a useful way of holding members accountable for their role in implementing decisions.

#### **Meeting leader**


In order to avoid getting off topic it is recommended that one person be in charge of guiding the direction of team negotiation. In addition, it can be helpful to use some elements of status update meetings in order to have meeting attendees present and be held accountable for research into the decision being made.

#### **Those with authority to carry out the decisions**

For decision making meetings it is particularly important to include all relevant persons with authority to carry out the decision. If decisions are made without including the relevant people, it can often be very challenging to implement the resulting decision.

In some cases, it can be useful to dedicate one leader of a team to be a representative for that group. Often, this job is given to someone in a senior position, but it can be fulfilled by anyone capable of accurately reporting information on behalf of a group. If this method is used, the representative should be prepared to report back to the team the

Whenever you see a  
successful business,  
someone once made a  
courageous decision.

tweet this 

If a decision making  
process is flawed and  
dysfunctional, the  
decisions will be bad.

tweet this 

consensus that was reached. Without this information exchange, the group unity that should have been a result of the group meeting is lost.

### ***Note taker and process observer***

Decision making meetings can often get derailed or become ineffective for a variety of reasons. To counter this, it can be helpful to include a note taker and process observer. These roles should be filled by people not directly involved in the decision so they are not biased toward any particular opinion. A note taker records what was suggested and decided throughout the meeting while a process observer records how those decisions were met. Incorporating these roles can lead to a lasting group understanding as well as ability to improve decision making meetings in the future.

## **Common Challenges in Decision Making Meetings**

Making group decisions can be hard. Making good group decisions is even more challenging. However, good decisions is what can make or break your project or even your company or career. Being aware of the most common challenges in decision making meetings will move you closer to facilitating successful group decision making.

### ***Incomplete information and narrow perspectives***

An important aspect of collective decision making is to incorporate a broad spectrum of opinions and ideas, and through group collaboration converge these into a best possible solution. This process is easier said than done. Getting to a solution often involves dealing with a lot of conflicting agendas and opinions which are not easily resolved.

Decision is the spark  
that ignites action.  
Until a decision is  
made, nothing  
happens.

tweet this 

### ***Identifying the best possible solutions***

Another classic challenge of the decision making meeting is knowing what possible options are worth further consideration and discussion, and which options to discard early. Time is often wasted discussing possibilities that are not even among the most likely or best choices.

## **How to Host a Successful Decision Making Meeting**

A great decision making meeting effectively incorporates all participants, benefiting from the knowledge and experience they bring to the process. Giving all relevant parties the opportunity to participate in the decision making process increases the quality of the decision, adds to the collective understanding and support of the outcome, and ensures successful implementation.



***Consider all relevant information***

We want as much relevant information as possible to go into the group decision process. This means involving as many stakeholders as practically possible to provide input when it comes to defining the problem area, come up with possible solutions, and evaluate options.

***Generate and evaluate possible solutions***

Identify and agree on solution requirements before starting to brainstorm potential solutions. Then, invite to brainstorm solutions with an open mind, focusing on the issue rather than the person presenting the idea. Use the solution requirements to evaluate the various suggestions, identifying the top ideas for further consideration.

***Get everyone on board***

One of the most important aspects of decision meetings is to create unity around the decision that is created. When each participant feels their opinion has been fully considered as part of the decision making process they are more likely to feel ownership of the decision, even in cases when it is not the outcome they hoped for.

The secret of change is to  
focus all of your energy,  
not on fighting the old, but  
on building the new.

tweet this 

**STEP IT UP: Better Decision Making Meetings with Meeting Collaboration Technology**

Collaborative technologies like MeetingSift make group decision processes easier to manage, more efficient, produce better solutions, and improve execution of decisions.

***Easily include and engage all key stakeholders for more complete information***

Using smart device-based participation levels the playing field and provides an efficient way to share information and reach group consensus. The unruly nature of decision making meetings is easily structured with MeetingSift because participants are presented with real-time visualizations of group opinions as the discussion moves forward.

***Quickly tap into the group's knowledge and expertise***

Having participants use MeetingSift to evaluate options will help focus on the task at hand. Collecting decision preferences automatically, rather than manually, speeds up the process. Not only does that mean less time spent on interpreting where a group stands but it also allows for more people to be involved in the process at the same time.

