Leading Productive Team Meetings

Description:

This tool provides guidelines and steps for ensuring meetings are focused and stay on-task.

How it can be used:

Meetings are an essential element of working toward and achieving accreditation. Most likely, your accreditation process relies on teams to assess your progress and complete the standards. As an accreditation coordinator, keeping the meetings focused and on-task is an important component of your role. Below are some suggestions for leading productive meetings that will result in the best use of time for busy staff and stakeholders.

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1. Prepare for the Meeting

- Decide on the purpose of the meeting – what does the team expect to accomplish?
- Determine who needs to attend the meeting – find the balance between including enough participants and not “over inviting”. If only some of the participants are required for most of the meeting agenda, consider having multiple meetings to make use of peoples’ time more effectively. It is better to have a few people attend multiple meetings than to have a number of people sit through meetings in which they have limited or no participation.
- Does anyone in the meeting require some orientation to the concept of accreditation prior to the meeting? It will help if your participants are on the same page as much as possible.
- Determine the length of the meeting –set aside only as much time as you need. Consider the intensity of the work; perhaps more frequent and shorter meetings to review accreditation standards would be more productive.
- Find a location that reduces distraction and encourages the team to focus.
- Prepare and distribute materials in advance – perhaps an agenda along with a copy of the sections of the standard being considered. This will allow participants to come prepared.

2. Set Group Meeting Practices

- Agree on group ‘norms’ or practices. For example:
  - Will there be penalties if someone is consistently late?
  - Is there a process to ensure that everyone gets a chance to speak?
  - How will you set a positive tone that discourages interruption or sidebar conversations?
  - Can participants send replacements if they can’t attend?
- Ensure that the team lead is prepared. Have they been trained or oriented? Do they have access to all the documents they need?
- Ensure that someone is in charge of taking notes, completing the standards and recording the relevant discussions.
- Determine how you will treat discussions that are not on topic.

- Set up the room in advance, making sure all materials are ready and available. Consider whether you need a blackboard, whiteboard, flipcharts, projector, screen, Wi-Fi, extra paper, water, coffee, snacks, etc. Having the tools available means that the meeting participants can focus on achieving the goals of the meeting rather than being sidetracked.

3. Hold the Meeting

- If necessary, be sure that everyone is introduced, including their roles and purpose in the meeting.
- Review what has happened in past meetings or with other accreditation teams to help put the work of this meeting in context. Keep reminding participants of the value of this meeting as part of a larger continuous quality improvement activity.
- Clearly lay out the purpose and the expected outcomes of the meeting. Set realistic expectations based on the sections of standards or the plan to be reviewed. Depending on content, some meetings can cover a few sections in one sitting, while others might cover only one small sub-section.
- Ask someone to be the timekeeper. Request that they give periodic time updates so discussions can be kept within reasonable time limits.
- Ensure the note-taker is recording any follow-up or action items.
- Defer items that can't be addressed - if it is found during the course of a meeting that an item cannot be addressed because of lack of information or the right individuals are not present, don't waste time on that item. Instead, defer the discussion to when it can be adequately addressed.
- When the meeting is ready to wrap-up, review what was done. Review any outstanding action items. Acknowledge the good work that was done.
- Set the agenda for the next meeting - include the purpose and objectives of the meeting as well as the time and place. Explain which sections will be covered and, if possible, provide copies so participants have plenty of time to prepare for the next meeting.

4. Follow-up after the Meeting

- If relevant, distribute the notes of the meeting.
- Continue to express your thanks to meeting participants for their involvement in helping your organization achieve this accomplishment.