

VENTRAX BE TIME WISE

MARCH 2018 ISSUE



FINDING TIME FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MAKING LEARNING A LIFELONG ACTIVITY

How often do you set aside time to learn new skills? Chances are, not as often as you'd like! If you're like many people, you're keen to learn, but you struggle to find the time. So, how can you make this time, develop your knowledge, and increase your value, both to your organization and to future employers?

Why Make Time for Professional Development?

If you're a manager, you'll know how important it is to ensure that your team members are given plenty of training and development opportunities. However, it's just as important to focus on your own learning and development. To do this, it's essential to set aside enough time. There are several reasons why you might not make learning a priority. Volume of work is the most obvious reason: with work and personal responsibilities competing for your attention, it can feel impossible to find room in your schedule for learning.

As well as this, you may feel guilty about taking time out for personal and professional development; after all, this could be used to work on urgent or important tasks, or even to be with your family.



It can also be difficult to make learning part of your routine. In the course of a busy, hectic day, tasks like "Read leadership book" and "Complete online course" can easily slip to the bottom of your To-Do List.

This can lead you to feel disappointed about not living up to your own expectations, which can affect your **self-confidence** and make you feel less positive about your career. You can also suffer if you don't stay up-to-date with changes to your industry or profession. For instance, you might miss opportunities to make a greater contribution to your team or organization, and other people may become more effective than you in the workplace.

However, when you make learning a priority, you increase your value to your organization. You're more marketable as a professional, and you're in a better position when you apply for a challenging project or seek a promotion.



Continuous learning can also help you develop **expert power**. If your boss, team members, or clients see you as an expert, they're far more willing to respect your opinion and follow your lead. This can make it easier to win support for your projects, negotiate a contract, or manage change.

10 SIMPLE WAYS TO HAVE MORE PRODUCTIVE MEETINGS



Who hasn't struggled to stay awake through a three-hour meeting, or left a department-wide pow-wow wondering what the point was?

Here are 10 quick tips to ensure your meetings aren't time-wasters.



1. State the Objective

How many times have you gone to a meeting with only a vague agenda and sat through a discussion with no end in sight? The most effective meetings are ones where the objectives are clear. A simple statement of what you hope to achieve can shave an average of 17 minutes off of your meeting. In my experience, a basic agenda, shared in

advance with any relevant documents, keeps everyone on track.

2. Be Exclusive

When I get a meeting invite, I'll usually ask (politely) if I actually need to be there. Often, office politics get in the way of who really needs to attend. It all serves one purpose: only invite essential personnel, and you'll find things stay on track.



3. Time It to the Second

I'll often request 22-minute meetings. This idea comes from an Ignite talk by Nicole Steinbok, and may sound a little silly, but I've found it's a hyper-effective way to keep everyone conscious of both starting and ending times. People tend to fill the amount of meeting time they're given, so I generally get just as much done in 22 minutes as in a standard half-hour meeting.

4. Leave a Buffer

It's amazing how often we'll book back-to-back meetings without thinking about the logistics - the time it takes to walk from one office to the next, for instance, or to top up your coffee. Building in even five minutes between bookings (and there are plenty of calendar apps that can do it automatically for you) will help avoid snowballing late starts for the rest of the day.

5. Ditch PowerPoint

At Amazon, Jeff Bezos banned PowerPoint outright. Too often, we're stuck listening to a presenter read an entire slideshow, verbatim. Visuals can be a great tool, but if you're using PowerPoint as a crutch, your meeting is going to feel like it's on life support.



6. Change Your Scenery

A boardroom is usually the most sensible meeting space for a group, but when you've got a one-on-one booked, a walk-and-talk outside makes for a nice change of pace. Not only can it be an opportunity to get some privacy if you've got an open-concept office, but walking also helps creativity, according to a recent Stanford study. Plenty of big thinkers love walking meetings - in fact, they were Steve Jobs' preferred method of conversation.



7. Provide Some Entertainment

Some people might hear "icebreaker" and groan, but a round-table question gets the conversation going. Or take it one step further and incorporate a team-building activity to break up a dull topic - the meeting we did with a short improv lesson had us all on the floor laughing and energized to tackle our agenda.