For example, conducting a brainstorm with a large group of participants using whiteboards, flip charts, and post it notes can get messy. When people are contributing one by one it takes a considerable amount of time.

The MeetingSift brainstorm activity lets group members submit ideas concurrently, via their own smart devices, making sure to accurately record and organize all inputs. This saves time for everyone involved, no matter how large the group is.

### ***Real-time visualizations of options and opinions focuses the discussion***

MeetingSift is well suited to measure group opinions. In the case of an extended discussion it can be helpful to take multiple snapshots of opinions, as they can change over the course of the conversation. Taking a quick group poll, ranking, or evaluation after an initial brainstorm will clearly identify where the group feels their time is best spent. This allows the discussion to stay centered on the most important and relevant issues. The group will be able to use these baseline opinions as a jumping off point for focused conversation, establishing a common ground and sense of unity which will set the stage for successfully reaching a decision.

### ***Engaged inclusion of stakeholders generates buy-in and better execution***

Unfortunately, just organizing a group decision making meeting does not necessarily assure that each person in the room will leave feeling that they have been heard. MeetingSift ensures each person gets to contribute on an even scale. Because MeetingSift displays group output in real-time, participants can literally watch their vote be factored into the results. Playing an active part in the decision making process generates a sense of ownership and responsibility for the results, which in turn ensures active participation in carrying out the plan.



## Meeting Type 4: Problem Solving Meetings

Problem Solving Meetings are oriented around solving either a specific or general problem, and are perhaps the most complex and varied type of meetings.

Whether the meeting is addressing an identified problem, or it is focusing on creating strategies and plans to navigate the future, there are a rich arsenal of group processes that can be used. Scopes and priorities need to be defined, opportunities and threats need to be identified, and possible solutions should be brainstormed, evaluated, and agreed upon.

At problem solving meetings the outcome is often an important decision and thus these meetings can be crucial to the development of a team or product. If the wrong action is chosen, it could be hugely damaging. To make sure that this doesn't happen at your next problem solving meeting, follow the tips provided here.

Problems are only  
opportunities in  
work clothes.

tweet this 

### Primary Goals in Problem Solving Meetings

The key objective for problem solving meetings is to find the most optimal solution or reach the best compromise that can resolve an issue facing the group or organization. In order to do this the group first has to identify possible solutions, and then evaluate these based on relevant requirements and criteria.

### *Agreeing on the most optimal solution*

What truly is the most optimal solution can vary a lot, depending on the setting and situation. It is important to clearly define what the problem is, as well as agree on key criteria for the solution, in order to start identifying possible options. Sometimes the best solution is the quickest one, other times it is the one that requires the least resources, while other times the solution that brings the most long term benefits is the best alternative.

If all planning decisions were made by one person, not only would the choices be uninformed, there would also be little unity around team goals and direction.

## Key Roles in Problem Solving Meetings

Problem solving meetings should be oriented around issues that affect and are only resolvable by the team. If a problem is the responsibility of, or can be fixed by one person, a group meeting is likely a waste of time.

Never try to solve all the problems at once — make them line up for you one-by-one.

tweet this 

However, when a singular person's decision affects that of the entire team, it may be worth it. The significance of a problem and the amount of group time spent solving it should be considered before calling forth any group problem solving meeting.

The participant roles found in a problem solving meeting tend to vary more than most other meeting types. This is because problem solving meetings exist across such a large variety of contexts and group.

### Meeting leader

Just as with decision making meetings, there is a need for direction and authority in the process of problem solving. The person in charge should either be the person with the deepest understanding of the situation or someone with the most responsibility over the outcome (i.e. the highest ranking member of the team). The leader should be able to provide the team with a general overview of the situation. They should then lead the team through the guided process.

### Meeting participants

All other attendees of the meeting should be people who fall under two categories. The first is of participants who may have been involved in the events leading up to the problem. This group is not there to be blamed or criticized, but rather to provide information about how the situation was reached. In addition, this group has unique insights on how potential solutions may or may not fit with the current approach.

