

January Event with Kenneth Norton, Google

Cross Functional Teams and the Product Manager

By Mahesh Ramachandran

SVPMA was excited to have Kenneth Norton, Product Manager at Google, Inc. (formerly VP Product Marketing, JotSpot, which was recently acquired by Google) address the association, at its January 10th 2007 meeting. The speaker shared his experience on the Product Management role and offered practical advice on being effective in that role. The speaker placed Product Management within the context of other functions – Sales, Engineering, Executive Management and Customer Support. The speaker then

shared specific practices product managers can apply in working across functions and managing engineering teams.

The Product Management role

The Product Management role is somewhat unique. Product Managers have accountability for the product's ultimate success without formal authority over any particular function. Unlike other functions (e.g. Sales, Customer Support) which have well-defined scope, Product Management is a multi-faceted role involving a range of activities across the organization. Typically, the Product Management role involves orchestrating activities across complex organizational structures,

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**The Secrets of Facilitation:
How to Make Meetings Masterful**

By Kristi Royse

A quick show of hands: Who hates meetings?

So that would be most of you, right? It's not surprising. Workers across this country are gripped with soul deadening angst as they shuffle down hallways to attend weekly reviews of "housekeeping issues." Years of our lives are slipping away in stuffy, overcrowded conference rooms, and nobody seems to be doing anything about it. Meetings can bring down morale and blow holes in the productivity of a workday. Pitifully few constructive ideas come out of them which means; of course, that yet another round of meetings will be called.

Taking into account a company's bottom line, the picture becomes even grimmer. For all the value employers are getting from meetings, they might as well open the windows and throw cash to the breeze—at least it would save time. Meetings should be a precious resource; unfortunately they are treated like a necessary evil.

Facilitators are ultimately responsible for the quality and effectiveness of their meetings. They have the power to create a meeting that succeeds or a meeting that disappoints. What follows are

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Stunningly Awful Remote Demos: The Top Ten List of Inflicting Pain at a Distance

By Peter E. Cohan

You are watching someone else's demonstration, via WebEx, and you are getting bored. Someone comes into your office – you mute the speakerphone and chat with your colleague for a few minutes. She leaves and you return back to the demo, still in progress, and unmute the phone...

After another few minutes of listening listlessly, you receive an email message – you flip over to email, respond to that message, then you idly review your Inbox – while the demonstrator's voice drones on about, "Another really nice thing about our software is all of the file types we can handle. Let me show you..."

Does this sound familiar? Has the demo made a strong (positive) impression with you? Likely not!

Now turn the situation around and imagine that it is your organization delivering the demo to one of your prospects... Ouch!

If your organization's Remote Demonstrations are not as successful as you wish, consider using this list as an assessment tool. If these items "ring too true" then you may want to contemplate making some changes...

The Stunningly Awful Demos ("SAD") Remote Demos Top Ten List:

Don't Learn the Technology: "Gosh this is boring..."

Assume that delivering a Remote Demo is just the same as presenting face-to-face. Ignore all of the tools and capabilities that the folks at WebEx, Live Meeting (Microsoft), *et al* have implemented to enable you to increase your level of interactivity with your customers.

By all means, do not set up a session ahead of time with a colleague from your own company to try out the capabilities and get feedback on what works well.

Instead, simply assume that your audience is paying rapt attention as you describe the seven layers of security associated with logging-in to your application...

Don't Test the Technology ahead of time: "Sorry, we can't seem to join the meeting..."

Schedule a Remote Demo for, say, 11:00 AM with the customer – preferably with a large audience – and spend the first 15 minutes "joining" the WebEx or Live Meeting session. This will ensure that your audience is bored and already contemplating leaving for another meeting or back to their desks to "get some real work done..."

To maximize the potential negative impact, don't have your customer test their firewall or network/ computing infrastructure to make sure that the collaboration software will work in their environment. Leave this until the start of the meeting to increase the possibility of technical challenges. After all, many IT groups are absolutely delighted to see their end-users downloading unknown components onto corporate machines...!

Along the same lines, pay no attention to screen resolution. It is best to find out that the audience can only

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see a fraction of your screen fifty minutes into the demo...

