



# WPO SPARK KIT: Effective Meetings

A curated facilitator kit for WPO Chairs and members

## HOW TO USE THIS SPARK KIT

This kit offers you an easy way to engage in a group discussion on the topic of **Effective Meetings – Beyond the Basics**. To get started, we recommend the following steps:

- Review the recommended reading list in the **Spark Resource Summary** chart below.
- Click through the links to see complete articles and videos in Spark, OR simply read the [Executive Summary and Key Points](#) section for quick reference.
- Prepare to facilitate your discussion using the prompting questions & tips suggested on page 3.

## TOPIC OUTLINE

Up your meetings game! Go beyond the basics of face-to-face, hybrid and virtual meetings with innovative ideas and tips to increase impact and improve engagement.

## SPARK RESOURCE SUMMARY

The chart below contains a carefully curated selection of Spark content to assist you in leading your discussion. You are encouraged to read the complete articles. However, for your convenience, we've also provided **Executive Summaries and Key Points** on the subsequent pages to simplify your preparation.

SPARK RESOURCE TITLE	TIME COMMITMENT
1. <u><a href="#">How to Effectively Build Pre-Work into Meetings</a></u>	Article - 5 min read
2. <u><a href="#">4 Distractions that Derail Meetings - and How to Handle Them</a></u>	Article - 6 min read
3. <u><a href="#">What It Takes to Run a Great Hybrid Meeting</a></u>	Article - 7 min read
4. <u><a href="#">When It's Worth Having a Meeting Before Your Meeting</a></u>	Article - 4 min read
5. <u><a href="#">Use Your Staff Meeting for Peer-to-Peer Coaching</a></u>	Article - 6 min read
6. <u><a href="#">3 Types of Meetings - and How to Do Each One Well</a></u>	Article - 6 min read



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### **PREPARATION FOR SPARK DISCUSSION**

**WPO Chairs:** Share this entire document with your members ahead of your meeting and encourage them to review content.

**WPO Members:** You're welcome to distribute this within your organization to facilitate your own discussions on this subject. Please keep in mind that a paid Spark subscription is required for your team to access the complete articles; alternatively, they can utilize the provided Executive Summaries if a Subscription is not in place.

### **SCOPE FOR: Effective Meetings, Beyond the Basics**

Meetings are an integral part of day-to-day business operation, but when poorly run they are inefficient time wasters that negatively impact the company. We assume WPO members are strong leaders who appreciate the basics of effective meetings.

This kit shares creative and innovative ideas to move from good meetings to great meetings by ensuring solid pre-work, a clearly defined purpose, and appropriate processes to support the desired meeting outcomes.

Of course, feel free to follow the needs of your group and broaden the discussion as required.

### **LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

- Recognize the impact of a clearly defined meeting purpose on achieving better outcomes.
- Explore the power of building pre-work into meetings for increased productivity.
- Navigate the dynamics of managing successful hybrid and virtual meetings.
- Leverage meetings as a platform to facilitate peer-to-peer coaching, fostering a culture of higher performance.
- Challenge your thinking to shift from 'meetings' to 'gatherings' - Transactional, Relational, and/or Adaptive.



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### **SPARK DISCUSSION: 30 – 90 MINUTES**

Feel free to initiate your discussions with the prompting questions below. Consider adopting a round-table approach where members can share their experiences. You can also kick-off the discussion simply by asking for any key learnings from the Spark materials.

Always encourage participants to share specific examples vs theoretical responses. We tend to learn best from our peers when we hear stories of real-life experiences.

### **PROMPTING QUESTIONS**

- What does a successful meeting look like at your company? What are the key components?
- When do you need a face-to-face meeting vs virtual or hybrid?
- Who are your best meeting leaders and how do you support them?
- When is a 'pre-meeting' needed?
- What role do meetings play in determining your company culture?
- What is your most creative tip for enhancing meetings?

