

Five Ways to FLIP Your Meeting

The essence of the “flip” is to do what we usually do *AT* the meeting either before or after instead - and do what we usually do *OUTSIDE* the meeting during the meeting itself. Currently we use up the bulk of our meeting time on sub-standard methods of sharing “background” material and leave ourselves too little time to dig in collaboratively on work that benefits from high levels of engagement. Here are five things you can do to flip your meeting:

1. Pull v. push

The excuse we use for subjecting meeting participants to stultifying presentations with and without (usually bad) slide decks is that nobody ever does their homework before the meeting. Duh! I'd rather watch a Ted Talk! So would everybody else. If you think there's something people really need to know ahead of time, find a way to do it in an accessible, entertaining, memorable way. Make a short video. Create a FAQ. Synthesize a key idea in the form of a wicked question. The most valuable thing to do before a meeting is to start a conversation worth continuing!

2. Design for the work, not the information

Our repertoire of meeting designs has been pathetically limited to canned reports, serial updates, Q&A, and general discussion. But those processes mostly offer different ways to tell people stuff and talk about what needs to happen later, after the meeting. How about using the meeting time for participants to get something done? There are dozens of powerful methods designed to engage participants in processes that allow them to move the ball on projects, decisions, and changes - before everyone splits up to go “back” to their own space. In a flipped meeting, do some of the work in real time while you have the advantage of having people together where they can really grapple with complex ideas.

group jazz



3. Start with the end in mind

We all know it's bad to go out with a whimper rather than a bang. But it's even worse to drift into a meeting with a limp start. Most people are arriving from another meeting, another phone call, lunch or an encounter in the hall and their attention is usually still back there. Find a way to get everyone fully present and ready to engage in *this* meeting. My favorite strategy is to start with a minute of silence and invite folks to think about a question like, "What's the question you need answered, decision we need to make, conversation we need to have right now in order for you to feel this meeting was worth your time?"

4. Engage the unusual suspects

A lot of meetings waste time because the people who actually know what's going on and what needs to happen next aren't there for one reason or another. We spend too much time planning what other people are supposed to do. If you find that you're talking about what "they" need to do or how we're going to figure out how to get "them" to get on board it's time to STOP. Table the discussion until you can figure out how to get "them" into the conversation. In a flipped meeting the participants are the people who can ACT on the problem at hand. "Nothing about me without me" is a good mantra for flipped meetings.

5. Go there

Meet where the action is. Flip the idea of "retreating" from the fray and have conversations about what's going on where it's actually going on! Many conference rooms are poorly designed for thinking and working (I have a pet peeve about windowless rooms where the table is too big to move around and it smells like the deli lunch from yesterday's meeting). Meet where others can see you and decide to join in if they feel like it. Meet on somebody else's turf. Meet where you can make something together.

group jazz

