

Are All-Hands Meetings Worth the Bother? ...or any other big meeting for that matter?

A White Paper by Rick Maurer
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Batteries Not Included™

All-Hands Meetings

I've attended a lot of dreadful big meetings. Sometimes they're called all-hands meetings, town halls, or something else. These big meetings usually involve almost everyone in the organization.

I wondered if other people had the same cynical reaction that I did to these meetings. So, I conducted a survey. I invited people on my mailing list to answer the three questions listed below, and I got 144 responses. These are men and women who are leaders at all levels in their organizations, consultants and educators, and others who just seem interested in the human part of making organizations work.

The first thing I learned was that I was wrong. People often do like these big meetings.

1 HOW VALUABLE ARE TOWN HALL MEETINGS?

These big meetings were:

Extremely Valuable -	9.79%
Very Valuable -	25.87%
Somewhat Valuable -	51.05%
Not So Valuable -	11.19%
Not at All Valuable -	2.10%

Since just over half the people said that the all-hands meetings were somewhat valuable, it suggests to me that there is a lot of room for improvement. I urge you to take a look at the actual comments for Questions 2 and 3. You'll find them in the two appendices at the end of this paper.

2 HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED AT LEAST SOME ALL-HANDS MEETINGS THAT WEREN'T VALUABLE? IF SO, EXPLAIN WHY THEY WEREN'T OF VALUE.

1. The most complaints pertained to agenda woes: they are too often unfocused and/ or irrelevant (especially when the audience is large and diverse). Many complain that the agendas cover nothing new. (49 responses)
2. The second biggest complaint was the structure of the meetings and the method of delivery—top-down, one-way communication with little, ineffective, or no audience participation. Too much telling, too many PowerPoints, not enough listening. One person said that this meeting format generates more questions than answers. (41 responses)
3. The third biggest complaint said that the actual purpose or motivation for the meeting was unclear or invalid. (18 responses)

4. The fourth biggest complaint is that too often, attendees leave these meetings with no action plans, no next steps, and they wait in vain for follow-up reports. (12 responses)
5. And, the fifth biggest complaint suggested that all-hands meetings were not a safe place to engage. (11 responses)

3

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED AT LEAST SOME ALL-HANDS MEETINGS THAT WERE VALUABLE? IF SO, EXPLAIN WHY THEY WERE SO VALUABLE.

1. The top response touched on the importance of two-way communication during the meetings, even if it turns out to be negative or contentious. All agreed that it's essential (not just hours of being talked at), and some offered particular methods that they found useful, e.g. breakout groups, prepared questions, online voting, etc. (41 responses)
2. The second largest group felt that the value of the all-hands meeting is directly linked to the leadership—if the executives are transparent, prepared, and authentic, attendees benefit from the contact with them. (25 responses)
3. The third most common response was that they got value from an agenda that focuses on enterprise-wide priorities and discusses the current situation and future vision—where we are, where we need to go. (18 responses)
4. Tied for fourth place were those who said to keep the agenda focused and concise and the meeting as short as reasonably possible. (15 responses)
5. An equal number said the meetings are very useful when the organization is facing big changes or problems, employees are unsure or worried, and rumors abound. (15 responses)

Next steps

I did not include a one-size-fits-all list of possible next steps. I believe that many of the comments speak for themselves. For instance, someone wrote:

“They were way too long and the information that was presented was not relevant to my area. This would not have been so much of an issue if the portions were not so long.”

If you or I had gotten that feedback, I imagine that we would make sure that our next meeting didn't last too long and that the content was relevant to everyone in the room.

The good news is that I don't think you have to get fancy to do these big meetings right. Listen to the feedback. If you're feeling particularly adventurous, you could show the list in the Appendices to people in your organization and ask if any of those comments are things that you should pay attention to.

I began to notice that a lot of plans leaders were using for big projects in their organizations were pretty good. Their plans for reorganizations, merger integration, IT, HR, quality improvement and other changes covered all the steps.

But, something was missing.

And that something was energy. It's like these good plans failed to include an important piece of advice: WARNING: BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED! For that reason, I developed resources to help leaders address that "batteries not included" challenge. I have been giving presentations and using Batteries Not Included™ as a way to focus my consulting work. And, I am writing a book that will be published in 2019.

