



Keyword: Desired Outcomes

The Golden Key to Meeting Success

by Kevin Eikenberry

We all attend many meetings. I'm sure you have been to some great meetings and some poor ones. Unfortunately for everyone I've ever talked to, the number of poor ones far outweighs the number of great ones.

The fact is most meetings are too long, too unfocused, too frustrating and too unproductive.

And yet meetings are a valuable way to gain collective understanding, buy-in, agreement and consensus. They help us find better solutions and create cooperation, collaboration, collegueship and community.

Since meetings are necessary and can lead to important results, we need to figure out how to make more of them successful. I have helped and watched organizations create more effective meetings by doing several things; including teaching people how to use some basic roles, setting some expectations around meeting effectiveness, providing specific tools for people to use, improving the skills of those facilitating the meetings, and many more things.

Each of these things has a positive impact on meeting effectiveness and productivity. None of them individually has a more positive impact than one key - what I call the Golden Key - to meeting success.

The Golden Key

The Golden Key is determining the desired outcome(s) for the meeting.

Think about it. If you are going to have a meeting and invite 2 or more (often many more) people to join you, shouldn't you be clear on what you want to accomplish?

And shouldn't all of the other people you are inviting be equally clear?

Unfortunately, all too often this isn't the case, and this lack of clear focus on the end goal leads to inefficiency and frustration.



The Golden Key to Meeting Success (continued)

Planning Your Meeting

Once you have determined that a meeting is needed, you need to determine the desired outcome(s) for your meeting. Do that by asking yourself questions like:

- What do I want to leave the meeting with?
- What will describe a completely successful meeting?

Or more directly,

What is the desired outcome of this meeting?

There may be just one, or for a longer or more complex meeting there may be several. Get down these ideas down on a piece of paper or on your computer screen. Then, take the time to craft these ideas into very specific noun/verb, past tense statements, like:

- Budget reviewed.
- Options identified.
- Decision made.
- Next step determined.
- Action plan finalized.

You get the idea.

Once you have written your desired outcome statement(s) you can include them with whatever agenda format you use and communicate these to everyone who will be attending the meeting.

If you haven't done this planning before the meeting starts, determining these desired outcomes is the first order of business for your meeting.

How Does The Golden Key Unlock Better Meetings?

Desired outcomes provide focus and clarity. By giving everyone a common understanding of what the meeting will accomplish (rather than the "topics" that will be "covered"), you will experience more effectiveness, fewer side conversation and fewer personal agendas.

It is as simple as giving people a common goal. When they have the common goal, progress will be much faster - and more often within the planned timeline for the meeting.

The value of stating them in noun/verb past tense form is to make them as free of ambiguity as possible, and when the statements are written this way, it is clear when the



The Golden Key to Meeting Success (continued)

objective has been met. (How many times have you been in a meeting discussing a topic that goes longer than most want or need it to because one person still has something to say about that topic? With a clear outcome stated, this situation can be largely avoided.)

Meetings are complex, populated by complex human beings. Because this is true, no single thing will make every meeting perfect (or even close). Having said that, the single best thing you can do to ensure more successful meetings is to state the outcomes you want to achieve before the meeting starts.

That is why desired outcomes are the Golden Key. They will unlock the door to greater productivity, less frustration and more enjoyment from the collaboration that meetings are supposed to provide.



Kevin Eikenberry is a bestselling author, consultant, trainer, speaker, coach, leader, learner, husband and father. He is the Chief Potential Officer of the Kevin Eikenberry Group (www.KEIKENBERRY.COM) and the Creator of the Remarkable Leadership Learning System (www.REMARKABLE-LEADERSHIP.COM), both of which are dedicated to life-long learning and helping Clients unleash their remarkable potential. Interested in becoming the remarkable leader you were born to be? Go to www.REMARKABLE-LEADERSHIP.COM today!