The second group of people who should be invited are those who will be impacted by the solution. If, for example, one subgroup of a company has to restructure the timing of their releases, representatives from other groups who will have to adapt their schedule as a result should be included.

The measure of success is not whether you have a tough problem to deal with, but whether it is the same problem you had last year.

tweet this 



## Common Challenges in Problem Solving Meetings

Often the most successful problem solving meetings are ones that happen before a major issue arises. Taking time to identify potential future problems allows a team to have solutions immediately ready. Unfortunately, problem solving meetings are all too often done only after a problem occurs, adding a variety of challenges that would not exist in other meeting types.

Problem solving can be a particularly stressful type of group strategizing. For instance, the urgency and decisiveness that is necessary in this meeting type can lead to disagreements that wouldn't happen if teammates were not strained.

### Identifying the real problem

Identifying the true problem to be addressed can on the surface seem like a very simple task. However, different meeting participants are likely to have slightly different perspectives of what they are gathered to address. Without a common understanding of what problem they are aiming to solve, the problem solving meeting is not going to yield any productive solutions.

Most people spend more time and energy going around problems than trying to solve them.

tweet this 

### Intra-group conflicts

With any problem solving or decision making meeting there is bound to be some conflicting opinions on how to go forward. Because problem solving meetings are often high strung, and because of the importance of selecting a correct plan, resolving these conflicts effectively is crucial. When making group decisions, a number of different strategies can be used to reach a compromise.

### Defensiveness

When any type of group decision needs to be made, participants in the process can become too attached to their own suggestion to truly consider other options. While this leads to a lot of passionate and potentially productive conversation, it can also lead members to feel personally offended when their solutions are rejected.

### Time pressure

Often problem meetings are extremely time-constrained. This can be because the problem is an approaching deadline or because there was simply no time scheduled in the initial plan for a problem to arise.

## How to Host a Successful Problem Solving Meeting

The best way to approach a problem solving meeting is to first properly define the problem and the restrictions of potential solutions. Before brainstorming solutions, evaluate them, and decide on the best one.

### ***Identify the problem to be addressed***

The first key step to solving any problem is to identify the issue at hand. Problem solving meetings are designed to address any type of situation specific to the group. Determining what the problem is may be easier if it has already become a pressing issue. However, problem solving meetings can also be designed to generate preemptive solutions to problematic situations that may arise in the future. Regardless, any problem solving meeting should begin with a discussion of the specific issues that need to be changed or resolved by the end of the meeting.

Often when a pervasive issue exists within a group, some members are more aware of it than others. Beginning a problem solving meeting by explicitly identifying the issue not only makes clear what the meeting goals are, but also puts all team members on the same page about the state of the group or project. Identifying this problem early on also gives the team the ability to modify the topics or members involved in reaching a solution.

### ***Define solution requirements and restraints***

Once a problem has been identified, the group should propose all possible ways to approach and resolve the issue. The reason why problem solving is often easier said than done is because of existing restraints that withhold many of the ideal options available. For example, these restrictions could involve a lack of time or a lack of corporate resources. These restraints are important to consider because problems often result as a lack of consideration for them in the first place.

### ***Brainstorm possible solutions***

To choose among feasible solutions, it is important to define not only the possible limitations but also where group priorities lie. The most effective choices are made once the team's understanding of the most urgent aspects of a future decision have been defined. Without a realistic idea of which aspects are most important, the

solutions proposed will either be unrealistic or oriented around personal opinions. This step in the problem solving methodology allows for the most important and realistic strategies to be the ones most discussed.

### ***Evaluate top solutions***

After the feasible solutions to a problem have been isolated, the group must come to a collective conclusion about the best approach. This process should involve group consideration and evaluation of proposed options. It can be important to highlight and compare potential options against each other. For example, depending on the priorities of the group, an option which extends the timeline might be preferable to one that sacrifices quality or vice versa.

"It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer." - Albert Einstein

tweet this 

### ***Agree on a solution***

The best and most appropriate options that are generated during this meeting should be approached in the same way as options within a decision making meeting. Feedback, opinions and questions about each strategy should be considered and everyone involved in the meeting should feel free to voice their opinions. The final decision should be one that is not only realistic but that puts the entire team on the same page going forward..

