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Effective and efficient work meetings

30+ years of meeting experience as a leader and facilitator

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Someone asked me a question about how to organize job meetings. Why not share my answer here on Medium for you to read?



As you all know, work meetings can vary greatly. Some are large, with hundreds of participants, while others are small, with just a couple of people collaborating. Some are formal, some informal. Some are decision-making meetings, some are work meetings, and some are information meetings. Unnecessary and ineffective meetings should be avoided, as large meetings are expensive for organizations. You could write pages and pages about how to organize work meetings, but I will focus on the most important points — the ones I believe are the most useful.

COARR

This guideline can be used for virtually any meeting.

The meeting leader is usually the person who called the meeting. The meeting leader begins the meeting by going through the COARR for the meeting.

Context — Why is this meeting necessary? What is the big picture, the context? Create motivation — Describe the background and the problem — Explain how important and urgent it is, and why.

Objective (of the meeting) — For example, what decisions need to be made, what summary or consensus needs to be reached? What is the expected outcome of the meeting?

Agenda — Detailed timeline with items, speakers, breaks, etc.

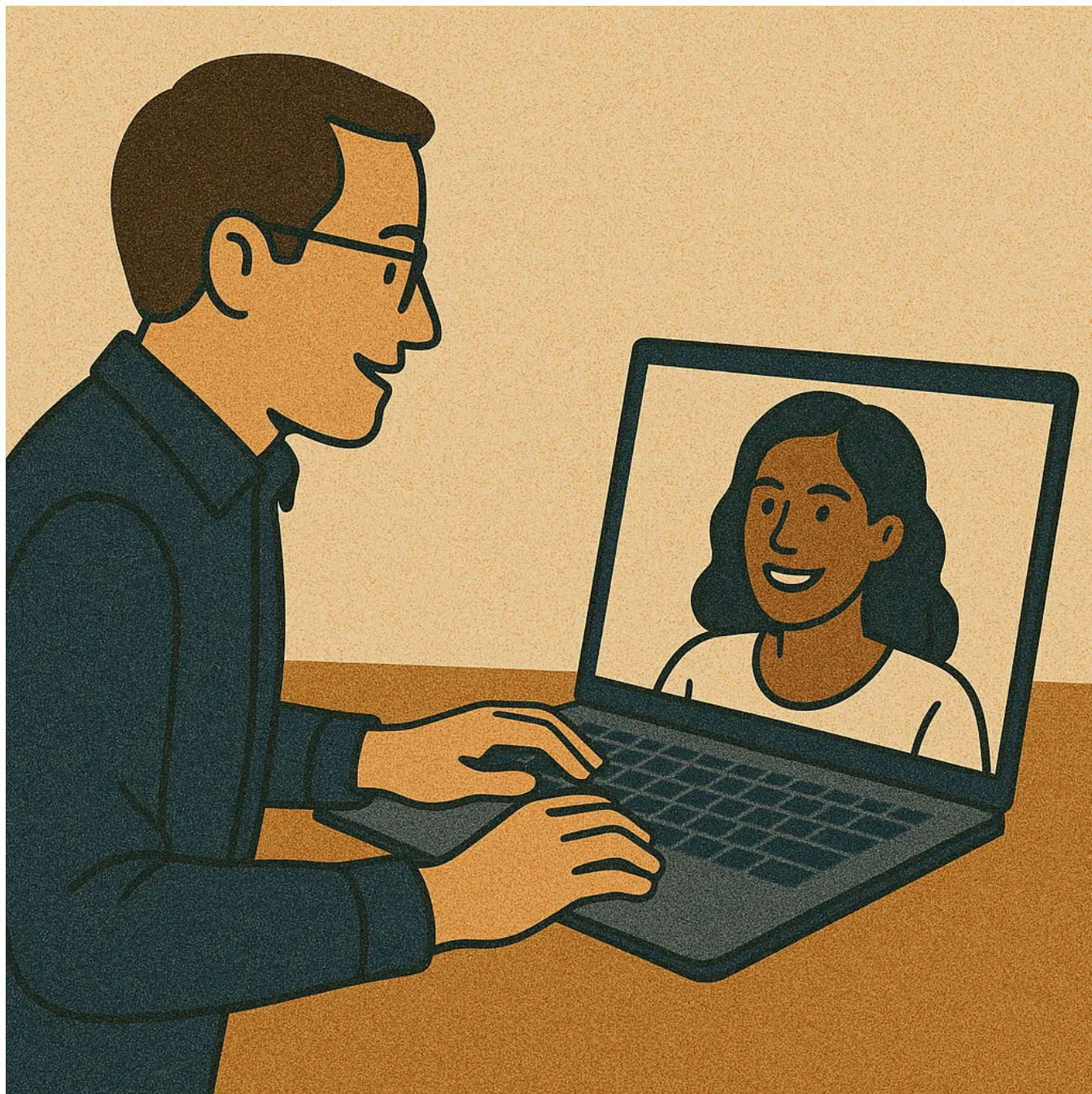
Roles — Who is leading the meeting, at least who is the chair, and who is responsible for the meeting notes/outcome.

Rules — For example, if laptops or cell phones are not allowed during the meeting.

Don't make it more complicated than necessary. COARR is a guideline, not a rule.

More about organizing meetings

One-on-one collaborative meetings



Work meetings where two people collaborate can be very effective, especially if both are different types of specialists, relevant to the problem being worked on, but have overlapping expertise, so they understand each other completely. Ideally, one should always work this way. Example: one business analyst/requirements analyst/designer collaborates with one system developer/programmer, and develops information system/application functionality. The more people involved, the more (exponentially) inefficient it becomes, as time is spent on communication and discussions when everyone has their own frame of reference.

Information meetings



Information meetings with hundreds of participants should be highly motivating to be effective.

Decision-making meetings



Decision-making meetings should have an excellent presentation of the decision-making basis. Today, instead of static (Word) documents and (PowerPoint) presentations, it is advantageous to use dynamic artifacts made with, for example, Claude or ChatGPT, to prove the preferred decision option. Make, for instance, a business case artifact, like a small app, dedicated to this meeting alone. This results in much faster decisions.

Workshops



Workshops are most effective for solving problems and producing a decision-making basis. By workshops, I mean on-site meetings where everyone works standing up, and all seven or so carefully selected participants work enthusiastically and with commitment to create and build a model together. The workshop is led by a trained and experienced facilitator who also acts as the meeting leader and modeling leader. The facilitator follows carefully selected methods and a notation for the model, ensures that everyone contributes actively, and knows how to avoid various biases, such as groupthink. The workshop creates results, participation, and anchoring. All participants agree and sign the finished model. International management research shows that facilitation is a key competence for leaders, and involves human interaction and communication to help people reach their full

potential. As a management consultant and trained facilitator, I've led hundreds of successful workshops.

About the Author



Gunnar Östberg, Business Transformation Architect, CEO, Business Clarity.

Gunnar is an M.Sc. computer engineer with 40 years of experience in **business and IT-driven transformation**. He has worked with global giants like Ericsson and Scania, as well as nimble high-tech firms. Passionate about sound architectural principles and systems thinking, Gunnar writes to expand perspectives and deepen insight. Through his consultancy, Business Clarity, Gunnar helps organizations evolve ideas into sustainable systems and products, and transform the business through structured, principle-based innovation. His focus areas include pragmatic architecture, business modeling, and delivering real impact.

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