Present to a Large, Unqualified Audience: “Why are we here...?”

Dramatically decrease your success rates by presenting demos to large, unqualified audiences – even better, encourage your customer to include people from multiple, disparate sites and time-zones. For the greatest (negative) impact, launch right into your demo without any mutual introductions, review of objectives or, God forbid, any brief qualification of any new players.

Use a Speakerphone: “What...?”

To maximize miscommunication, use a speakerphone on your end. That way, you can appear to be yelling into the phone when you are speaking directly into it – and your voice will fade to a mumbling whisper when you turn back to your screen during the demo.

Use a flat, monotonic, Passionless Voice: “Yawn...”

You’ll have your audience sleeping peacefully in no time with this approach! Nothing says “boredom” like a flat, passionless voice presenting from a speakerphone...

It is always best to assume that your audience knows you intimately, can see your eloquent gestures and hear your subtle changes in tone. And by all means, don’t work to compensate for the inability of the audience to see you by putting more energy and dynamics in your verbal delivery.

Move your Mouse Rapidly: “Where’s the Drama-mine...?”

“Oh my God, he’s got ‘Zippy Mouse Syndrome’...!” Few things excite an audience as much as trying to track a mouse moving like lightening via a web connection – and lightening is a good analogy. The mouse appears briefly, then disappears, only to appear again in a flash somewhere else on the screen. The element of surprise is high, enabling customers to play Mouse Location Bingo. “I wonder where the mouse will appear next?”

To add to this effect, make sure to click much faster than the collaboration software can keep up. This will enable you to finish the demo a good ten minutes before your audience does...!

Even better, your “voice-over” will be several screens ahead of what your audience is seeing, proving to the audience how skilled you are with your software.

This strategy will also help prepare for your next career in fortune-telling...

Eliminate Interactivity: “Any questions so far...?”

Visualize that you are presenting to an audience of cardboard cut-outs. This will help ensure that you minimize any possible interactions with your audience. Don’t draw them into the demo, don’t make it a conversation, and absolutely don’t use any of the tools that might generate real interactivity:

Don’t ask specific questions, such as, “Can you see my mouse pointing at the logo?”

Don’t use the highlighter, arrow or pen tools, as they only mess-up an otherwise pristine screen.

Don’t ask the audience to change their seat colors, raise their virtual hands, or use the chat dialog – doing so would only interrupt your flow.

Don’t offer to let someone in the audience “drive” – this would be far too exciting for the audience and might risk real engagement.

If you must ask a question, remember that the safest question to ask in a Remote Demo is, “Are there any questions so far...?” The sound you typically hear in response to this question is the sound of crickets in huge, open meadow...

Don’t use an Agenda or Roadmap: “Where is this going...?”

It is best if your audience has no clue as to your over-all plan for the demo – that way, every topic will be a wonderful surprise. To ensure this effect, eliminate presenting any agenda or demo roadmap from your

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meeting. And, by all means, if you make the mistake of sharing an agenda at the beginning of the meeting, make certain to never show it again!

Even better, present your demo as a long, complex story, with multiple fictional characters and a storyline that braids together several storylines. Jump back and forth between these characters as you present the benefits to their counterparts in the audience. Make sure that you move seamlessly from section to section, module to module, while applying the other techniques in this list.

This strategy should have your audience lost by the ten minute mark (“Who was the character named ‘Bob’, again?”). Even better, the lack of any clear demarcations between demo segments will ensure that once lost, your audience will never be able to rejoin the story. The good news is that they will be able to use the time in the demo to do their email, since you can’t see that they got lost...!

Point at Your Screen with Your Finger: “If you look right here...”

Yes, audiences are clairvoyant – they can accurately visualize your every motion and gesture via a speaker-

phone. This is why pointing at your own screen with your finger (“If you look right here...”) is such an effective approach in Remote Demonstrations.

As an exercise, practice developing this and related skills by gesturing broadly when you are talking on a cell telephone while driving in a car. Your audience will mysteriously be able to visualize points you are making...! For extra credit, practice your remote gesturing while on a cell phone driving on the freeway or autobahn.

