



# CUTTINGS...

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Welcome to the latest edition of Cuttings - #113.

The United Kingdom is still united, I didn't need my passport to get back from a recent trip to Scotland, and all of the prophesies of doom and destruction in the event of a YES vote for Scottish independence will not be tested out in realist. Back to 'normality' and another season of learning and development!

I hope that thus collection of the recent press on the subjects proves to be interesting and stimulating.

Enjoy...

*Geof Cox*

## Better Meetings

Dick and Emily Axelrod, a husband-and-wife team specialising in organisational development, have a new book written for executives whose meetings fell into the category of needing improvement. And that probably means the vast majority of the estimated 11 million meetings held daily in the United States, not to mention those in the rest of the world. Most are mind-numbing, energy-sapping encounters that start late, carry on too long and are a major waste of time and money.

Some tips from the book for more productive meetings:

### Make meeting attendance voluntary

The idea is borrowed from Eric Lindblad, now a vice president at Boeing and general manager of its 747 program, who has been using voluntary meeting attendance in all his working at Boeing. He wanted people to be there not because of threat or politics but because they wanted to be there. And he figured that if people didn't show up for his meetings, the meetings needed to be either cancelled or improved.

### Decide if you need a meeting

Lindblad is also responsible for a couple of basic criteria for deciding on whether to hold a meeting:

## In this edition

**Better Meetings** Dick and Emily Axelrod share some insights for more productive meetings

**The Importance of Storytelling** Using metaphor and story is an ancient approach, still relevant for engaging people in change and cultural norms.

**Low Trust in Leaders** Research from Forum suggests there is a global trust gap between employees and leaders

**Public Course programme** courses in Europe and Malaysia for 2014.

And a collection of **Snippets** to provoke your thinking and reflecting.

## Snippets

*A collection of thought provokers and quotations...*

"If you look at the way we meet in organisations and communities across the country, you see a lot of presenters, a lot of podiums, and a lot of passive audiences. This reflects our naiveté in how to bring people together."

*Peter Block*

"No pessimist ever discovered the secrets of the stars, or sailed to an uncharted land, or opened a new heaven to the human spirit."

*Helen Keller*

"It is never too late to be what you might have been."

*George Eliot*

- Is there a need to share information?
- Does the information that needs to be shared require dialogue?

If the answer is 'yes' to both - hold a meeting. Otherwise share the information in a more effective way.

### Decide who should be there

Another Lindblad idea - attendance at meetings is limited attendance to people who:

1. Had information or knowledge to share
2. Had decision-making authority
3. Were vital to the issue at hand

### Meetings are like video games

Meetings use the same principles as designing video games. In order to engage people, both meetings and video games must have a clear and meaningful purpose. There has to be a challenge—kind of a sweet spot beyond your grasp, but not so far away that it's impossible to reach. There needs to be autonomy; the players must feel like they can influence outcomes. There needs to be an opportunity to learn something. And there needs to be feedback, so you know how well you're doing.

These five factors—*purpose, challenge, autonomy, learning, and feedback*—provide a way of thinking about a meeting that goes beyond the agenda and mechanics, like how you set up the room.

### A six stage meeting process

The order, shape, and flow of a productive meeting experience follows six stages:

1. **welcome** people
2. then **connect** them to one another and the task.
3. help them **discover** the way things are,
4. **elicit their dreams** about what could be.
5. help them come to a **decision** about what should be done and ensure that everyone is clear about the decisions reached and who is going to do what.
6. finally, you **attend to the end** by reviewing the decisions reached, identifying next steps, and reviewing how you worked together.

### Keep it relevant

Icebreakers can be fun, but what do they have anything to do with what you're there for? There should always be a clear line-of-sight connection between the purpose of the meeting and what you're asking people to talk about, otherwise you are wasting time and energy

### Leaders define the decisions to be made in meetings and who has the authority to make them before the meeting starts.

One thing that gets people really angry is thinking that they're part of a participative process and then finding out that the decision has already been made. So if, as a leader, you're clear on the decision process—and you stick to it—then people know the rules of the game and they know where to put their energy.

"Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished."

*Lao Tzu*

"Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all."

*Aristotle*

"Nothing will work unless you do."

*Maya Angelou*

"The longer we dwell on our misfortunes, the greater is their power to harm us."

*Voltaire*

"If you aren't having fun you must be doing it wrong"

*Groucho Marx*

"Stop beating people with carrots"

*Ken Blanchard*

"If you're the smartest one in the room, you're in the wrong room."

*Richard Tirrendi*

"How very little can be done under the spirit of fear."

*Florence Nightingale*

"Hatred does not cease by hatred, but only by love. This is the eternal rule."

*Gautama Buddha*

"There comes a point when a dream becomes reality and reality becomes a dream."

*Frances Farmer*

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

*Winston Churchill*

"Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought."

*Albert Szent-Gyorgyi*

"Keep your eyes on the stars, and your feet on the ground."

### Three things to end meetings

1. Review the decisions—how often have you left a meeting thinking that you should do one thing, and somebody else thinks you should do another thing?
2. Identify the next step. You don't have to have the whole thing laid out, but everyone needs a clear understanding of what's going to happen next.
3. Do a quick review of the meeting itself—what worked and what didn't work; how could you improve the meeting?

