

Avoiding Repeat Meetings

SIMPLE SOLUTIONS FOR MOVING FORWARD

By: Dr. Jill Bella

It was over two decades ago, yet it seems like yesterday. I was meeting with my colleagues about an exciting new venture. We were going to develop a playgroup for children and their families. We were meeting to discuss the logistics. This was our first planning meeting and it was two hours long. We began by brainstorming lots of ideas: purpose, length of the playgroup, day of the week, time of day, information to be shared, facilitator schedule, roles and responsibilities, resources, etcetera. The room was filled with energy as we bounced around ideas. We thought through every option. Next, we discussed advantages and disadvantages of the options which quickly led to critiquing and negating ideas. We went round-and-round, finally landing on a plan. And, by the end of our meeting we were even more excited than when we began.

Two weeks later we gathered together again to proceed with our playgroup plans. However, as we began our meeting it was clear that we had all forgotten most of the final decisions we had made at the previous meeting, and no one had moved forward to put our plans into action. I became more and more frustrated as we ultimately repeated our first meeting all over again. Looking back, this could have easily been avoided by following two practices.

- 1. Recording Meeting Minutes.** If someone had recorded minutes from the meeting we would have had a record of our final decisions and the context and rationale behind them. This would have informed the next meeting agenda. Had we done this, we could have reviewed the minutes and completed any assigned tasks prior to the next meeting, making us more prepared to get started on the next phase of our planning.
- 2. Creating an Action Plan.** An action plan can be informal or formal and involves determining the course of action to be taken. Formal action plans often include:
 - identifying a goal,
 - specifying objectives to meet that goal,
 - determining the people, time, and resources needed, and
 - establishing evaluation checkpoints.

Action plans may seem time consuming, yet they can be done relatively quickly, and in the long run they are likely to save you time. Consider how much time my team wasted during the first meeting, making decisions that went nowhere and then, spending time rehashing our discussion during the second meeting. Having an action plan would have allowed us to start our conversation where it had ended, rather than revisit it all over again.

If you have suffered from “Repeat Meetings” you may want to consider recording minutes and creating an action plan to guide the planning process. Action plans help ensure your objectives align with your goal and

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can serve as a guide for assigning tasks and thinking about all the possible resources to assist in your endeavor. Recording minutes and creating an action plan are simple solutions to keep your team moving forward in accomplishing tasks.

A sample action plan can be found here:

<https://mccormickcenter.nlu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Hndt-Action-Plan-3rd-Ed-BLANK-Brnd.pdf>

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