### **DISCUSSION WRAP-UP**

At the end of your group discussion, we recommend requesting key take-aways and commitments from each participant regarding their plans for implementation, along with significant insights gained. Ideally follow-up at the next meeting to check in on progress.

See the note taking table on the final page if you want to capture action items within this document.



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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & KEY POINTS FOR SPARK RESOURCES

(NOTED IN CHART ON PAGE 1)

#### How to Effectively Build Pre-Work into Meetings

##### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The article discusses the importance of incorporating pre-work into meetings to enhance productivity and focus. It addresses common resistance to pre-work and provides insights into how leaders can implement this practice effectively. The key points include:

##### KEY POINTS:

1. **Meeting Efficiency:** Incorporating pre-work into meetings does not necessarily lead to longer meetings. Instead, it makes meetings more focused and productive by ensuring everyone is on the same page from the start.
2. **Purpose-Driven Meetings:** The article emphasizes the role of the meeting leader in creating a thorough and concise pre-work document. This extra effort clarifies the purpose of the meeting, making it a gatekeeper for meaningful gatherings.
3. **Amazon's Approach:** Amazon is cited as an example of a company successfully embracing embedded pre-work. The practice involves reviewing a memo at the beginning of each meeting, creating a context for discussions and ensuring participants are well-prepared. Think about the start of your WPO meetings, where you might allow members dedicated time to prepare for their 3 min update.
4. **Implementation Tips:**
  - a. Break down pre-work into manageable components, considering the preferences of employees.
  - b. Include interactive elements to encourage discussion and engagement.
  - c. Clearly communicate the purpose behind pre-work, emphasizing the goal of enhancing efficiency.
  - d. Encourage pairs to engage with pre-work materials, kickstarting the brainstorming process.
  - e. Consider providing hard copies for those who absorb information better through physical materials.
5. **Conclusion:** Establishing a culture of embedded pre-work communicates a commitment to valuing employees' time, leading to more meaningful and efficient group interactions.



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## 4 Distractions that Derail Meetings - and How to Handle Them

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Effective meetings are crucial for achieving organizational goals, but poorly run meetings can hinder team performance. A significant number of senior managers find meetings unproductive, leading to negative consequences such as lower market share, reduced innovation, and decreased employee engagement. Dysfunctional behaviors, or "GAAS" (Gravity problems, Assumption overload, Annoying negative thoughts, Squirrel chasing), often derail meetings. To ensure productive, efficient, and effective meetings, managers must understand, prevent, and address these behaviors.

### KEY POINTS:

1. **Meeting Challenges:** A substantial percentage of senior managers perceive meetings as unproductive and inefficient. Dysfunctional meeting behaviors are associated with negative outcomes such as lower market share, reduced innovation, and decreased employee engagement.
2. **Dysfunctional Behaviors (GAAS):**
  - a. **Gravity Problems:** Discussing unsolvable challenges diverts attention from solvable issues, leading to frustration.
  - b. **Assumption Overload:** Excessive or unverified assumptions hinder collaboration and decision-making.
  - c. **Annoying Negative Thoughts:** Unproductive thinking patterns impact meeting outcomes, such as all-or-nothing thinking and catastrophizing.
  - d. **Squirrel Chasing:** Difficulty staying focused on the meeting's purpose, introducing unrelated tangents.
3. **Preventing Meeting Derailers:** Enhance meeting focus by clearly defining the meeting's primary objective, reframe goals as inquiry-driven statements, and invite only relevant team members.
4. **Handling Meeting Derailers:**
  - a. **Introduce GAAS Concept:** Familiarize the team with GAAS behaviors using a mental picture of reacting to the smell of gas.
  - b. **Use Humor:** Address dysfunctional behaviors with humor to establish a positive atmosphere, make meetings more enjoyable, and maintain focus.
5. **Positive Example:** Share a positive example of using humor to address squirrel chasing during a meeting, demonstrating how it can keep the team on track while maintaining a lighthearted atmosphere.



