



40. Check-in and check-out at meetings and other gatherings

Challenge

A common comment in our work is that we run from appointment to appointment, have full agendas and have to deal with long action lists. In addition, in the back of our minds we are busy with non-work-related matters, such as caring for children or parents, a car that has to go to the garage, a leak at home that needs to be fixed etc. All in all, many different things at once, which reduces the focus on what we are doing. This can affect the effectiveness of meetings and other gatherings (and therefore possibly also the decision-making process): our minds are somewhere else.

Solution

A simple solution can be to consciously marking the start and end of a meeting or gathering. By consciously *checking in*, it becomes clear which expectations and distractions people have start. By sharing and addressing these, participants can clear their minds and really be present and actively contribute to the meeting. In addition, it allows others to approach the participant in a different way or to take into account what he/she has shared. By consciously *checking out* at the end of a meeting, there is an opportunity to indicate what went well or not so well, or what has not been discussed. Arrangements can then be made for this (e.g. on the agenda of the next meeting). The meeting is really completed, so that participants can continue and there are no open ends.

Check in

Checking in doesn't have to take much time and it's about 'sharing and dumping'. So it's not a conversation; there is no response to what someone shares (says). It is a strong method to 'land' at the beginning of one/every meeting, to gauge/name the energy in a group, to create equality and to give participants the opportunity to share what is relevant for them. It's nice if everyone is covered, but it doesn't have to be. As long as everyone has the opportunity to share something.

Procedure:

- Indicate what the goal is (see above).
- Explain that it is a short round, where everyone has a turn, it is not a conversation.
- Example of what can be named: "I don't really know what this meeting is for and I have very little time. Don't know why I have to be here'. That is good to address after the check in. If it is true that this person does not have to be there, then it is good to know and the person can leave. Another example: 'My child is not well and I expect a phone call from out-of-school care. I have to take it then.' That is also good to know. Another



example: 'I really want us to make clear decisions today. Last time it was not clear who exactly was going to do what.' This provides useful input for the discussion.

- Check-in can be done sitting down, but also standing up.
 - o Standing up: standing in a way where everyone can see each other (e.g. in a circle). The person who wants to share something, takes a step forward and express what it is. Others who find the same thing, support it, want to bring it in aswell can also step forward. This makes it easily visible, who is on the same page and who is not. Then everyone steps back and the next participant can contribute something.
 - o Sitting down: the same principle, but then, for example, with raising your hand instead of stepping forward.
- Question/expectation: at the start of the check-in you can state what kind of input you ask for (e.g. what people expect from the meeting/meeting). You can also choose to leave it open and see what others come up with.
- Thank the participants briefly for their input and summarize what you will do with it, for example: 'Maria has to leave today at 15:00 at the latest, so we will try to really finish by then', or 'Dave will step out of the meeting when he gets the call from school.'

Check out

Checking out doesn't have to take a lot of time either. It uses the same principle: the person who wants to share something before everyone leaves, shares and dumps it. Again, no conversation and also good to address what is shared (e.g. 'We will put that point on the agenda for the next meeting'). Check-out can also be done standing up or sitting down. It is also possible to do the check-in standing (immediately actively involved) and check-out sitting down.

Tips

Give participants some time to get used to this way of starting and finishing a meeting. As a group you will see that it benefits the meetings and that people soon do not want to without.

It works well not to do a static tour of the group, but to let people speak according to the 'popcorn' principle: 'pop when you're hot'.

When you, as chairman of the meeting, start checking in, you immediately have the opportunity to frame the check in terms of time and subject if necessary, for example at a relatively short meeting.



Actors

- Compliance professional
- Managers and other initiators/organizers of meetings and gatherings
- Participants in meetings and gatherings

Techniques

- Being able to act as a moderator
- Being able to inspire others, to get people to embrace this way of working

Role Compliance Professional

- Identifying a lower level of effectiveness in meetings/gatherings
- Signaling that in meeting it is not discussed what should be addressed
- Discuss this approach with the organizers (and possibly participants)
- Guide the organizers in the introduction of check-in and check-out as a standard part of meetings / gatherings (e.g. by showing how to do it, followed by them doing it themselves)

Literature and background information

- Deep Democracy:
<https://studiumgenerale.artez.nl/files/things/01379/200414MagazineCocreatingDeepDemocracykle.pdf>