Follow the advice in the Stunningly Awful Demos Top Ten List:

If you do manage to generate interactivity and engage your audience by ignoring the previous nine items, you can still snatch defeat from the jaws of victory by following the devastating advice found in the *Stunningly Awful Demos Top Ten List* article. Here are the key items to keep in mind to maximize your chances for failure:

Be unclear on the Customer’s Needs - “The Harbor Cruise”

Present a Linear Demo from beginning to end - “Where is this going...?”

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Start with a Corporate Overview - “Death by Corporate Overview...”

Don’t reconfirm the Time Constraints for the meeting - “Sorry, we’re out of time...”

Show as many Features as possible - “...And another thing you can do is...”

Show the same demo, regardless of the Customer’s Depth of Interest - “One for all...”

Let Questions interrupt and take control of your demo - “But what about...?”

Let Bugs and Crashes consume you - “Gee, it’s never done that before...”

Limit the time you show your big Pay-Off Screen - “Ta-da... Any questions?”

Avoid Summarizing - “And the next thing is...”

Practice and perfect the items on these lists and you’ll join the hallowed ranks of the Sales Presentation Team at your organization. In any case, following these “Top Ten” SAD Remote Demo guidelines will certainly increase the probability that your demos will not help you achieve your goals.

When you do these ten simple things, you should expect your audience to say, “That was a Stunningly Awful Demo!” ☹

For a copy of the *Stunningly Awful Demos Top Ten List* article visit us at www.SecondDerivative.com or contact me at PCohan@SecondDerivative.com.

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Top 10 Product Launch Mistakes - (Part 1)

By Brian Lawley

Companies invest millions of dollars each year developing new products and trying to increase their revenues and profitability. Some of these are good products, and some aren't. Nonetheless, they all have one thing in common: without appropriate marketing activities they will most likely fail. In fact, there are many examples of inferior products that have won in the marketplace simply because the marketing was more effective than that of the superior competitor.

Once a product is finished, the first step in successfully bringing a product to market is to execute a successful product launch. If done correctly, a product launch can provide early revenue momentum, a stronger competitive position in the marketplace and a foundation for all other future marketing activities to build upon. If done incorrectly, the marketing efforts may never have a chance to recover no matter how much money and effort are spent.

The key to an effective product launch is to create and execute a plan that is appropriate to meet your goals given your resource, budget and time constraints. This paper will summarize the top ten most common mis-

takes that we have seen companies make during the past twenty years of launching high-tech products.

On To The Top 10...

Not planning early enough

Clients come to us all the time and tell us they need our help with launching products. Most of the time they are only a few weeks away from the product being ready, and they have realized that they either don't have a launch plan in place, don't have the expertise to plan and run a launch themselves or they don't have the resources to do the necessary work.

We recommend that you build your launch plan four months prior to product availability. Given our experience this gives you adequate time to plan for and execute extensive PR activities and marketing programs and get all of the positioning, messaging, collateral and pricing finalized. It also allows enough time to communicate to your partners (and internal groups if your company is large) so that they can prepare for and support your efforts.

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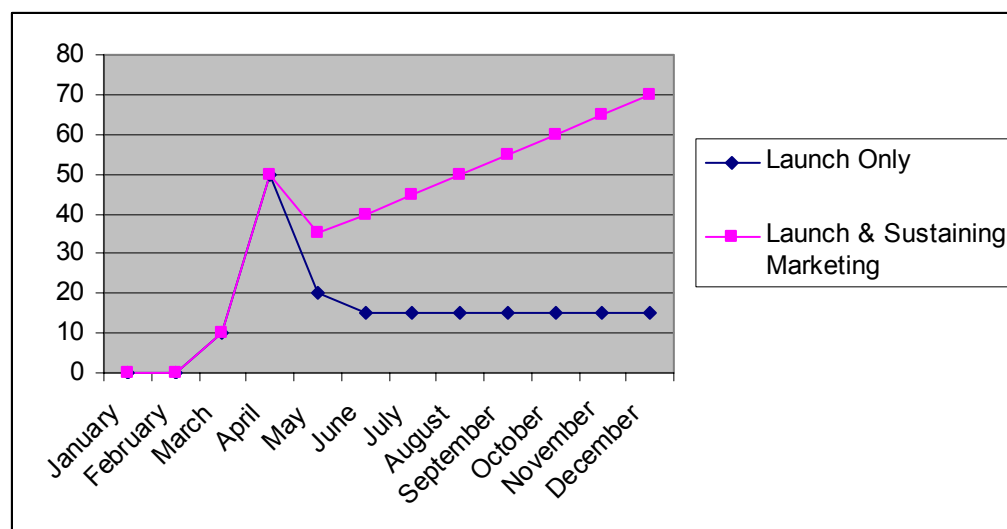
Product launches can be pulled off in a matter of weeks, but it is extremely stressful, leads to miscommunication and poor execution, and ultimately will usually result in less-than-optimal results and lower revenues.