This white paper is a tool to help leaders like you address a big problem: How you can use all-hands meetings to actually build energy rather than sap the lifeblood out of employees.

I hope you find this paper useful. To book a private one-on-one consultation at no cost to help you operationalize some of these findings, please give me a call.

Thanks.

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APPENDIX I

Question 2: Have you experienced at least some all-hands meetings that weren't valuable? If so, please explain why they weren't valuable.

The most complaints (49) pertained to the agenda woes: They're too often unfocused and/or irrelevant (especially when the audience is large and diverse). Many complained that the agenda covered nothing new.

- “Diverse audience with very different perspectives and needs. Trying to make the meeting relevant becomes very challenging.”
- “Loose agendas led to rambling discussions that only affected a few of those present.”
- “When the leader makes grand, sweeping statements with no clarity around next steps or impact at a front line level, the value of the meeting decreases.”
- “Too much focus and presentations on organization's bottom line”
- “...information was 'old news'.”
- “Areas covered are often so general as to reach everyone, so they really don't reach anyone.”
- “All-hands means that *everyone* must know the same information at the same time, no delay, no filtering and all questions answered at the same time. If this is abused, it's a waste.”
- “In my thinking, an ‘all-hands’ meeting says, ‘We've got to pay attention to something that is slipping,’ or, ‘We're moving in a new direction and everyone's got to know about this and from the CEO/VP.’ If that's not what happens, people do not find it valuable.”
- “They either glossed over concerns that were important to employees, didn't address the hard issues, or avoided the ‘elephant in the room.’”
- “I think that the meeting must have an agenda. It may be as simple as the leader discussing his/her vision for the organization, but it should include some new information.”
- “Lack of focus, too many messages. Everything was important, or just status of what is already known (nothing new).”
- “Too much time taken in items that did not pertain to me. Didn't think they were even ‘nice to know’ as they did not impact me, my team, or the jobs I was working on. Generally, amount of valuable material in the meeting is about 25-35% of the presentation.”

7 respondents complained that the meetings are unnecessarily long, some adding that the venues are uncomfortable.

- “They were way too long and the information that was presented was not relevant to my area. This would not have been so much of an issue if the portions were not so long.”
- “Irrelevant or routine information covered, inept delivery, and too long.”
- “Topics not good for that type of meeting and / or meeting too long.”
- “Most go way too long, and don't speak to the people in the audience in a meaningful way.”
- “Too long, too much talking at people. Uncomfortable environments.”

18 said that the actual purpose or motivation for the meeting was unclear or invalid.

- “Sometimes managers will say, ‘It’s been a long time since we’ve gotten the organization together, so let’s have an all hand meeting.’ That’s not a good reason.”
- “...some of the all-hands meetings just seemed like they were scheduled simply because the VP had it as a goal to have 4 meetings a year. They did not really have a purpose.”
- “Completely lacking a goal and a good explanation of the ‘why’, which left people with far too many questions afterward.”
- “It was evident that the leader wasn't interested in holding the meeting.”
- “All-hands meeting feel like a check-the-box activity for leadership. There is usually no insightful information because it's a huge event.”

7 said that the meetings were unnecessary, as the material could have been conveyed as well or better in writing.

- “A lot of time, no decisions, only announcements, which could have been done via writing.”
- “Typically contain general information that one can read online”
- “They were simply providing info that could have happened in simpler ways (like email).”

4 claimed that the meetings were ineffective because attendees were ill-informed of issues in advance.

- “Not understanding where the audience was related to the info being shared. In other words, assuming they brought in when they were not even at understanding of the issues.”
- “Views too diverse. Not everyone has the same level of briefing or commitment.”
- “Unclear expectations of the meeting amongst the various players and their groups.”

The second biggest complaint was the structure of the meetings and the method of delivery—top-down, one-way communication, with little, ineffective, or no audience participation. Too much telling, too many PowerPoints, not enough listening. **1** said this meeting format generates more questions than answers. (**41** responses)

- “One-way communication. No validation that people understood messages.”
- “Too much ‘talking at’ folks, numbing.”
- “Sometimes only a few voices get heard, which makes it a waste of time for everyone else.”
- “If the meetings are a one-way communication from the top down, it is a waste of valuable time.”
- “Content didn't align with what audience wanted. Too much ‘top down’ without thinking about what ‘bottoms up’ wanted”
- “Leaders don't address what participants want to know about (ex: boring 'state of the union'-type speeches that gloss over the tough stuff and puff the good stuff...these increase cynicism, not engagement!)”

