Empowering Meetings

A How-To Guide for Any Organization

Based on the Adizes Methodology™

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*This book is dedicated
to our families.*

Preface

Since 1973 the Adizes Institute has helped organizations unlock their hidden value and enabled them to achieve leadership positions in their industries or regions.

We help companies become the leaders of their markets by addressing key management infrastructure issues with an approach that builds a culture of mutual trust and respect.

Our powerful processes, tools and concepts are based on the Adizes Methodology™, which is a highly-evolved proprietary, structured and pragmatic system for accelerating organizational change.

This Methodology is based on the proven proposition that what makes businesses strong over the long term, what underlies their ability to improve financial performance, attract and retain exceptional talent, build and sustain competitive advantage, and become the champions of their markets, is the presence of a robust and pervasive culture of mutual trust and respect where there is minimal energy spent on politics and internal fighting, so that maximum energy can be devoted to competing in the marketplace.

The Adizes Methodology has been tested on thousands of profit, non-profit, public and private organizations in various industries and cultures around the world. The Methodology has a demonstrated track record of success.

A large part of the Adizes Methodology relates to how to properly run meetings. In this guide Shoham and Nir provide an easily accessible explanation on how the Adizes Methodology is used when running meetings. They have taken a highly complex and evolved meeting management system, one that Adizes Associates study for years to fully understand and utilize, and put it into a short, easy to read, immediately usable guide.

I congratulate them and thank them for what they have done, as I know this will be a great help to managers worldwide.

With best regards,
Professor Ichak Kalderon Adizes
Santa Barbara, California
August 2014

Foreword

In order to manage well we must make good decisions and implement those decisions effectively. If this process requires the input or cooperation of multiple people, it will require meetings. How these meetings are run will directly impact the quality of the decisions that we make and the effectiveness of their implementation. Further, how these meetings are run will directly impact the culture of our organization and how future problems will be addressed. Therefore, the way meetings are run, as much as anything else, will determine the success or failure of our endeavor.

This book will outline a system that can help assure that good decisions are made and implemented effectively. This system will empower meetings. Additionally, this system will assure that meetings empower the organization so that we, as the organization, can solve bigger and bigger problems.

Empowering Meetings is about using problem solving as a tool with which to create an organizational culture of mutual trust and respect[1] among members.

It is important to note that this guide will focus on meetings of three or more people. The number three is an arbitrary number. But the smaller the number of people in the meeting, the less the need for the tools provided in these pages and the greater the need for psychological tools that help with interpersonal communication. The book *Leading the Leaders* by Ichak Adizes (2004) is a great resource for these tools. However, in meetings with a larger number of participants, these psychological tools are less relevant. Different tools are needed. This book will speak to those tools.

This book was created utilizing the knowledge, practice, and meeting-related research findings that were accumulated during more than forty years at the Adizes Institute by Professor Ichak Kalderon Adizes and his Associates. This source presents expertise in multi-disciplinary, intra-organizational teams that focus on problem solving. In the Adizes Methodology these teams are called "Synerteams.™" Additional knowledge was derived from meeting research conducted in various government and military organizations.

This book explores various best practices for running different types of meetings. We differentiate between meetings whose intent is to find

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[1] The Adizes Methodology proposes that a strong culture of Mutual Trust and Respect is the greatest competitive advantage of any organization.

collaborative solutions and create plans of action to address problems and opportunities ("Problem-Solving meetings"), and meetings that are designed to Ratify, Communicate, and/or Follow Up on decisions that have already been made ("Implementation meetings"). This distinction is important, as best practices for one type of meeting can sometimes undermine the effectiveness and efficiency of the other type of meeting.

We ask you—the reader—to adopt a critical approach when you read this text. We would be happy to hear from you with any request, question, comment, or remark regarding this book, parts you feel are missing, or topics you believe require change, addition, reduction, or improvement.

This guide was made possible through the enduring and unwavering support of our mentor, Professor Ichak Kalderon Adizes, who is a pioneer in the field of participative management. This guide sits squarely on his shoulders and would have never been possible without him. Additionally, this guide benefited from the support of over seventy Adizes Associates who utilize the Adizes Methodology on an ongoing basis, providing continuous feedback on the tools and systems described within, constantly testing and improving them. We also thank our families, friends, and the dozens of managers, consultants, and dispute-resolution experts who have contributed to this guide along the way. All these people gave their time and generously shared their knowledge, experience, and expertise to assist in creating this meeting management "toolbox."

Thank you all,
Nir Ben Lavi, Tel Aviv
Shoham Adizes, Santa Barbara, August 2014
Publishing@adizes.com

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Introduction

CHAPTER 1

Why Are Meetings So Frustrating?