No sustaining marketing plan

One of the biggest mistakes, particularly in high-tech, is that companies assume that the launch is an "event" unto itself, and that initial buzz generated combined with the excellence of the product will be enough to generate ongoing sales momentum. To further compound the problem, if the product is exciting and the company achieves a lot of initial press coverage and revenues, they will oftentimes be convinced that they have hit the magic formula and that all is well.

Unfortunately, what often happens is that after an initial spike in sales and excitement following the launch revenues quickly drop to a much lower level. The company is baffled, and can't understand what has happened. After all, they had clear indications that things were going well.

Given that effective marketing programs take several weeks to plan and execute, the company is now in a bind. Once they come out of denial (if they do) and realize they need to act, it will take quite a bit of time to get adequate programs going, and in the meantime revenues will continue to miss expectations.



Revenue growth can drop off significantly without a viable sustaining marketing plan & programs

Shipping a poor quality product

This is one of the deadliest mistakes because it can sometimes be impossible to recover from. If the press gets hold of your product and it doesn't work as promised, or customers have a bad experience with it the product image and brand may be tarnished permanently. During the dot com boom there were literally thousands of examples of this - products that were announced and after customers tried them once they were never willing to try them again.

The best way to avoid this problem is to set quality goals early and gain consensus among all of the key stakeholders, including the executives involved. If you are a startup it is tempting to want to get first version of the product out. If you are a public company you may be under immense pressure to meet quarterly goals. And there is always the temptation to ship a product that isn't quite ready but that can be "fixed" with downloads from the Internet by the time it is in the hands of many customers (assuming they know about and act on getting the fix). Without concrete goals that are agreed upon up front, most likely your company will fall into this trap.

Examples of goals like this might include:

- No fatal or crashing bugs can remain.
- Pre-set targets in your QA plan must be met (this forces you to have a QA plan, testing matrices and adequate resources to make it happen).
- Beta program targets must be met in terms of number of beta customers and usage. You might want to set a goal that 20 customers must have used the product successfully for 3 weeks with no

major issues and at least 90% indicating they believe the product is ready to ship.

Inadequate funding

It is very common for companies to believe that they have such a compelling product that for \$5k-\$10k they are going to be able to launch the next Hotmail, Skype or Google. This is particularly true with products that have a viral marketing component to them. The reality is that Skype's are few and far between.

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One way to avoid this mistake is to do an ROI (return on investment) analysis. To do this you first list all of the ways that you are going to reach customers (announcements, product reviews, marketing programs, viral word of mouth, online advertising such as Google AdWords, etc.). From there you can make a rough estimate of how many impressions you will make on your target market, and how many you can expect to turn into leads. You then estimate what you think your close rate will be for those leads. Will 10% of them actually buy your product and pay you money? The last step is to then calculate the profit you will make based on the money you spend (ROI). This will help build a reality-based picture so that you can make more informed decisions about what an adequate spending level will really be.

Program	Cost	# exposures	# leads	# sales	profit
PR program	120,000	500,000	2,500	500	\$ 200,000
Adwords/Online Advertising	5,000	N/A	10,000	250	\$ 100,000
Print Advertising	250,000	450,000	2,250	450	\$ 180,000
Collateral & Demo	25,000	-	-	-	\$ -
Trade Show/Launch Event	30,000	1,200	480	192	\$ 76,800
Email Blasts	20,000	100,000	1,000	400	\$ 160,000
Channel Mktg Program	50,000	N/A	1,000	400	\$ 160,000
TOTAL	500,000	1,051,200	17,230	2,192	\$ 876,800
Total Profit	\$ 876,800				
Less total cost	\$ (500,000)				
Net Return	\$ 376,800				
ROI	75%				

ROI calculation for a product launch.