### Use a facilitator

Leaders get into real difficulty trying to simultaneously lead and facilitate meetings where they've got content input. You don't have to have a professional facilitator, you can give the job of discussion leader to someone else in the group, even temporarily at points where you've got some clear inputs to make. It's difficult to be offering input and trying to facilitate the group's process at the same time without seeming manipulative.

### USEFUL LINKS

Read an interview with the Alexrods in *Strategies+Business*. [Click here](#)

### Let's Stop Meeting Like This: Tools to Save Time and Get More Done

Alexrod et al, Berrett-Koehler, 2014 Order the book from [Amazon](#)

For New Directions consultancy and training services [Click here](#)

## The Importance of Storytelling

An interesting post recently by Erica Sosna, Leadership Consultant and Coach at BlessingWhite, shared some thoughts on the importance of storytelling in engaging people with change.

Since ancient times, we have been telling stories to inform and reinforce culture and to help people understand what is expected. They have always been a powerful and compelling way to provide meaning and to transfer knowledge and information in a memorable way. Even adults are transported into an alternative frame of mind through listening to a story.

BlessingWhite and others have shown in their research that clear vision and purpose is fundamental to engagement and releasing the discretionary effort we all have to take positive action to move the organisation forward. The clearer this line of sight, the more effective individuals are. The more your audience understands about the story of the business and the role they play in creating an ending to the tale, the more committed they are to making a difference.

### How to tell your story

Theodore Roosevelt

"A tree is known by its fruit; a man by his deeds. A good deed is never lost; he who sows courtesy reaps friendship, and he who plants kindness gathers love."

St. Basil

*"The more we nourish our internal world, the more powerful we grow in the external world."*

Susan L. Taylor

"A good heart is better than all the heads in the world."

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

"There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it."

Edith Wharton

"One starts an action simply because one must do something."

T.S. Eliot

## Low Trust in Leaders

Forum have recently conducted some global research into trust in organisations. While they found that most leaders gave building trust a high priority (over 95% rated it as "great" or "very great" in importance) two out of three employees rated trust in their leaders moderate at best and less than 10% reported very high levels of trust.

Establishing trust is critical to business success. Trust sets the foundation for high performance by creating an environment in which employees are willing to take risks, learn continuously, support and motivate each other and strive to meet challenging business goals.

**So, how is trust lost?** The most commonly cited mistake was being

Rather than just recite facts and data, here are some tips from Erica to bring your story to life.

1. Be authentic. Speak from the heart, share your values and beliefs. In order to win hearts and minds, leaders need to be vulnerable, authentic and truthful.

2. Use metaphor. Metaphors help to bridge the gap between the known and the unknown. They provide an image that people can see, and one where the listeners can see themselves in the metaphor. (If you have difficulty thinking beyond facts and figures, Nick Owen has written a couple of great reference books: *The Magic of Metaphor*, and *More Magic of Metaphor*)

3. Acknowledge the 'counter' view. Not everyone will share the same view about the world as you do or draw the same conclusions. A powerful response to this can be to acknowledge these concerns and anxieties and build them into the story.

4. Respect and know your audience. Great leaders create a shared sense of belonging while also working to align their community behind certain core truths and principles. When you tell your story, be sure to give some thought to the needs of the audience to understand the context and their part in it.

## USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the full post from BlessingWhite.

[Click here](#) to buy the Nick Owen 'Metaphor' books from Amazon

New Directions uses storytelling in its consultancy and training in employee engagement and strategic change. [Click here](#) to access information from the website about our workshops and consultancy services.

inconsistent (almost 1/3 of all responses), followed by lying or lacking transparency, lacking leadership skills, taking undue credit or passing blame, talking behind employees' backs, not "walking the talk", and having generally poor communication and interpersonal skills.

**How to build trust.** Leaders can close the "trust gap" by following the advice of their employees: Act with Integrity - be open and transparent; Listen and demonstrate caring; Walk the talk; Demonstrate trust and empower; Recognise hard work; Provide clear and consistent messages and vision; Give constructive feedback and coaching.

These trust building tips are closely correlated to building employee engagement, so there is a double benefit to be achieved by leaders who adopt these best practices.

## USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to download the report.

New Directions provides consultancy in organisation development and employee engagement. [Click here](#) to find out about our consultancy services.

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New Directions runs a number of public training programmes in association with partners. Click on the date to reserve a place or get more information direct from the delivery partner.

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A 2 day course in positive influencing run in association with Frost & Sullivan and with Frank Garten BV.

**Netherlands 27-28 October**

**London 10-11 November**

## Getting Results Without Authority (5 day)

A new 5 day extended version run in association with Synergy Group Training.

**Malaysia 15-19 December**

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An intensive 5 day workshop in strategic management for the Oil and Gas industry run with our partners Strategies for Training and petroEDGE.

**Kuala Lumpur 27-31 October**

## **Human Competency and Capability Development**

A 4 day course in strategic human resource management run in association with Strategies for Training and petroEDGE and tailored for the oil and gas sector.

**Kuala Lumpur November 3-6**

## **Results Through People**

A 5 day course on leadership through performance management run through our partners Synergy Group Training.

**Kuala Lumpur 8-12 December**

### **USEFUL LINKS**

**New Directions consultancy and training services**

New Directions is a partner in the European consulting organisation *Learning Consortium* who are the providers of one of the leading personal development courses in interpersonal skills, *Focus on Influence*.

### **USEFUL LINKS**

**Past issues of Cuttings**

**New Directions website**

**Getting Results Without Authority**

**Learning Consortium website**

**Focus on Influence**

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