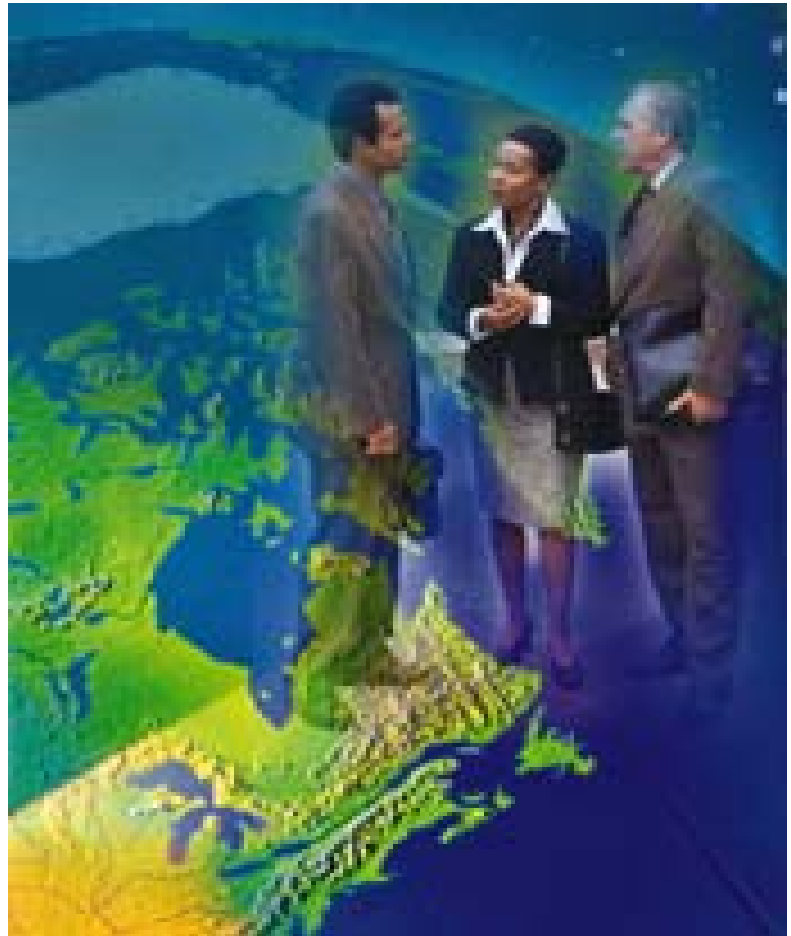


# PROJECT MEETING METHODOLOGY



**April 30, 2003**

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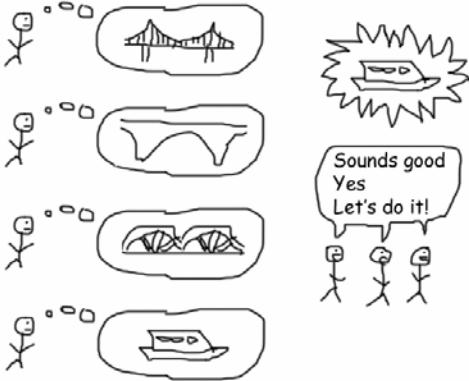
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# Types of Meetings Addressed

After a project has been approved, there are three main types of meetings:

- **Progress** – Takes place to **inform management** about the progress being made
- **Issue status** – Takes place to **inform the project team** on what the issues are, not to resolve issues
- **Issue resolution** – Takes place to **resolve issues**

Meeting Type	Purpose of This Type of Meeting	Key Participants	Example
Progress	Provides a bird's-eye view of project. Provides information like costs-to-date, burn rates, estimates-to-complete, etc.	Project Sponsor Project Manager	
Issue Status	Provides the status on recent problems. Provides information like what meetings are upcoming, who will help resolve the issue, whether a resolution has been selected.	Project Manager Project Leader Team Leaders	
Issue Resolution	Provides the opportunity to suggest resolutions and choose one.	Team Leaders Team Members	

We will discuss all three types.