Overestimating results

Studies show that it takes an average of six exposures to your marketing message before there will be enough awareness to take action. This is one of the reasons that marketing after the product launch is so critical. If you can't reach your target with several exposures to your message you had better have a product that is so life-changing that potential customers can't resist finding out more and trying it.

I'll give you a personal example here to make my point. My wife and I were watching television one night and I saw an ad for a shredder being sold by Staples. The first time I saw it I thought "okay, another shredder, I don't need one". I saw the commercial two more times - luckily it was clever enough that I finally got what the differentiating point of their product was. It was heavy duty enough to shred credit cards and even CDs (which my shredder could not do). I then saw an ad in the local paper, and recognized that it was the same one and mentioned it to my wife. She told me "that would be great - right now I have to open all of those credit card offers and take out the fake credit cards in order to shred them". Prior to this I had no idea we had this need, or that this product would solve it.

As it turns out I went to Staples for something completely unrelated. In the store there was a big display of the shredders, being advertised for \$39.99. My wife and I saw them and started talking about them. Mind you this was the fifth or sixth time I had been made aware of this product. It seemed very compelling, and we decided that we should investigate buying one. What happened leads us to the next launch mistake... (to be continued in the next issue). ☞

Brian Lawley is the President of SVPMA and founder and President of the 280 Group, a Product Management and Product Marketing consulting firm that helps companies define, launch and market breakthrough new products. See www.280group.com for additional details.

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with minimal supervision, to deliver tangible outcomes that define the product's success.

Working effectively across functions and with customers

Follow three principles in approaching the role – 1) focus on communicating the desired end result, rather than telling people what to do – given an objective, people will generally find their own way to accomplish it; 2) communicate to different people in language they understand (e.g. address Sales in language that Sales understands); 3) represent the viewpoints of all the functions – be the universal translator for the organization.

Product Managers need to earn the credibility of Sales, Engineering, Executive Management and Customers. The speaker offered simple ways to establish credibility with each constituency:

Engineering: Take responsibility to clear obstacles to execution; ask dumb questions as a way of getting at the essence of things – this demonstrates focus; always explain the “why” (the rationale behind decisions); always take the blame – this shows the Product Manager has a stake in the effort; empathize with engineers – this generates goodwill.

Sales: Know the numbers driving Sales (e.g. quotas); stay engaged in the sales process – participate in phone calls with customers, help Sales be creative in addressing customer needs (e.g. point out feature X suffices for a feature Y demanded by the customer).

Executive Management: Have a vision and demonstrate a keen understanding of the industry – competitors, products, technology; demonstrate rigor in making business cases – have supporting data and the necessary analysis; be dependable – deliver on commitments.

Customers: Develop a deep understanding of customers' needs – go beyond what customers think they want to uncover what they really need; engage customers for direct product feedback – customers tend to give candid input if approached directly, in informal ways; take the blame for things that go wrong and deliver on commitments.

Tips on motivating teams

These tips can help teams stay motivated and execute better:

Always be shipping something: Shorter product release cycles or milestones help maintain a team's tempo by constantly working towards deliverables.

Hackathons: This is dedicated time for teams to experiment/explore ideas outside scheduled deliverables – e.g. prototypes for new ideas, experimental features, etc.

Daily 15-minute meetings: A daily 15-minute, informal “stand-up” meeting helps teams keep track of daily progress and coordinate activities for the next day.

Better work estimates: Simple techniques can be used to better estimate time required for tasks – e.g. calculating based on a pessimistic and an optimistic estimate, using a simple low/high/medium scale. ☞

Mahesh Ramachandran is a Senior Product Manager at Hewlett Packard, responsible for strategy, planning and marketing for virtualization software on HP servers. He has over 10 years of industry experience spanning virtualization, systems management, compilers

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SVPMA February Event with Eric Krock, Verisign Inc.