- “Mtgs were mandatory Employees arrived resentful.”
- “They aren’t valuable when there is a pressing issue on employees’ minds (layoffs, takeovers, facility moves, etc.) and the leader does not address the concerns with what they know at that point, or they are unwilling to take questions. All Hands are for the employees, not the leader. That is what makes them worth the effort.”
- “Leading candidate [for frustration with all-hands meetings] is ‘faux collaboration,’ in which a leader appears to be asking for input about decisions already made or is implicitly asking for approval of his/her views.”

In terms of audience feedback, **11** said that the all-hands meetings were not a safe place to engage.

- “some folks were afraid to speak up”
- “nothing much materialized as folks were very reluctant to speak up”
- “dissension in the ranks not handled well by the leaders”
- “Leader expected feedback and comments and didn’t make it safe to do that.”
- “It’s not an intimate enough setting for introverts to feel safe to be heard or even sometimes attend.”
- “If the group is too large, then not everyone can get engaged; this is true even if the event is well structured, as some people will never ‘come out’ in a larger setting, and, if there are too many in the room, folks start to think their voice doesn’t matter, especially if the facilitator doesn’t do a good job of controlling the dominant voices. Also, too often, all-hands meetings just means giving the appearance of involvement when everyone’s involvement isn’t really sought/wanted.”
- “People too intimidated in front of large group to respond or ask questions”
- “Many times leaders will open the floor for questions and get none. It may be helpful for employees to submit questions on index cards or plant a few questions to get a discussion started.”

9 said that the all-hands meetings might be valuable if they were good places to do team-building or to build consensus—but they’re not.

- “Not good team building exercises ... as they are too large.”
- “Unfocused agenda, too little time to hear everyone and reach consensus, therefore frustrating.”

Another common complaint (**12**) is that too often, attendees leave these meetings with no action plans, no next steps, and they wait in vain for follow-up reports.

- “There were no takeaways or ‘If you only get one thing, get this...’ If I’m going to give a day of my life, I’d like to have something to follow through on.”
- “Dive into problem-solving vs flagging the need and appropriate people getting together at a later time to solve the problem”
- “...lack of focused direction and idea of what specific actions that were wanted from those attending (coming out of the meeting)”
- “...There was no call to action and the meeting was not engaging.”

- “Without follow-up with the leadership team, the meeting is a futile exercise.”

2 reported that unwelcome surprises surfaced at all-hands meetings.

- “There were issues at play that weren't revealed by the client. It was a good lesson learned early on and why we always do sensing with the participants prior to an all-hands meeting.”
- “‘Rogue’ employee sabotaged the meeting by disparaging the content.”

5 said that these meetings reveal incompetent, flailing, or untrustworthy management.

- “When management seems to want to prove there is no master plan to a downsizing exercise.”
- “When management does not provide information that indicates they are leading the company or understand the market. Left employees wondering if anyone really was guiding the ship.”
- “Senior leaders having ego trips (and sometimes competing with each other to out-present the others).”
- “About a year and a half ago the two main executives for our company were in an all-out war and just about everyone in the company knew that we were headed for a split. However, these two executives held an all-hands call every month where they pretended to be aligned and supportive of one another—always painting a rosy picture of our future and numbers even though the firm was struggling financially. The result was that not only were the calls a waste of time, but they made many people in the organization question if we could trust anything coming from the top.”
- “Not valuable and in fact, detrimental, when leaders sidestep the truth.”

One respondent is on the fence whether or not the meetings are of value.

- “I work in a decentralized organization. We have an HQ with about 125 people in it and then 77 chapters with another 500 or so people spread across them. I'm a senior leader—I have access to ALL the information, so meetings are not particularly informative for me. We believe they are important for our employees for imparting information—but I don't think we know whether they really work or not.”