## **STEP IT UP: Better Problem Solving Meetings with Meeting Collaboration Technology**

MeetingSift's brainstorm activity can help determine the problem, identify restrictions, and come up with ideas for possible solutions. The polling and ranking activities can then give an overview of where the group's opinions lie. Using these tools can relieve not only the above mentioned problems but many others that are associated with problem solving meetings.

### ***Gather honest opinions through anonymous feedback***

The anonymous contribution platform that MeetingSift provides allows for more candid feedback, as well as helping the group to focus on the issue rather than the person. Not only does this lead participants to be less upset when their ideas are not chosen, but also to not feel like they must support one particular solution or plan just because it was proposed by someone with authority in the group. In short, MeetingSift allows for the group to focus on the problem solving process rather than office politics.

### ***Cut meeting time with parallel input***

With MeetingSift, group polls can be conducted and decisions made in a fraction of the time that it usually takes to collect that amount of information. Additionally, MeetingSift allows facilitators to time the duration of their slides and activities in order to cut down and condense unnecessary aspects of the conversation.

### ***Efficiently identify solutions or acceptable compromises***

With problem solving meetings we suggest using an empirical voting tool such as ranking or voting to choose a winner, rather than trying to find a compromise between the two. In the face of a problem at hand, it is often best to choose and stick with one dominant strategy.

### ***Easily record and share the final solution***

While these opinions should be incorporated in the process, MeetingSift reports serve as a useful tool to share the solution decisions with as many other people as possible.

## Meeting Type 5: Innovation Meetings

Ideally, every meeting would be exciting and stimulating, but all too often they feel tedious and uninspiring. There is one type of meeting where creativity and enthusiasm are particularly essential: innovation meetings.

The idea behind innovation meetings is that participants will build off of one another's ideas, creating a product of their collective intelligence that is better than what each of them could have come up with on their own. Even if no one member of the team has a brilliant idea, much better ones can result from sharing and combining insights from people with complementary insights and experience.

Innovation meetings and creative meetings often start with thinking outside the box; brainstorming, associating, and sharing ideas in a broad scope. Meeting participants can then use various techniques and processes to reduce the diverse pool of ideas to a more focused short list. Through ranking, evaluations, and decision making, the most suitable idea, or ideas, are identified, and recommendations and tasks can be assigned.

The source of innovation is not an individual genius, but rather the collective intelligence of people with different expertise and different points of view, engaging in collaborative problem solving.

tweet this 

### Primary Goals for Innovation Meetings

Meetings where the main focus is to come up with new ideas, designing or redesigning products, or developing entirely new approaches for your business, can all be defined as innovation meetings.

#### *Identify a new or redesigned approach*

The primary goal of an innovation meeting is to leave with either a new or redesigned approach to a current project or problem. The process of reaching this desired outcome is generally straightforward.



## Key Roles in Innovation Meetings

Innovation meetings typically happen at the beginning of a project timeline, where the final goal has not yet been defined or refined. The most driven teams usually have their goals and direction aligned early on in the process. Thus, especially with smaller teams, it is often helpful in the long run to include as many team members as possible in the early planning process. This way, everyone feels ownership and responsibility for the goal, you can tap into everyone's knowledge and expertise, and no one feels that they are assigned to work on something they did not agree with.

Innovation is hard. Because most people don't get it. The automobile, the airplane, the telephone, these were all considered toys at their introduction because they had no constituency. They were too new.

tweet this 

### Meeting leader

As with most meetings, it can be helpful to have a meeting leader in charge of directing the flow of ideas. However, meetings built around brainstorming should also be some of the least hierarchical that your team is involved in. This is because the process of freely generating and sharing ideas can be hampered when people feel like they are being told how to respond by an authority.

### Meeting participants

At innovation meetings it is important to have a variety of perspectives and experiences present. True innovation is often a result of combining elements

and approaches from at least two different fields. It can be beneficial to include a few participants that are less familiar with the area that you seek to innovate, to provide a fresh perspective and potentially question stale assumptions.

