



LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: THE AGENDA DEFENDER

Most leaders report feeling they attend too many meetings and that the meetings are too long. This overabundance of meeting time adds up to six hours per week for the average worker and 23 hours per week for senior leaders on average.

From TED's design project manager, Emily Pidgeon, we know that 90% of people daydream during meetings, 73% of employees do other work in meetings, 50% of people find meetings unproductive, and 25% of meetings are spent discussing irrelevant topics.

What we have found in doing Strategic Team Coaching® with senior leadership teams is that, with an Agenda Defender, the percentage of productive time in senior leadership team meetings increases as does satisfaction with meetings' effectiveness.

So, what is an "Agenda Defender" and how does the role work?

1. **Topic management.** Adherence to a well-thought out agenda will result in well-thought out outcomes and decrease time spent on irrelevant topics.
2. **Time management.** If a meeting is set for 45 minutes, it is critical to discuss all 3 topics on it, and each is allocated 15 minutes, then the Agenda Defender's role is to ensure that discussion of each topic is moving toward conclusion in a timely fashion, as in: "We have 7 more minutes to reach a conclusion on the topic."
3. **Discussion management.** Ensuring, in concert with the facilitator, that all opinions are heard and considered and that the meeting does not get dominated by any individual, as in, "We still need to hear from Joe and Susie, in the next 4 minutes."
4. **Accountability-sharing.** Each team member should experience the role of Agenda Defender. That will let each person learn the importance of listening to and "obeying" the Agenda Defender as they work to manage a group of talkative (or silent) executives. It is the Agenda Defender's job to ensure that the meeting objectives are achieved, decisions are reached, and information is imparted as planned. At a minimum, if the objectives are not achieved, it is not due to poor meeting management but due to some other externality.

The benefits are clear. Objectives of the meeting get achieved. All topics are covered. Frustration with wasted time is eliminated. People's expectations of what would be discussed are met.

If you don't believe us, give it a try. Let us know how it goes.

What percentage of time in your meetings is productive? What else could an Agenda Defender do to improve the effectiveness of your team's meetings?