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## What It Takes to Run a Great Hybrid Meeting

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As organizations transition to a hybrid work model 'post-COVID', combining both in-person and remote participation, effective hybrid meetings become crucial. This shift requires a careful approach to ensure equal engagement and participation for all attendees, regardless of their location. Drawing from extensive experience in facilitating executive meetings, the authors provide best practices to enhance the effectiveness of hybrid meetings.

### KEY POINTS:

1. **Audio Quality Matters:** While visual aspects are crucial, clear audio is even more critical for remote participants. Ensure high-quality microphones in meeting rooms and consider additional solutions like handheld microphones for in-person participants to avoid last-minute audio issues.
2. **Explore Technological Enhancements:** Investigate technology upgrades to improve face-to-face communication between in-person and remote attendees. Features like [Zoom's Smart Gallery](#) aim to enhance the hybrid meeting experience, and organizations should stay informed about available technology to make meetings more immersive.
3. **Design for Remote Participants:** Continually consider the remote participant perspective when designing meetings. Opt for creative solutions, like using multiple webcams to capture different aspects of the meeting environment, ensuring remote participants feel integral to the discussions.
4. **Give Remote Participants Presence:** Provide remote participants with a physical presence in the room through large monitors showing "life-size" panes of their faces. This enhances their visibility, acceptance, and engagement in the meeting.
5. **Test Technology in Advance:** Avoid disruptions by conducting thorough audio-visual tests before important meetings. Schedule one-on-one dry runs with remote participants to familiarize them with the setup and software features.
6. **Design Meetings Inclusively:** Review meeting activities with a focus on how remote participants will engage. Use digital tools for activities like polls and online whiteboards to ensure remote participants have equal opportunities to participate.
7. **Strong Facilitation is Key:** Appoint a facilitator to manage the complexities of hybrid meetings, ensuring remote participants are actively engaged and their voices are heard. The facilitator should prevent in-person dominance and encourage equal participation.



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## When It's Worth Having a Meeting Before Your Meeting

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The success of meetings on contentious issues often hinges on strategic pre-meetings. These pre-meetings serve as crucial opportunities for information gathering, coalition building, trust-building, and refining arguments. The author highlights the importance of pre-meetings through a scenario where a division leader faces challenges in introducing a strategic change. The key is to talk to the right people, really listen, and frame sticky issues appropriately, to gain buy-in and acceptance before the actual meeting.

### KEY POINTS:

1. **Scenario Overview:** A division leader faces the task of reorienting the strategic focus of their division for a new market. The change involves redistributing parts of the division, leading to potential layoffs. The initial meeting to announce the plan encounters unexpected challenges, resulting in stress and discouragement.
2. **Importance of Pre-Meetings:** Strategic "pre-meetings" are essential for successful meetings on contentious issues. These pre-meetings allow for information gathering, coalition building, trust-building, and refining arguments, ensuring a well-thought-out set of justifications for the proposed changes.
3. **Talk to the Right People:** Identify and engage with individuals directly affected by the decision and those with significant political influence. Understand diverse viewpoints, especially from those with different perspectives, to anticipate objections and incorporate various thinking into proposals.
4. **Really Listen:** During pre-meetings, actively listen to participants' viewpoints, understand their interests, and demonstrate appreciation for their perspectives. Be open, honest, and transparent about potential issues.
5. **Importance of Framing:** Present contentious issues in a way that resonates with individuals, considering their risk tolerance and organizational values. Tailor the framing to align with the person's perspective, whether highlighting incremental change or bold moves for the company.
6. **Political Process and Buy-In:** Pre-meetings play a crucial role in the political process of organizations, facilitating buy-in and acceptance for new ideas. Conducting the right pre-meetings is vital before entering potentially contentious meetings.