8. Unplug Your Laptops



Studies have found that students who use laptops have a harder time remembering what they learn in lectures and are less likely to understand complex ideas; the same goes for the office. When you've got half an eye on your email, you can't be fully present. So unless you're taking minutes or absolutely need your computer, turn it off.

9. Meet Face-to-Face

How many conference calls have you tuned out of? I'm guilty of it, too: letting my mind wander when I'm not physically in the room. One study found revealed that 65% of employees regularly do other work while a conference call is happening. (A full 47% have even gone to the washroom during a call). A good meeting is about connecting minds and ideas, and face-to-face is ultimately the best way to make that happen. That's not always possible, but there's really no substitute for face time.

10. Lead with Purpose

Great meetings happen when you have great leaders. It's not always easy to be the one ensuring things are moving along, but someone has to be accountable for running meetings that don't suck. Once you've set standards for efficient, effective and entertaining meetings, your team will follow - and meetings may start to be the best part of your workday.



ASK THESE 9 QUESTIONS BEFORE EVERY MEETING TO AVOID WASTING TIME

Many activities take up a lot of our time at work. However, not all meetings are a waste of time. If done right, a meeting can solve problems or convey information without an endless Slack thread. The key is preparation, and asking yourself the right questions. Before you get your team together for another pointless meeting, ask the following questions to ensure that it'll be the most productive use of everyone's time.



1. DO I REALLY NEED TO HOLD THIS MEETING?

This question might seem really obvious to you, but some companies have regular check-ins without really thinking through why.

2. WHAT IS THE GOAL?

If it's not just about checking in, go a step further and ask yourself—what do you hope to get out of it? In 2016 a Microsoft study revealed most meetings aren't properly planned and 67% are held without an agenda. You can't make an agenda if you don't know what you want to achieve. And without an agenda, there is a greater risk that your meetings will be wasted hours.

3. HOW CAN I MAKE THIS MEETING MEMORABLE?

Let's face it, as engaging as you might be as a facilitator, people zone out in work meetings. And sometimes they don't always take notes and miss out on important information. You can prevent this from happening by including a unique element. It doesn't have to be major—employee engagement. Software provider TINYpulse starts their staff meeting at 8.48 a.m., an odd but memorable time.



4. WHAT DO I NEED TO TELL ATTENDEES AHEAD OF THE MEETING?

There's nothing worse than having unprepared attendees. But you can't blame them for not having good ideas if you put them on the spot and didn't give them enough time to prepare. The categories that meetings tend to fall under: information-share meetings, creative-discussions meetings and consensus meetings. For creative discussions and consensus meetings, the more you warn participants about the issues or ideas you want to discuss, the better prepared they'll be. If they're hearing about them for the first time in the meeting, you'll have to allocate extra time for clarifications.



5. WHO REALLY NEEDS TO BE AT THE MEETING?

You know how annoying it is when your inbox is clogged with emails you've unnecessarily been copied to? People also don't want to spend their days on meetings if that means not getting their actual work done—or staying at the office later because of it. “Meetings with a large group tend to get bogged down. Smaller groups are more efficient, especially when the right decision maker is sitting at the table.”

6. HOW CAN I TURN THE AGENDA ITEMS INTO ACTIONS?

Of course, meetings are for discussion, but if all you have in your “agenda” is “discuss x, y, z,” you might end the meeting and realize that no one knows what they should do next. There are those who usually will turn items into questions. For example, instead of “discuss video schedule,” write “when will videos be completed?” This way, you'll leave the meeting with clear next steps.

7. HOW CAN I MAKE SURE THAT EVERYONE IS INCLUDED?

If your meetings are dominated by one or two voices (and there are more attendees), that's a drain on your productivity. After all, the whole point of meeting is to exchange ideas and thoughts. If organizations don't ensure they include everyone, they're missing out on diverse perspectives that could be extremely valuable to the team.

9. HOW CAN I ENSURE THAT THIS MEETING IS THE BEST USE OF EVERYONE'S TIME?

Meetings have opportunity costs. And too many non essential ones drain a company's progress and productivity. Ultimately, the key question is, understanding whether it's the best use of everyone's limited time. Walking into any meeting, it's important to remember that everyone in the room is sacrificing part of



his or her day to be there. And when you treat people's time with the reverence it deserves, suddenly, meetings become a force for good in your day, rather than the thing you had to do.