## Characteristics of Good Facilitators

Productive meetings typically have a strong facilitator. Bosses and key stakeholders can make poor facilitators if they have a stake in the outcome. This is because they may subconsciously or even consciously do things to influence the outcome. This makes the results suspect and possibly inhibits rational decision-making.<sup>1</sup> The ideal facilitator:

- Stays positive and complements the group and individual participants
- Provides controlled, coordinated movement through the process
- Encourages balanced participation; tries to get input from as many participants as may have some input
- Tries not to steer the ideas of any participant, but lets each try to express himself or herself
- Protects suggestions from attack (suggestions will be weighed later in the process)
- Protects participants from groupthink

## Avoid Groupthink

"Groupthink" is a psychological term coined by Irving Janis to describe the mode of thinking that persons engage in when concurrence-seeking becomes so dominant in a cohesive ingroup that it tends to override realistic appraisal of alternative courses of action. It refers to a deterioration in mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgments as a result of group pressures. Groups experiencing groupthink do not consider all alternatives and they turn to unanimity at the expense of quality decisions. Groupthink occurs when groups are highly cohesive and when they are under considerable pressure to make a quality decision.

The meeting methodology outlined in this whitepaper incorporates several remedies to prevent groupthink. For a list of symptoms, targeted remedies, and more information about groupthink please read Spectrum's whitepaper "Groupthink", which is available on our website.

## The Meeting Script

Try to follow this cycle when you decide that you want to hold a meeting:

1. Decide on the **participants** and possibly on the different **roles** and responsibilities of the participants
2. State the **content/agenda** and the **process** to be used for each agenda item
3. **Publicize** the information at least 24 hours in advance (See "Figure 2: Meeting Agenda Form" below on page 6)
4. Hold the **meeting** (see "Progress Meeting Script", "Issue Status Meeting Script", and "Issue Resolution Meeting Script" below)
5. **Publish** outcomes and decisions of the meeting
6. **Honor** outcomes and decisions of the meeting

## Progress Meeting Script

1. Report the **status of the schedule, budget, and scope**. Proper status reporting **includes estimate-to-completes** (ETCs)
2. Report issues by **stating the problems** (what, why) (not analysis, approaches, or action ideas) and their **possible impacts** on the project's schedule, budget, and/or scope

## Issue Status Meeting Script

For this type of meeting, the meeting itself should go through the following cycle:

1. If necessary, **state the issue** (what, why) (not analysis, approaches, or possible solutions)
2. Then stay focused on the **process of resolving** the issue (who, how, when, where) and how far through the process the issue is, **without resolving** the issue itself

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<sup>1</sup> From the book titled "How to Make Meetings Work"

## Issue Resolution Meeting Script

For this type of meeting, the meeting itself should go through the following cycle<sup>2</sup>:

1. **State the issue** (what, why) (not analysis, approaches, or possible solutions)
2. Have the most knowledgeable participants offer their **analysis** of the situation to uncover the **true cause** (keep in mind that you may need to ask a series of 5 whys to reach the true cause<sup>3</sup>)
3. Gather **possible solutions** from participants, and protect them from attack (until later in the process)
4. Discuss the **possible solutions**. Occasionally additional possible solutions will be proposed here
5. Select the **solution** and assign it to someone with a due date

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<sup>2</sup> From the books titled “Getting to Yes” and “How to Make Meetings Work”

