

CASE 11: UNNECESSARY MEETING SYNDROME

The Story

Elaine Crawford reached over to her in-basket to pull out yet another Notice of Meeting. It went like this:

Notice of Meeting
Agenda for Weekly Mid-Managers Meeting (MMM)
8:30 to 11:30

1. Introduction of new employees, Systems and Procedures Division
2. Briefing on new Company Procedure on Claims Management
3. Regional Report, Maritime Region
4. Decision Making: Product introduction to Central Region
5. Company benefit package changes
6. Discussion on new company motto
7. Report from quarterly MIS

Elaine was really fed up with all the meetings she had to attend. Not only did she have to attend the weekly MMM but also, her own supervisory meeting, the Report to Senior Management meeting and two committee meetings, all in the space of a week. She felt very strongly as others did as well that there had to be a better way.

The Intervention

Strange affliction, meeting-itis...It causes a great deal of stress without producing many results. Elaine's organization needs a Meeting Protocol that would:

- Provide a decision framework for what constitutes the need for a meeting, e.g. making a decision could be a good purpose for a meeting, getting a report on MIS, probably not;
- Ensure that the purpose of a given meeting is stated up front;
- De-institutionalize regular meetings on behalf of calling meetings when they are truly necessary;
- Establish the internal process for each agenda item to ensure that meetings proceed with the minimum time required;
- Use facilitation (on a rotational basis, for example) to improve the time it takes to process an agenda item;
- Ensure that all meetings are evaluated in their closing moments, aimed at eliminating them or improving them.