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### Use Your Staff Meeting for Peer-to-Peer Coaching

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Coaching is essential for team performance but is often neglected. This article explores a creative peer-to-peer coaching approach during staff meetings as a powerful and underutilized resource. Research indicates that training, coupled with coaching, significantly enhances performance. Leveraging the staff meeting as a platform for peer coaching mirrors sports team practices, fostering collaboration, problem-solving, and collective improvement.

#### KEY POINTS:

1. **Challenges in Managerial Coaching:** Time constraints and organizational changes have made it challenging for managers to dedicate time to coaching employees. However, research underscores the effectiveness of coaching in tandem with training, leading to a substantial performance improvement of 88%.
2. **Leverage Peer-to-Peer Coaching:** Peer-to-peer coaching is presented as an accessible and valuable coaching resource within organizations. Staff meetings, where all team members are present, serve as an ideal platform for peer coaching to enhance team performance.
3. **Analogous to Sports Team Practices:** Drawing parallels with sports team practices, the article suggests viewing staff meetings as opportunities for running 'new plays' and building new habits. The manager, akin to a coach, has the chance to micro-coach the team's movements during staff meetings, fostering collective improvement.
4. **Three Strategies for Effective Peer-to-Peer Coaching:**
  - a. **Shift to Collaborative Problem Solving:** Transform staff meetings from individual report-outs to collaborative problem-solving sessions. Predefine topics, distribute topic descriptions, and encourage small group debates to generate diverse input.
  - b. **Facilitate Open 360-Degree Reviews:** Implement periodic open 360-degree reviews where team members provide honest and constructive feedback to peers. Structured feedback sessions build respect, safety, and encourage input from team members.
  - c. **Assign Homework with Accountability:** Each team member identifies a behavior to work on and pairs up with another member for peer coaching between meetings. Leaders ensure the accountability of offline peer coaching and track progress.





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5. **Cultivate a Culture of Candor:** Encourage open communication and candor in workplace interactions. Peer-to-peer feedback, conducted in a formal yet supportive manner, contributes to improved decision-making and team performance.

### 3 Types of Meetings - and How to Do Each One Well

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The traditional approach to meetings has been disrupted, particularly with the shift to online work in 2020. And the 'return to the office' hasn't addressed the challenges. Our focus should move beyond when and where meetings occur, emphasizing the *why* and letting that dictate logistics. This perspective introduces three types of gatherings—transactional, relational, and adaptive—and outlines the conditions for their success in both distributed and hybrid environments.

#### KEY POINTS:

1. **Transactional Gatherings - Purpose:** Getting things done.
  - a. **Conditions for Success:**
    - i. Shared working documents using cloud-based tools.
    - ii. Screen parity for hybrid meetings.
    - iii. Host actively looking for signals of participation.
2. **Relational Gatherings - Purpose:** Strengthening connections.
  - a. **Conditions for Success:**
    - i. Clear objectives, avoiding generic gatherings.
    - ii. Structured activities for reflection and sharing.
    - iii. Mix of people across functions, levels, or locations.
3. **Adaptive Gatherings - Purpose:** Addressing complex or sensitive topics.
  - a. **Conditions for Success:**
    - i. A malleable, distinct environment.
    - ii. A sense of safety, respecting individual preferences.
    - iii. Release valves to dissolve tensions during discussions.



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4. **Combining Gatherings: Different gatherings may have overlapping needs.**
  - a. **Example:** An offsite combining relationship building, strategic discussions, and work tasks. Adjust conditions for each type of activity within the combined gathering.
5. **Guiding Questions:**
  - a. Always ask why a meeting is happening and what the goals are.
  - b. Tailor conditions to meet the specific needs of the gathering.
  - c. Recognize that not all gatherings fit neatly into one category.



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### **CAPTURING COMMITMENTS & KEY LEARNINGS**

<b>Who</b>	<b>Commitment / Action</b>	<b>Insights / Learning</b>
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