One respondent wrote a full paragraph that describes his or her experience with these large meetings and makes some suggestions. Here it is in full:

“Rick, I have a bias, earned thru experience—initially as an employee, then as a senior leader, and reinforced later in my consulting and teaching—that I need to state in advance. And that is that all-hands meetings are usually done for the wrong purpose, at the wrong time (rumors tend to move faster than fact in organizations, and people are constantly monitoring what's going on for clues about what's coming), and are often poorly planned and delivered to an audience that afterwards feels they should have been issued a raincoat in advance of the meeting. Effective and ongoing communication—between first-line supervisors and employees, middle managers and their direct reports—reinforced frequently by senior management town halls and site visits (see

GE's 'work-out' practices under Jack Welch) that invite real employee feedback and presentation and make it safe to do so, obviate the need for what often becomes an a-periodic 'all-hands band-aid.' It's admittedly a POV, but there is a better way to address organization needs for communication and task-mission alignment... Just sayin'! ;-)"

A few people answer the next question which focuses on the value of big meetings by saying that they found no value in them. I felt it best to place those comments here.

- “No, I tend to show and say hello to one of the members of the Board of Directors.... and then I leave. This gives me ‘an alibi’ and this way I get half a day alone in the office, to actually get things done. I keep updated on organizational matters through other channels than all-hands-meetings. I have attended 30+ of them and I have been part of 15+ of them. I regard all-hands-meeting to be of no value.”
- “Sorry...no. The only all hands meetings I found great is... (a specific music festival).

APPENDIX II

Question 3: Have you experienced at least some all-hands meetings that were valuable? If so, please explain why they were so valuable.

132 respondents said yes, they have found the meetings helpful when and if they met certain criteria.

22 said that the purpose of the meeting needs to be clearly defined, and ideally, staff should be briefed in advance, perhaps so they can prepare questions, or indeed can even help plan the agenda.

- “The meetings where the purpose was clear, and the invited were working on the meeting, and not just not joining the meeting.”
- “...action that proceeded the meeting made for substantial talk”
- “Participant engagement in designing the content.”
- “Yes, those well planned with an intended outcome that allows the employee to know why they are coming together.”
- “When speakers connected with the audience and answered the questions sent to them in advance.”
- “Key success factors include: explaining why, stressing the importance of every voice being expressed, structuring the discussion, including a few meaningful activities, giving some time for small group discussion as a warm-up for the full group discussion, and closing with next steps.”
- “There was thought put into the presentation to ensure it was relevant to all.”
- “Sense of need for meeting agreed amongst the players”
- “When the remit is clear, targeted and brief enough for concrete action to arise, it can be useful and motivating.”

1 suggested making the meetings open to all hands, but not mandatory.

- “CEO holds open forums open to all hands but not required. Transparency exists which builds trust and lets concerns be heard.”

3 mentioned that comfortable location, food and drink, and even gifts are helpful.

- “In a smaller organization, an all-hands was a semi-social event that people actually looked forward to, with food & drinks and time to catch up with people we didn't see frequently.”
- “...comfortable location—great food and handouts/ gifts...”

15 said to keep the agenda focused and concise and the meeting as short as reasonably possible.

- “But keep it short.”
- “Yes, short, to the point, update or info sharing with time to ask questions”

- “The best all hands meetings were focused on a very simple message with the most credible person in the organization delivering the message.”

7 said the meetings are best when presenting primarily new information and recent developments.

- “Delivery of timely information, and a forum for engaging the audience with a real-time Q&A seem to be the most valuable use of everyone’s time.”
- “When a new message needs to be communicated, when there is an important change coming, new leadership, new work, a major change in business rhythm or organizational structure, it is good to hear it first-hand.”

18 said they got value from an agenda that focuses on enterprise-wide priorities and discusses the current situation and future vision—where we are, where we need to go.

- “It provides focus on the priorities that have to be worked on.”
- “Link employees to overall strategy; provide updates on how we are doing—sharing of business objectives and metrics”
- “We now have a monthly call, led by our new CEO. We start with reviewing progress made on our 6 priority initiatives for the year. The CFO shares exactly where we are in terms of revenue according to plan. Then one or two people from the field share a client success story. I feel that the meetings keep people feeling connected and hopeful for our future.”
- “The common strategic direction given and the open forum to ask questions DIRECTLY to the management, in front of everyone is a strong tool to keep sight of our Must-Win Battles and keeping the team together.”

