

## Agenda Planning with the Let's Leave with a List

When planning an agenda, the first thing I'd like you to think about is the last thing you will do in the meeting: get up and leave. Place yourself at the moment of departure: What essential outcomes, or measurable results, will you hope to leave with?

Once we identify a "let's leave with list," then I can begin to draft the agenda and think about potential activities and meeting formats. This first step is often the most important contribution I make to a meeting - to help you build a logical and compelling agenda on a solid foundation of what matters most to the participants.

At the beginning of the meeting, I will ask the participants whether they can agree to focus their attention on completing the list.

During the meeting, the list will be our touchstone any time we begin to wander or bog down. I find it is much more effective to refocus everyone's attention on the list and their agreement, than to lead a forced march in time with the clock. It's everyone's job to focus, not just mine as the facilitator.

We'll revisit the Let's Leave With list during wrap-ups to measure our success.

*You'll notice that each sample below includes the ending so that. By completing the sentence after so that, you can test the value of each proposed outcome.*

- ▶ A substantial outcome will lead to a compelling so that. You'll know this one belongs on the list.
- ▶ A flimsy outcome will make you wonder, Why do we want to spend time on this issue? If that's the case, either dig deeper to find the real issue, or delete it from your draft.

*There are two broad categories of so-called rational outcomes: Knowledge and Products. I have offered below some ticklers to start your thinking. Don't feel limited by these suggestions, but do begin every outcome with a solid noun: understanding; agreement; commitment; recognition; a decision; etc.*

### Knowledge Examples

- ▶ Understanding of current situation, or root causes of a pressing problem so that...
- ▶ Understanding of potential solutions, courses of action, risks, etc. so that...
- ▶ Understanding of our history so that...
- ▶ Recognition and understanding of conflicting attitudes, ideas, or perspectives so that...

## Product Examples

- ▶ A decision to [spend money, hire a contractor, run an event, approve a budget, etc.] so that...
- ▶ Agreement on next steps so that...
- ▶ A working draft of a document so that...
- ▶ A decision by each committee member to \_\_\_\_\_ so that...

Once your list is solid, please put it in some kind of order: logical or priority.

*Now that you have identified rational objectives, please consider your experiential objectives for the meeting:*

- ▶ What is the context of this meeting?
  - When did they last meet?
  - How well do they know/like one another?
  - Have they recently had a major success, failure, or other significant event?
  - Is this part of a long-term series of meetings?
- ▶ What kind of experience do you hope participants will have?
- ▶ What kinds of interaction do you feel they need, or does their situation demand?
- ▶ How do you hope they will feel as the meeting concludes?

## Experiential Objectives Examples

- ▶ Get better acquainted, get to know one another's strengths and skills
- ▶ Build trust
- ▶ Celebrate recent accomplishments
- ▶ Feel more collegial
- ▶ Let go of emotional and interpersonal baggage; resolve longstanding tensions
- ▶ Share enthusiasm for shared mission and upcoming challenges
- ▶ Feel confident that we can achieve what we want

Work with others on the committee to refine the first-draft lists. Once you have consensus on a list of the essential items, it's time to draft an agenda.