Recommendations for Departmental Meetings

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To: Mangement

Subject: Meeting problems

From: Brad Frazier

       The meetings for my department are scarce and occur about every other month. Not only does the department not have a lot of meetings, but they also only last about one hour. When meetings do happen they are fast paced and provide very little substance. Ironically, my department might actually benefit from having more meetings per month. The quality of my department's meetings might actually increase if there was not a long list of topics to discuss where each topic only gets a couple minutes of discussion and consideration.

       The purpose of this memo is to determine how to increase the efficiency of the department's meetings. Meetings in this department are held about every two months and last no longer than one hour in duration. Though, this approach allows employees' schedules to not be interrupted, it does however, create meetings that contain too many topics that do not allow for adequate discussion time resulting in poor decisions being made.

       The inefficiency of the meetings are reflected in the minutes kept for each one. The minutes show that very little is ever discussed or decided during the meetings, even though, there are anywhere between 10-15 items to discuss per meeting. During the last meeting, that was composed of 6 employees, we had to rush through each topic to ensure that the meeting ended in one hour. The decisions that were made during the meeting

must not have been well thought out because the decisions made during the meeting were not the ones that were put into action.

Having less than one meeting per month is not economical if the meetings result in poor decisions. The department does not have very many direct employees, so currently the amount of money wasted each year is around $1,000. That amount is much less than most departments, but it could be even less if the meetings that were conducted allowed for more time to discuss the topics on the agenda. This can only happen if the amount of meetings are increased to one per month which will reduce the number of agenda items, or if the meetings are removed altogether and replaced with a discussion board that can be accessed anytime during the day by the employees.

<u>**Overview of the Situation**</u>

The purpose of our department's meetings are being undermined by overbooked agendas trying to be accomplished during short, sporadic meetings. For the employees to fully discuss and think through each item on a meeting agenda they require more time than what the current meetings allow for. Increasing the number of meetings conducted in each month, or increasing the length of each meeting will allow the employees to have the time to thoroughly think through each issue and develop quality ideas.

Overbooked Agendas

During our meetings we need to be able to focus on a few key issues rather than the overbooked agendas that regularly accompany our meetings. In the *CPA Journal,* an article published by Dom Cingoranelli (2001), introduces the importance of how it is counterproductive for managers to try to accomplish too much in a single meeting (p. 58). Devoting more time to each issue will resolve this problem.

Thinning out the agenda will allow for more time to be spent on each issue. More time devoted to each issue will result in more productive meetings and ideas. As Cingoranelli also points out, "[m]any managers underestimate the amount of time required to effectively deal with an issue" (p. 58).   Yet, increasing the length of time of each meeting too much will also be counterproductive. The length of the meeting needs to allot the appropriate amount of time for the issues being discussed. Conducting meetings during slower times of the day will allow for the employees to have more time to discuss complex issues. Increasing the number of meetings or the length of them will be more difficult to schedule around each employee's work day, but can be achieved with careful planning.

Recommendation

To increase the productivity of the meetings the meetings will have to be extended in occurrence and in length. An email will need to be sent out to each employee that requires them to provide the days and times that will be most convenient for them to meet. A meeting schedule will most likely be able to be made based on this alone, but if

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there are too many scheduling conflicts than it would be more beneficial to introduce conference calls into the possibilities of increasing employee attendance.

Increasing the amount of productive meetings will inevitably save the department money. This money should first be utilized to further increase the productivity of our meetings by increasing the amount of technology available to conduct meetings. Video conferencing would be a good technology to introduce during the meetings to ensure that every employee can participate even if they are not on site. Implementing technology to the department's business meetings will also benefit employees who are unable to travel to the meeting. According to Michael W. Toffel and Arpad Horvath (2004), during times of financial strain, a company should use video conferencing to save time and money Beyond introducing new technology, the saved money could than be put into investments for the department to ensure an increase in financial stability (p. 2961).

Reference

Cingoranelli, Dom. "Successful Meetings." *CPA Journal*. 71 (2001): 58-59. *EBSCO*.

Horvath, Arpad., Toffel, Michael. (2004). Environmental Implications of Wireless

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