### Note taker

One crucial role to innovation meetings in particular is that of a note taker. Not only should ideas be written down, but comments and concerns brought up in the discussion about ideas should also be recorded. All too often, the first choice of ideas don't work out. In this case, rather than brainstorming all over again, a team can simply refer back to their meeting report in order to see what the next best ideas were and begin working on them right away.

For good ideas and true innovation, you need human interaction, conflict, argument, and debate.

tweet this 

## Common Challenges in Innovation Meetings

We often attribute the most brilliant inventions or creations to one person, but the truth is that ideas really take shape when being bounced between multiple people with different perspectives. This is why we do so much of our brainstorming in groups. But inspiring and facilitating free idea sharing and discussions in groups may present some challenges.

### *Creating an inspiring environment*

Most people who have attended a handful (or truckload) of meetings know what a high-functioning brainstorm feels like. This kind of meeting generally has participants spit-balling ideas off of each other, working with one another without feeling reserved to create something brilliant by combining and building off of each other's ideas. Meetings like this may feel rare and spontaneous, but there are certain techniques any meeting leader can bring to a meeting to get the ideas flowing.

Innovation doesn't come just from giving people incentives, it comes from creating environments where their ideas can connect.

tweet this 

### *Freely sharing ideas without judgement*

Unlike your company vision, which is carefully crafted by the leadership, innovation can originate from anywhere in the organization. Creating a meeting culture where a junior employee's fresh observation is freely shared and given the same consideration as a seasoned executive's ideas can be challenging.

### *Tapping into different perspectives*

In day-to-day enterprise collaboration, different views are often played down to unify the team and move together in the same direction. In innovation, the creative interaction

between two, or more, different perspectives is what produces new solutions. It can be challenging to truly bring this change of mindset out in innovation meetings.

## How to Host a Successful Innovation Meeting

Innovation usually starts with broad, creative thinking, often in the form of a brainstorm in which many ideas are generated and shared. These suggestions are then narrowed down into a more concise list which can be refined, evaluated, and discussed in order to highlight the drawbacks and benefits of each idea. Through group assessment, evaluations, and various voting methods, a final choice is made and a best path is determined. Once this has been done, steps for bringing this idea to life can be discussed and tasks can be assigned to members of the team.

### ***Set the stage and generate flow***

Sparking the kind of idea exchange that works best in innovation meetings can be difficult. However, any meeting leader or participant can start the process by asking the right questions. Try initially sparking a conversation about team goals and priorities to narrow the focus of the meeting. It can also be helpful to have involved or passionate members share the importance of what the team is setting out to do. These kind of introductory activities help get members focused and inspired to begin the process of innovation.

### ***Brainstorm & evaluate ideas***

Any kind of brainstorm is sure to originate some ideas which may or may not be brilliant. But in general the more ideas you initially generate, the bigger chance there is for there being some diamonds in the rough among the contributions. Begin with some activities that spark interest and excitement among the team and record all ideas. We suggest that as many people and ideas as possible should try to be incorporated into any early brainstorming session. Once a large number of ideas have been contributed, the process is then to refine and evaluate them, before categorizing them into practical steps.

The best way to have  
a good idea is to have  
a lot of ideas.

tweet this 

### ***Involve stakeholders to ensure follow-through***

The majority of ideas and contributions in innovation meetings will probably be scrapped. However, when stakeholders know that their ideas are being taken into consideration and compared to the other possibilities, they feel like they have been part of the process and are more likely to be supportive of the final decision. This kind of group alignment can be essential to successfully moving forward.

## **STEP IT UP: Better Innovation Meetings with Meeting Collaboration Technology**

For the best ideas, and true innovation, you need human interaction, conflict, argument, and debate. MeetingSift helps you better facilitate such interaction by providing easy to use group activities for brainstorming, prioritizing, evaluating, and making decisions.

Use MeetingSift to create environments where out-of-the-box ideas can be shared without judgement. Where different perspectives are visualized side-by-side. And where the group's collective intelligence can be harvested effectively and efficiently.

### ***Safely share ideas anonymously***

MeetingSift Brainstorm Activity supports anonymous idea sharing, putting the focus on the idea rather than the person behind it. This lets the group consider each idea on its own merit. The best ideas lose their owners and take on lives of their own.