Using Great Product Management Process to Achieve Great Results

By Greg Cohen

Erick Krock, Director of Product Management for Broadband Content Services at Verisign spoke at the SVPMA February 7th 2007 event. He addressed a full house on *Using Great Product Management Process to Achieve Great Results*. The techniques Eric developed started at Kontiki and were then carried through their acquisition by Verisign. Eric and his team have achieved over 13 on-time releases to satisfy a demanding customer set, including some of the world's major media companies.

The speaker instantly grabbed the crowd's attention early with a quiz on how to know if you have a process problem. A few of the "problem signs" that received the most laughs because they hit home include: 1) no one in engineering believes the schedule but the company commits to it anyway, 2) wait shouldn't the schedule account for QAing the product on Windows, and 3) there's no specification for the user interface.

Eric identified the roadmap as the first source of problems because it means different things to different people. To some it is an illustration of what is possible while to others it is interpreted as a firm commitment. Mr. Krock suggests eliminating the word road map and switching to a written Plan of Record that shows only what is firmly committed and maintain potential enhancements in a separate "under consideration" list. The plan of record should be one page and easily available such as on an internal wiki.

The next trouble spot is the tension between delivering features and benefits to customers and prospects on the time-frame they want, never missing a commitment, and retaining the flexibility to change the plan at any time. Eric labels this the "Iron Triangle of Sales Needs." To solve this, the speaker suggests a solid product definition and delivery process, that is approved, that everyone understands and that is followed. Further, you have to be committed to performing the due diligence upfront to create the best plan at the time. Once the plan is in place, stick to it, and only change it through the formal change control process with explicit tradeoffs for making the change. Everyone must be conditioned to know that new features are not free; they come at the cost of another feature or time.

Three key processes that Eric introduced at Kontiki are:

- Feature Drop Process
- Product Definition & Development Process
- Change Control Process

These processes are very detailed and involve working with engineering, sales, account management, the executive team,

and customers to solicit input and document the plan. Anytime the plan changes, the same parties need to be informed, understand the impact, and agree to the new plan of record.

The process may largely appear to be a well executed waterfall methodology. But Mr. Krock also pointed out ways they use to remain nimble. The first is to work on the big must have features and evaluate the smaller features on an ongoing basis. This allows iterative decisions and more time to be spent finalizing the feature plan. Where possible, they also use late binding to retain maximum flexibility in finalizing the release.

To schedule releases, the engineering schedule becomes the internal target date to track against and commit dates to customers include a 30% buffer for the unexpected. Adding 30% to the schedule may seem like padding, but is done with complete transparency. This has allowed the team to never miss a customer commit date while also not providing excess buffer.

Ultimately good process saves more effort than it consumes, prevents more conflict than it creates, surfaces issues sooner, and improves satisfaction of customers and employees alike. ☿

Greg Cohen is the Director of Business Development and Principal Consultant at the 280 Group and on the board of the Silicon Valley Product Management Association. He has over ten years of product management and marketing experience with a focus on application services specifically with spend analysis, business analytics, and contract management.

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BOOK REVIEW

In Search of Stupidity: Over 20 Years of High-Tech Marketing Disasters

Second Edition by Merrill R. Chapman

Review by Brian Lawley

We first reviewed this book back in 2004 shortly after it was first released. The title (and the content) are a play on the famous book by Tom Peters called "In Search of Excellence", but rather than giving examples of excellence it tells the legendary stories of tech companies that have made big mistakes. Covering everything from the early operating system wars to consumer product such as the ipod, this book is packed full of brilliantly stupid blunders that have caused companies grief, and in many cases cost them billions of dollars in revenue and lost market share.

The new edition includes additional content that is particularly fun and insightful, such as the famous Google privacy press debacle and the Salesforce.com marketing campaign that offended the Dali Llama from Tibet. I also particularly enjoyed the chapter on avoiding stupidity, especially the section called "Never Trust (or Hire) Anyone Over Thirty". There is also an interesting interview with Joel Spolsky of www.joelonsoftware.com fame.

In Search of Stupidity is an entertaining and easy book to read. If you are in high-tech this is a must-read - reading it and understanding the blunders that have occurred just might help you avoid committing an un-reversible career-killing move. We give this book 5 out of 5 stars.