<sup>3</sup> From Toyota’s problem analysis process

# Meeting Script Process Diagram

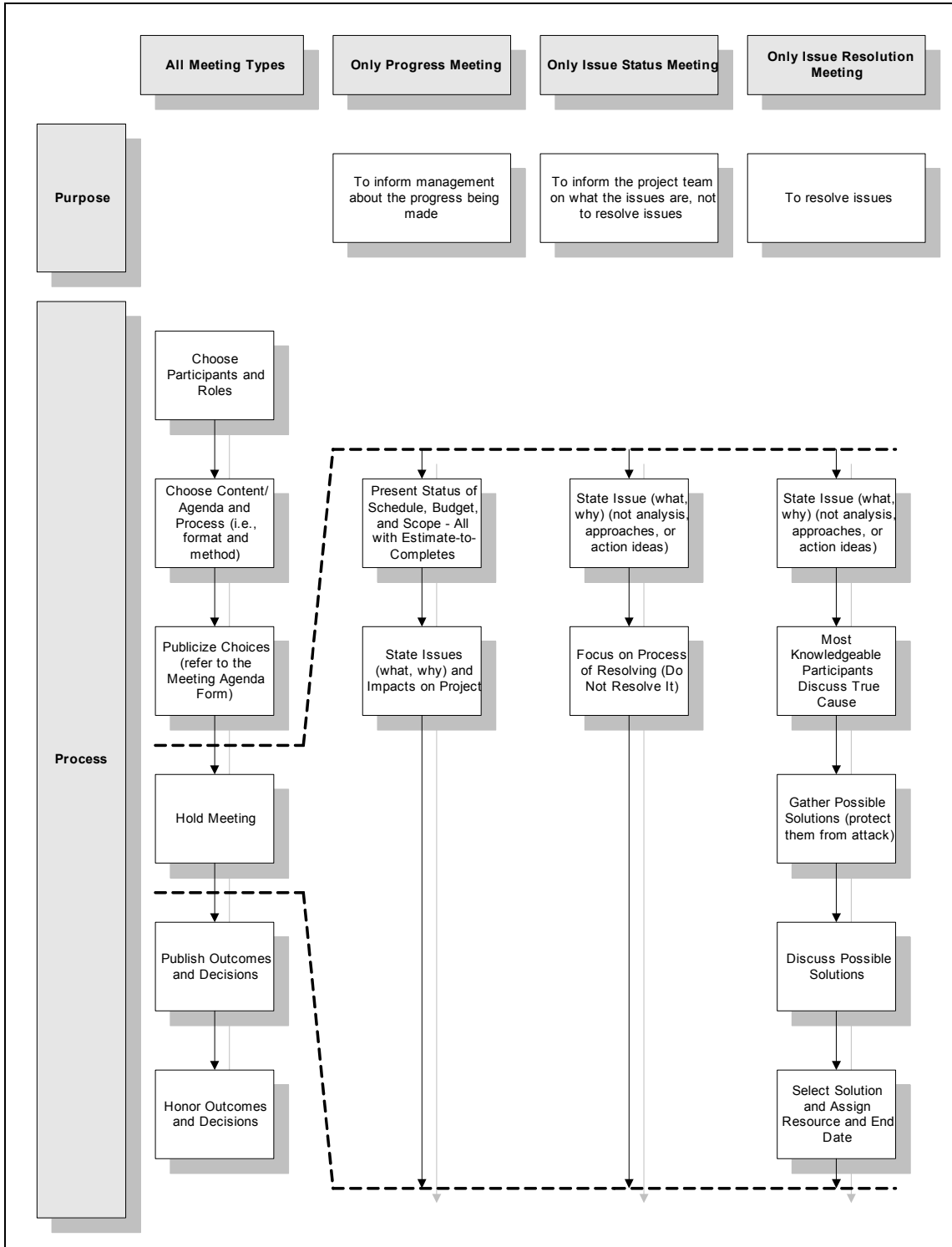


Figure 1: Meeting Script Process Diagram

## Meeting Agenda Form

Consider putting the following elements on the meeting agenda that you send out<sup>4</sup>:

<sup>4</sup> From the book titled "How to Make Meetings Work"

Name of Group		Meeting Called By		
Title of Meeting		Date	Starting Time	
Meeting Place			Ending Time	
Desired Outcomes				
Background Materials You Should Review Beforehand				
Please Bring				
Manager/Chairperson		Facilitator	Recorder	
Group Members				
Observers				
Resource People				
Special Notes				
Agenda Topic	Persons Responsible for Introducing	Format (problem-solving, decision making, planning, reporting/presenting, feedback)	Decision-Making Method (consensus, vote, final decision makers)	Time Allocated

**Figure 2: Meeting Agenda Form**