Would you agree that most people hate meetings? In many cases, people leave meetings totally exhausted, frustrated, and unsure of what, if anything, was decided.

Why is that? Meetings go in all different directions with people interrupting each other, discussing many different ideas at the same time. Everyone is talking but nobody hears anyone else.

How can meetings be conducted so that they produce results? How can the participants understand and support the decisions and be motivated to implement them?

Professor Adizes started looking for the answer to this question in the academic world. Much of the academic research had been about controlled experiments and psychological analysis—not much that could be readily applied. He could not find material that could help managers run meetings. All of the knowledge available on how to facilitate team decision-making processes resulted in management by committees, which is a disaster.

> "Ask any group of managers to list their three most time consuming activities. Invariably, 'meetings' will appear among the three. I have asked, and in every case but three, more than three quarters of each group indicated that half their time spent in meetings is wasted."
>
> —McKenzie (1972)

Professor Adizes' big illumination came many years ago when he was invited to give a lecture in Toronto. The president of the company to which he was going to lecture picked him up at the airport and drove him to the hotel. It was already nighttime and the president said to Professor Adizes, "Would you like to go to the office and meet the people that you will be lecturing to tomorrow?"

Professor Adizes, not wanting to be rude, said, "Okay." After all it was getting late and he could not imagine that they would stay at work for much longer. When he got there he found that all the executives were sitting at a table playing poker. Never having played poker Professor Adizes thought, "Very interesting. Let me watch what's going on." So, he sat and watched them play—until 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock, 12 o'clock, 1 o'clock. As they were playing Professor Adizes realized something very interesting. Money was changing hands, some people were losing a lot of money, but nobody was upset. As a matter of fact, when they stopped playing, because they had the lecture the next morning, they kind of tapped each other on the shoulder and said, "Good game, let's get together tomorrow again."

"What is going on here?" Professor Adizes wondered. "If I took these four executives who were playing poker, gave them money, and said 'Now you

Problems that Decrease Effectiveness of Meetings

Romano and Nunamaker (2001) identified 22 problems that decrease both the effectiveness and effieciency of meetings. We chose to highlight the 13 most prevalent reasons.

Rank	Type of Problem as Realized in Meetings
1	Getting off the subject
2	No goals or agenda
3	Too lengthy
4	Poor preparation
5	Inconclusive
6	Disorganized
7	Ineffective leadership/lack of control
8	Irrelevance of information discussed
9	Time wasted during meetings
10	Starting late
11	Not effective for making decisions
12	Interruptions from within and without
13	Individuals dominate/aggrandize discussion

Other researchers have identified a series of problems that may lower meetings' efficiency and/or effectiveness. For references, see McKenzie (1972), et al. (1989), Mosvick & Nelson (1987), and Nunamaker, et al. (1986)

jointly have to make a decision what to do in the company,' they'd probably leave the meeting exhausted, frustrated, and with a compromised solution. Yet here, after a poker game, they were energized and excited. What was the difference? Why is playing poker exciting and meetings are not?"

This question led Professor Adizes to a big insight. The difference was the existence of rules. The game of poker has a clear set of rules. Without these rules on how to deal the cards and which set of cards beats which other set of cards, the game of poker would be just as frustrating as a committee meeting. Once this insight was understood, Professor Adizes realized that every participative sport has a set of rules. The problem with meetings is that they don't have rules (or the rules they use, like Robert's Rules of Order,[2] although helpful, are insufficient.) The way the meeting is run is organic, depending on the style of the leader at that moment. There is no systematic way of advancing through the decision-making process. That's why these meetings are so exhausting and frustrating.

What Others Had to Say About Meetings

"Office Workers spend an average of 4 hours per week in meetings. They feel more than half of that time is wasted."

"Opinion Matters" for Epson and the Centre for Economics & Business Research, May 2012

Salary.com, in a 2012 survey, identified that, according to 47% of those surveyed, the number one time-waster at the office is 'too many meetings,' up from number three in 2008.

"Unnecessary meetings cost U.S. businesses $37 billion annually."

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005

"An average of 37% of employee time is spent in meetings. During an average meeting, agenda items are covered in only 53% of the scheduled time, with the remaining time as unproductive."

National Statistics Council survey findings, in a Verizon Conferencing White Paper

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[2] *Robert's Rules of Order*, written by Henry Martyn Robert and first published in 1876, provides common rules and procedures for deliberation and debate in order to place the whole membership on the same footing and speaking the same language.

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ABOUT THE ADIZES INSTITUTE

The Adizes Institute Worldwide was founded by Dr. Ichak Adizes to assist corporations, organizations, and government agencies successfully manage change. In doing this work, the Institute applies the concepts and methodologies developed by Dr. Adizes over the past 40 years.

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