### ***Quickly and easily capture ideas from any size group***

MeetingSift lets you easily and efficiently gather ideas, feedback, opinions, and evaluations from groups of any size. Recording and sharing ideas in larger groups can be a difficult task when several dozen people are juggling hundreds of Post-it Notes or shouting suggestions across the room. MeetingSift allows participants to submit ideas and feedback on their mobile device. Their ideas are then displayed for the rest of the group to see and build upon. This kind of parallel input saves time and also removes any potential bias introduced by the order of which the ideas were presented. The collective intelligence of the group is visualized in real-time, enhancing the discussion and group alignment.

### ***Visualize everyone's opinions in real-time***

MeetingSift visualizes participants' ideas, feedback, and opinions in real-time. Feeding this valuable information back into the discussion not only enriches it, but saves time. Instead of a room full of "yes-men", you get to tap into the group's true thoughts and ideas.

Especially helpful for large groups is the word cloud generated out of submissions, highlighting the most frequently submitted words or ideas.





## Meeting Type 6: Team Building Meetings

One of the best ways to get everyone on your team working well together, and moving towards the same goals, is to conduct regularly scheduled team building meetings.

These meetings can be critical components in establishing your team culture, which is a key element to productivity and success.

Team building meetings also let you bring everyone up to speed on what's happening and why, which helps strengthen team communications, boosting productivity, and streamlining processes.

### Primary Goals for Team Building Meetings

The overarching goals for team building meetings is to improve the way the team members work together. This can be done by fostering a collaborative environment, connecting team members who may not see each other that often, and aligning everyone's efforts towards the same goal.

#### *Fostering a collaborative team environment*

Team building meetings should combine work with fun, featuring team building activities that let team members share experiences together, get to know each other in new ways, and build trust and communication channels to tap into when completing their tasks. Team building meetings are particularly effective for getting new hires introduced to team culture and aligned with the way things are done.

#### *Aligning everyone's efforts*

Team building meetings are great channels for communicating your overall team goals and strategy. They also give team members an opportunity to present how they will contribute to reaching these goals. This is invaluable because it gives team members an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of where they fit and how they depend on each other to achieve the overall goals.

"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." - Henry Ford

tweet this 

### **Unifying distributed teams**

More and more teams have team members distributed across the country, or around the world. Virtual workers with home offices may not see colleagues often, and can easily feel detached from their team. A team building meeting creates a feeling of togetherness in your team members, building shared goals, and fostering collaboration.

Good teams incorporate teamwork into their culture, creating the building blocks for success.

tweet this 

### **Key Roles at Team Building Meetings**

Team building meetings are all about the team. They need to be inclusive, and team authorities should participate alongside the rest of the team members.

#### **Team members**

To truly build your team it is essential that you include every single member of your team in the team building meetings. Sometimes this would be a group of people who share a physical office. Other times this would

include everyone who is involved in a particular project or process, and span multiple offices, departments, and locations.

### **Activity leader**

It can be beneficial to bring in activity leaders from outside the team to facilitate team building activities, so team leaders can participate alongside other team members. The activity leader could be a team building professional, like an organizational psychologist or off-site activity coach, or someone from within your company, like a manager from the HR department. There are some times when it makes sense to have the team leader plan and run activities with the team, without any outside interference or assistance.

### **Common Challenges in Team Building Meetings**

Team building meetings can have great benefits for your team's communication, productivity, and work satisfaction. However, if team members bring issues like work conflicts and lack of engagement into the team building process, it can backfire and weaken the team rather than strengthen it.

Teamwork divides the tasks and multiplies the success.

tweet this 

### **Work conflicts**

Work conflicts can affect team members' willingness to fully participate and engage in team building activities. If possible, team leaders should seek to identify and help resolve major work conflicts with the involved individuals before inviting the entire team to participate in team building activities together. Research has shown that misalignment and miscommunication are the main culprits for work conflicts, and having regular team building meetings can dramatically improve team alignment and communication.

### **Lack of engagement at work**

Unfortunately, research shows that the vast majority of employees are not engaged in their work. Disengaged team members can be a challenge to involve in team building activities, but these are the employees that team building meetings can help the most. Making the team building meeting fun and focused on non-work related topics can help. Taking the team out of their regular settings for an off-site experience is another way to excite disengaged team members and give them a new perspective of the team.