SELF IMPROVEMENT SEMINAR

BANKER'S CLUB

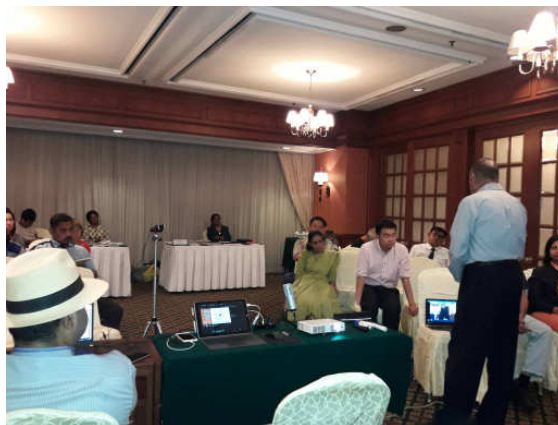
Date: 4th April 2018

Time: 6pm – 8pm

Venue: Bankers Club Kuala Lumpur
(Amoda Building) Jalan Imbi
Opposite Berjaya Times Square

Topic

How to Give and Receive Feedback About Creative Work?



VENTRAX OFFICE PUCHONG

Date: 25th April 2018

Time: 6pm – 8pm

Venue: Ventrax Management Sdn Bhd
37 & 39 Jalan TPP5/I7
Taman Perindustrian Puchong
47160 Puchong, Selangor

Topic

How to Tell If A Company's Culture is Right for You?

Timely Inspiration

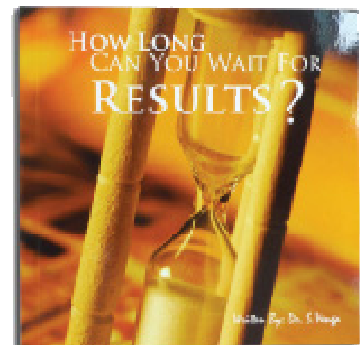


“He who sits and plans every night for the next day’s work and follows the plan the next day, has in his hands a string which will guide him through the maze of the busiest life you can ever imagine. But when he leaves the plan and the use of time is left to chance, chaos will soon take place.”

Everyone knows that they ought to be more organized and disciplined. Yet, many lead a disorganised life that makes it impossible for them to manage what they have. In a typical middle manager’s day, he’ll spend 20% of his working time managing; 33% of his time providing support tasks to his staff, performing non-productive and clerical activities; 13% doing non-productive tasks such as walking to meetings, travelling, searching for a parking spot and the balance 34%, he is unable to account for.

There are 5“P’s” in Time Management. Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance. Simple enough, but why do people find it so difficult to plan? These days just about everyone carries some sort of organiser. Most carry it around without even knowing it’s there while those who carry it with intent are aware of the mountain of activities to be done. They realise that some sort of a tool is needed to assist them in the process of handling these activities.

(Extracts from “How long can you wait for results”)



LEARN HOW TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE WORK RELATIONSHIPS

You can damage your career and work relationships by the actions you take and the behaviours you exhibit at work. No matter your education, your experience, or your title, if you can't play well with others, you will never accomplish your work mission.

Effective interpersonal work relationships form the cornerstone of success and satisfaction with your job and your career. How important are effective work relationships?



They form the basis for promotional opportunities, pay increases, goal accomplishment, and job satisfaction.

The Gallup organization studied indicators of work satisfaction. They found that whether you have a best friend at work was one of the twelve key questions asked of employees that predicted job satisfaction. Without a friend at work, work satisfaction deteriorates.

What Happens When You Don't Play Well With Others?

A supervisor who worked in a several-hundred-person company quickly earned a reputation for not playing well with others. He collected data and used the data to find fault, place blame, and make other employees look bad. He enjoyed identifying problems and problem patterns but he rarely suggested solutions.

He bugged his supervisor weekly for a bigger title and more money so that he could tell the other employees what to do. When he announced that he was job hunting, not a single employee suggested that the company take action to convince him to stay.

He had burned his bridges all along the way. And, no one will have a good word to say about him when an employer who is checking references comes their way.

THE TOP 7 WAYS TO PLAY WELL WITH OTHERS AT WORK

These are the top seven ways you can play well with others at work. They form the basis for building effective interpersonal work relationships.

