



Becoming a Meeting Wizard

by Shirley Fine Lee

Believe it or not – a discussion on the topic of meeting management can be exciting, lively, and enthusiastic. This is what the [Coaches and Consultants SIG](#) found out in the April 17th meeting, where it was a pleasure to lead a discussion on how to improve meetings. Why was this meeting a good place to be on a rainy Tuesday night? Because all the participants were open to new ideas and ready for improvement since we all have to attend so many meetings every week.

First, we started by evaluating a recent meeting each person had attended that they felt did not go well. This allowed us to see where some weaknesses or barriers to good meeting are. We used the Meeting Evaluation format from the book ["R.A!R.A! A Meeting Wizard's Approach"](#) page 54 (also available in 8.5 x 11 as a free form at www.ShirleyFineLee.com). We discussed the process-related questions which scored low. Then we placed the averages of their meeting evaluation scores on the chart to the right. Afterwards, we discussed some reasons why we are willing to accept a meeting grade of 20, 40, or 60 in business when we would accept a report card from one of their children with a grade that low. The general

Shocking Meeting Statistics

- Koontz said "Most managers spend up to 10 hours a week in meetings, and 90% say more than half that time is wasted."
- IT survey of why projects fail showed 75% due to deadlines missed.
- 60% of meeting attendees take notes to appear as if they are listening.
- 63% of the time, typical meetings in America do not have prepared agendas.
- According to The Facilitator newsletter, using a skilled facilitator increases the productivity of a project by 25%.



Shirley facilitates C&C SIG discussion. Participants were Dennie, Jeff, David, Bob, Al, Tracy, Debbie, Dave, Patricia, Julie.

response was that we are conditioned to accept bad meetings because that is what we have gotten used to - it has become the norm.

Then we moved to a very interactive 30-minute discussion to see how we could move our meetings from ineffective (scores below 40) through average (scores between 40 and 60) and then make them both better and more effective (scores above 60). During the discussion, the group was challenged to find the answers to the following questions on their worksheet:

What does the R.A!R.A! acronym stand for?

- Roles (the main 5 _r's)
- Agenda (using 3 T's)
- Records (during and after)
- Actions (using 3 W's)

What do you feel is an important element of R.A!R.A! and why?

Every component of the R.A!R.A! approach was chosen by someone with many great comments related to clarifying roles, getting participation, preventing take-over, controlling conflict, staying on-track, using open/close components, focusing group, having an optional open time, using standard formats, complementing with technology, and assuring follow-through.

How can R.A!R.A! be used for coaching and consulting? What is your take-away from today?

The group was challenged to come up with 2-3 ideas for how they can use R.A!R.A! with customers and co-workers and put that on their worksheet to do during the next two weeks. Then in closing, we shared some key things we learned from discussing the R.A!R.A! approach to meetings. Some things shared included: records are more important than most people think, always having an agenda structures meeting, don't just assign actions – set deadlines, better understanding of the extra responsibility of facilitator verses meeting leader.

We ended the meeting with a Briefing Evaluation to score the presentation (another R.A!R.A! form). Overall, the presenter and topic scored excellent. The facilities and equipment received an above-average.

About the Author: Shirley Fine Lee is the author of "R.A!R.A! A Meeting Wizard's Approach", which is a quick guide to planning and conducting meetings so that they are as productive, effectual, and smoothly run as possible. She has considerable training and expertise in leading effective meetings herself, as well as training others within the corporate world to be able to do the same. Shirley has worked as a training and development specialist since 1986, and an independent consultant since 2000. She has extensive experience helping organizations with their team building, training development, meeting facilitation, presentation delivery, and other communication needs. Shirley may be contacted via phone 214-457-5736 or email slee@shirleyfinelee.com.