## **How to Host a Successful Team Building Meeting**

As with any other meeting, planning ahead is the best way to ensure good use of participants' time and successful outcomes. Start with finding out exactly which aspect your team needs to improve on. This will help you identify suitable activities that includes everyone. Make sure to signal that teambuilding is important, but it

should still be fun and engaging. This is a great occasion to celebrate team successes and strengths.

### **Identify what to focus on**

Spend time thinking about your team's current weaknesses. Does your team need to improve its communication, get to know each other better, improve trust, pull in the same direction, or become more agile? Identifying areas for improvements will guide you in selecting useful team building activities. Different team building activities address different issues.

### **Include everyone**

Team building meetings are all about the team members, every single one of them. Make sure to plan activities that would not exclude certain team members based on their physical abilities, religion, or other personal characteristics. It is important to choose activities everyone feels safe doing. Making anyone feel left out, or less important to the team, is going to undermine the very purpose of the team building meeting.

A group becomes a team  
when all members are  
sure enough of  
themselves and their  
contributions to praise  
the skill of others.

tweet this 

***Make it important***

People don't really care until they know how much you care. At one time each team member was excited about being part of the team, and you should aim to rekindle that excitement on a regular basis. There is no reason why people shouldn't be circling the team building meetings on their calendars and view them as can't miss events.

***Make it fun and engaging***

Engaging with each other and having fun is a great way to develop bonds that help team members work well together. Building a stronger and happier team will ultimately make them more effective, more productive, and more successful.

***Celebrate team successes***

Invite the team to celebrate successes, large and small. Emphasize milestones reached and areas where the team excels. Involve all team members by having them individually answer questions like:

What are you most proud of doing here?

Who on the team would you like to acknowledge for doing something great, and why?

Teamwork is the  
secret that makes  
common people  
achieve uncommon  
results.

tweet this 

**STEP IT UP: Better Team Building Meetings with Meeting Collaboration Technology**

The ability to connect and engage participants at team building meetings is essential. MeetingSift lets you add activities that allow participants, whether they are attending in person or remotely, to become an integral part of team dialog right from the start.

***Easily include and engage everyone***

With MeetingSift you can easily engage teams of all sizes via the participants' smartphones, tablets, or laptops. It's easy to use, no training is needed, and there is nothing to download or install. Whether team members are co-located or distributed, they all get equal opportunity to participate.

***Visualize Team Successes in Real-Time***

MeetingSift combines, analyzes, and visualizes group results in real-time, for everyone to see, react to, and discuss. Within seconds the entire team can see a snapshot of what everyone is thinking, whether it is a serious

topic or something light and entertaining. This is exciting and engaging, and makes it easy to focus the discussion. You will all learn a great deal from the answers.

### ***Tailored group activities that fit any team***

Customizable group activities let your team members quickly combine their opinions and ideas in fun ways that create a buzz and energize the team. MeetingSift lets you choose from an array of group activities, that can be tailored to engage your participants.

tweet the link to this book 

### About the author

Dr. Viil Lid is the Chief Science Officer at MeetingSift. Her expertise combines organizational communication, team collaboration, and management technology. She holds a PhD in Communication and Information Sciences, and has spent the past decades developing and researching collaboration technology for work, education, and fun.

### About MeetingSift

MeetingSift is a collaboration platform for meetings that is proven to save time and increase efficiency for in-room, remote, and hybrid meetings. It compliments your current meeting technology, significantly enhancing meeting facilitation, engagement, collaboration, and decision-making. Meeting participants use their own device with no software to install.

With MeetingSift, you can plan and run more productive meetings, increase participant feedback, and save time. Customers have reported 100% meeting engagement, 10 times more participant contribution, and a 20% reduction in meeting times when using MeetingSift.

Built-in tools include strategic planning with agenda building, collaborative digital brainstorming, real-time visualizations of group input, and automated post-meeting reports and recordings.



[www.meetingsift.com](http://www.meetingsift.com)



[info@meetingsift.com](mailto:info@meetingsift.com)