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some secrets effective facilitators use that will help you make your meetings masterful.

The Secret of Preparation

A little preparation can transform your meetings from a dreaded chore to a useful tool, and the first step to doing that is to identify your goal.

What do you want out of this meeting? What do your attendees want? Before you can go any further you must figure this out. You are not meeting for meeting's sake. You are meeting to accomplish goals. A meeting should be held because you wish to do something-communicate information, brainstorm ideas, or solve a problem. Facilitators should know why the meeting is being held and what they hope to accomplish in the course of the meeting. Without an objective, meetings can meander off course.

The swiftest way to accomplish a goal is to map out the steps required to achieve it. Preparation before a meeting can save time during it. Circulate a solid agenda in advance so that participants can prepare to address the topics that will be covered in the meeting. An agenda ensures participants will bring all required materials to the meeting and will stay on topic. Without an agenda important issues can be overlooked, and topics unrelated to the task at hand can use up valuable time.

The Secret of Starting - Start with a Bang

How you start a facilitated meeting is critical to its overall success. Conventional wisdom states that a good meeting should start with an agenda. The reason typically given is that the agenda answers the question, "What are we going to do?"

Smart facilitators, however, know that participants in a facilitated session need several questions answered before the agenda is discussed:

- Why are we having this meeting?
- What do we need to have accomplished when we are done?
- What is my role in the decision making?
- Why should I invest my time in this meeting?

Smart facilitators answer these questions and more in the first fifteen minutes of a meeting. The opening sets the tone, pace and expectations for the rest of the day. Your opening words should do four key things: inform, excite, empower, and involve (IEEI).

• **Inform** the participants about the overall purpose of the meeting by discussing the objectives and deliverables.

• **Excite** the participants about the process by giving them a clear vision of the overall result to be achieved and how this will benefit them.

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- **Empower** the participants by discussing the important role each person plays in the process, the reason they were selected or the authority that has been given to them by being a part of this particular meeting.

- **Involve** the participants as early as possible by identifying their personal objectives, the issues that must be covered, the challenges that must be overcome or some other topic that contributes to the overall goal of the meeting.

The Secret of Focusing

How do you focus the group and keep them focused? How do you prevent the group from going off on long, unproductive detours? Make each agenda item a FIRST CLASS item:

- Focus the participants by providing an explanation of how the agenda item furthers the meeting's purpose.
- Instruct the participants by providing clear and concise directions on how the agenda item will be executed.
- Record the appropriate information gathered during the meeting.
- Step the participants through the agenda item, using the appropriate information gathering processes.
- Track time to ensure that the participants are using it appropriately.
- Control and resolve any dysfunctional behavior quickly and effectively.
- Listen for off-topic discussions, and redirect these to a parking board to be discussed later.
- Address disagreements or conflicts that emerge.
- Seek all opinions and invite people to share their views.
- Summarize the results.

The Secret of Closing a Meeting

Meetings frequently accelerate in the latter stages because everyone wants out, but a quick recap at the end of a meeting is an important part of good facilitation. If you want everyone to walk out of the meeting knowing exactly what they're supposed to do, close it with a five-minute synthesis report that reviews the major points of the meeting. When a meeting ends, participants should be able to answer the following:

- What did we accomplish?
- What decisions did we make?
- What can we tell others about the meeting?
- How will the meeting be documented?
- What's going to happen when we leave this room?
- Who is responsible for making it happen?

- How will we know that it has happened?
- When do we come back together?
- What will we do when we come back together?

The real joy of doing a recap at the end of a meeting is realizing how many extraneous meetings you won't need in the future. By taking the time to do a synthesis report and clarifying potential outcomes, next steps, and who is responsible for each one, you minimize your number of follow-up meetings. The meetings you do need will now be meetings that are goal oriented and productive; they will be meetings that succeed and do not disappoint.

By preparing well for your meetings, starting them off with a bang, keeping them focused and closing each with a synthesis report you will make all of your meetings masterful and well worth the time.

Meeting adjourned!

⌘

Kristi Royse is a nationally recognized speaker, facilitator, management consultant and trainer with over 20 years of experience. You can learn more at www.klrconsulting.com

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