

Hello, this is Wayne Rivers at FBI, and *We Build Better Contractors*.

This week, I want to talk about running better meetings. And I have a question. How often do your people or your teams look forward to your meetings? And so, this question applies to us at FBI too, doesn't it? So, I polled my folks just to make sure I wasn't being inauthentic here. And we got great feedback, that people actually look forward... Now, we don't have that many meetings. We have regular meetings, we have a rhythm of meetings, but we don't have meeting after meeting, after meeting, after meeting. And I think that's a problem in some companies, they have too many meetings, and they lack purpose, they lack even agendas at some time.

So, I've got six tips here for you for running better meetings. And let's face it, every contractor has to have meetings to keep the communication flowing. Now, what about this is important to you? Golly, you've got to have your folks open, listening, enthusiastic, ready to learn and contribute. And if you run great meetings and fun meetings, it's going to be easier to get all those things done. Okay. So, part of this comes from a CNBC article, which featured Ray Dalio, who's a hedge fund billionaire, and also a guy who's famous for his concept of radical transparency, which may be in a future blog, and we can talk about that. Okay. The first thing in your meetings, this is really practically weird, as I talk to my contractors here, but start your meetings with appreciations.

Dennis and I learned that in a class that we took 20 plus years ago, and it was taught by a psychologist and we thought, "Oh, this is touchy, feely, mushy, silly stuff." It's not. You wouldn't believe how much goodwill it creates in your meetings. And the other thing about your meetings is, whenever you can focus on the positive stuff. If you're meeting with somebody, a group, for a half hour a week, there's 39 and a half hours during the rest of the week to focus on all the negative stuff that you have to deal with. Take some time in your business week when you're meeting with your teams and focus on the positive stuff and begin with appreciations.

You can say, it doesn't have to be just for your internal people either, you could be on a job site meeting, and you could say, "I really appreciate that X, Y, Z trade came out a few days early and really scoped out everything carefully and walked the job. And they just really put in that extra effort so that when they got on site, they could be super productive in favor of the next trade that was coming." It could be anything like that. So just tell folks when you appreciate the things they do, and you'll be surprised how far that goes.

Okay, the second thing is, make sure your meeting has a purpose. Don't meet just because you've been meeting every Friday morning for the last 20 years. Make sure the meeting has a purpose and make sure everybody in the meeting knows what the purpose is. Have a clear leader for the meeting. It doesn't always have to be the boss, it could be somebody else, depends on the situation. And then that leader of the meeting should be facilitating so that different perspectives and ideas and opinions can come to light. And everybody gets a say in things.

Third thing, avoid topic slippage, you should have an agenda for every meeting. And when things come up that are off the agenda, you want your meetings tight, 20 minutes here, 30 minutes there, maybe an hour or longer for some important things. But avoid topic slippage. When things come up that are off agenda, table them, put them in a parking lot. If they're important, you can address it at another meeting. Sometimes you could address it with an individual offline, you don't need to consume the time of everybody else who's there. So, make sure that you keep your meetings tight and focused and short, and that will increase the quality and the effectiveness.

Number four, somebody needs to record at least a little bit about the meeting. It could be the leader; it could be someone else. But you've got to know what decisions are made in the meetings. You've got to know who agreed to do what and when they agreed to do it, what's the deadline? If you're having meetings, where no decisions at all happen, that is the very definition of an ineffective meeting. Every meeting should produce some decisions and some action items, even if it's only for another group to get together at another time, to drill down on this particular subject. But you've got to make

decisions. If you're having meetings and everybody breaks up and says, "What did we just meet about? And what did we decide?" you've wasted a lot of people's time. And I don't have to tell you, folks, time is much too valuable in today's world to waste.

The fifth thing, if you can do this, this is tricky. Try to suck the emotion out of the room. We used to have a psychologist that worked for us at FBI, and he always talked about, in tough situations, whether it was a family business or other non-related people getting together, you want to do as much as you can to suck the emotion out of the room. And I remember being facilitating a peer group years ago, and someone went off on a tangent and it really angered the host of the meeting. And you could just see, this guy was pretty volatile, and you could just see his blood was boiling. And I saw that, and I knew there was going to be a clash, so I went off on a weird tangent and told a story that, frankly, it took so long to tell that they kind of forgot they were mad at each other. And in other words, I tried to deflect, to suck the emotion out of the room, to deflect it, to get it out of there.

And then I worked as a diplomat, shuttling back and forth between the two people to try to get things in a better place. That worked okay. And maybe I was lucky, but that's one example of how you can maybe suck the emotion out of a difficult situation. The other way, a simpler way, is simply call a timeout. When you see somebody's about to blow their stack, call a timeout, 10 minutes, everybody take a biological break, check your emails, whatever, let's get back together in a few minutes. Timeouts are an easy way to do that. And the sixth thing, final thing, review your meetings. Were they effective? I mean, think about this as you come out of the meeting. Was it effective? Was it time well used? Did we decisions? Are people accountable for the decisions that we made?

And here's a great little tip from one of our former contractors, Kevin Albanese. And what he used to do in his meetings is, he would just pass out slips of paper and they would vote, 1 to 10 scale, was this meeting effective? And I would suggest use to the net promoter score, scale 9s and 10s, yes, the meeting was the effective, 7 and 8, the meeting, ah, neutral it was good, but not so great. And then if it's 6 or below, that's actually a negative. People are too nice, and they won't tell you truthfully, "Oh, that was a 1, that was an awful meeting, a complete waste of time." So, 6 or below is actually bad. Okay. So, if you're getting 7s and 8s, neutral, you got work to do. If you're getting 6 and below in your meetings, you've got a lot of work to do. Kevin said it really improved the quality of their meetings and they were able to eliminate some meetings. Instead of having a monthly meeting, they went to, for example, a quarterly meeting, and that saved everybody some time.

So those are our six tips. I'd love to hear what you're doing to run successful meetings in your organization, I bet you have lots of great ideas. Let us know in the comment section. Oh, and don't forget Boot Camp. Our Denver Boot Camp is sold up, that is out. No seats available for Denver. The Raleigh Boot Camp in late March, still available seats. So, let Charlotte know if you have questions and she'll get you the information you need. Thank you. This is Wayne Rivers at FBI, and *We Build Better Contractors*.