These are the actions you want to take to create a positive, empowering, motivational work environment for people.

1. Bring suggested solutions to problems to the meeting table. Some employees spend an inordinate amount of time identifying problems. Honestly? That's the easy part. Thoughtful solutions are the challenge that will earn respect and admiration from co-workers and bosses. Your willingness to defend your solution until a better or improved approach is decided on by the team is also a plus.

2. Don't ever play the blame game. You alienate co-workers, supervisors, and reporting staff. Yes, you may need to identify who was involved in a problem. You may even ask the Dr. W. Edwards Deming recommended question: what about the work system that caused the employee to fail?



But, saying that it's not my fault and publicly identifying and blaming others for failures will earn you enemies. Throwing other employees under the bus, either privately or publicly, will also create enemies. These enemies will, in turn, help you to fail. You do need allies at work. Remember this if you want to accomplish your goals and dreams.

3. Your verbal and nonverbal communication matters.

If you talk down to another employee, use sarcasm, or sound nasty, the other employee hears you. We are all radar machines that constantly scope out our environment. When you talk to another employee with a lack of respect, the message comes through loudly and clearly.



In one organization a high-level manager once asked this question, "I know you don't think I should scream at my employees. But, sometimes, they make me so mad. When is it ever appropriate for me to scream at the employees?" The answer? Never, of course, if respect for people is a hallmark of your organization—which it should be and which it is in massively successful companies.

4. Never blind side a co-worker, boss or reporting staff person. If the first time a co-worker hears about a problem in a staff meeting or from an email sent to his supervisor, you have blindsided the co-worker. Always discuss problems, first, with the people directly involved who own the work system.

Also called ambushing your co-workers, you will never build effective work alliances unless your co-workers trust you. And, without alliances, you will never accomplish the most important goals for your job and career. You cannot do it alone so treat your co-workers as you expect them to treat you.

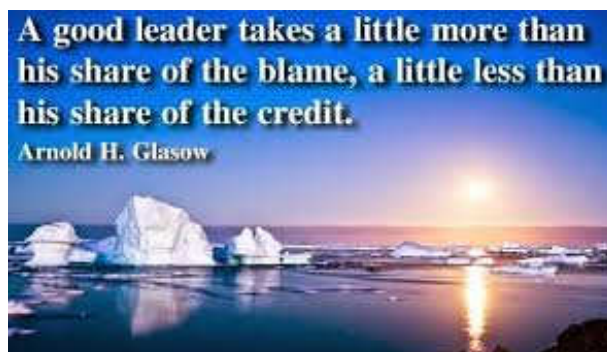
5. Keep your commitments. In an organization, work is interconnected. If you fail to meet deadlines and commitments, you affect the work of other employees. Always keep commitments, and if you can't, make sure all affected employees know what happened. Provide a new due date and make every possible effort to honour the new deadline.



It is not okay for an organization to just quietly allow deadlines to slip by. Your co-workers, even if they fail to confront you, will think less of you and disrespect your actions. And, no, don't think even for a second that they didn't notice that the deadline passed. You insult them if you even consider this possibility.

6. Share credit for accomplishments, ideas and contributions. How often do you accomplish a goal or complete a project with no help from others? If you are a manager, how many of the great ideas you promote were contributed by staff members?

Take the time, and expend the energy, to thank, reward, recognize and specify contributions of the people who help you succeed. This is a no-fail approach to building effective work relationships. Share credit; deflect blame and failure.



7. Help other employees find their greatness. Every employee in your organization has talents, skills, and experience. If you can help fellow employees harness their best abilities, you benefit the organization immeasurably. The growth of individual employees benefits the whole.



Compliment, praise, and notice their contributions. You don't have to be a manager to help create a positive, motivating environment for employees. In this environment, employees do find and contribute their greatness. They will always remember that you were part of bringing it out of them. Those interpersonal work relationships are cherished.

If you regularly carry out these seven actions, you will play well with others and build effective interpersonal work relationships. Co-workers will value you as a colleague. Bosses will believe that you play on the right team—with them.

You'll accomplish your work goals, and you may even experience fun, recognition, and personal motivation. And, hey, work can't get any better than that.

reflections