12 said that they appreciated the big-picture perspective at these meetings, learning what other parts of the company are doing, especially in large and multi-location companies.

- “Busy people who work with different parts of the elephant. Teams, where 1 or more people are overwhelmed, can raise an SOS. When there are lots of handoffs and coordination is important. When people touch the same project/customer but aren’t co-located.”
- “In large organizations, it is useful to get a sense of what is being done in other areas; I like to hear that. I also like to get a sense of where the business is going.”
- “The participants got the whole picture and their understanding of the dynamics better”

7 said that positive, uplifting, morale-boosting material should be at the top of the agenda.

- “Don’t use this valuable time to discuss policy and rules. Use it to lift an organization.”
- “Sometimes we have inspiring and uplifting speakers or they are collaborative events.”

8 said that the meetings are a fine way to recognize employee achievements.

- “Recognize star employees and celebrate successes.”

- “We gave our team members opportunity to share their successes across the wider business. This gave them pride in their work, due recognition and inspired others to follow suit.”
- “For me the most valuable all hands allowed the workforce to present back their achievements, demonstrating a passion for the business, which was received very well.”
- “It's valuable when a leader recognizes individuals or groups who usually receive little or no recognition (the maintenance crew, the admins) or makes credible statements about inclusion.”

8 felt the meetings are needed when it's imperative to get the same information to all employees at the same time.

- “...an opportunity for everyone to at least be delivered the same message.”
- “... getting everyone on the same page all at once.”
- “Management team must have the exact same message going out to everyone to address a topic that cannot be overlooked, good or bad.”
- “The boss ... wanted us all on one page and made sure no one was unclear about what that was.”

15 said the meetings are very useful when the organization is facing big changes or problems, employees are unsure or worried, and rumors abound.

- “a) When employees are seeking some clarity b) At times when you are going through transformation”
- “Good all hands meetings signal a change and have the leader authentically explaining the why for the change.”
- “During an extreme emergency, the meeting was used to calm the troops and inform them of the actions taking place.”
- “Changes were planned. Management needed to communicate what to anticipate: what was changing, how it would change, the plan / schedule of implementation, support available for those to be impacted, where to go for further information. In addition, intact work units were guided through discussions to identify matters they would need to address including other work units with whom they would need to interact and agree on responses to the anticipated change(s).”
- “We've had clients who were front page news and in those cases, all hands meetings were very valuable as employees were reassured that all was OK despite the news. If information about company changes are more ‘insider’ related, then employees were pleased to hear from the top exec about what is going on.”
- “They put an end to rumors. Really valuable and necessary when major change is required and everyone in the org will have to change some behaviors/mindsets to achieve it. All hands serve to clarify what employees are hearing from the managers above them. I've often found that the critical link in communications about change are the mid-level and first line managers. They often don't realize the important role they play in communicating about change, and translating it down for their staffs, helping them connect it to the work they do and how they go about it. Senior leaders can use all hands to determine, at least somewhat, if their message is getting through and if it's understood.

All hands are also important when something bad has happened and people can be brought together to acknowledge it and grieve together. They are also useful when something bad has happened that goes against the organization's values, e.g. misconduct, malfeasance, and it's important for leadership to acknowledge it, apologize, and explain how amends will be made. Honesty and sincerity are always critical.”

2 found the meetings valuable for coordination either immediately before or after major events, project executions, etc.

- “Yes. Post-merger go live day ... worldwide TH to intro new leadership, new vision, strategy. Valuable on target, it was exactly what EEs (?) needed.”
- “When there was a clear plan and we were at the point of execution, an all-hands meeting was valuable because people could see the whole project coming together. They learned what groups were responsible for and the timeline for which tasks needed to be completed. It was 'go' time and this meeting served as final details / reassurance that 'we got this' message. It was a way to rally the team and a nice time to say thanks for work that has been done and will be done.”

25 felt that the value of the all-hands meeting is directly linked to the leadership—if the executives are transparent, prepared, and authentic, attendees benefit from the contact with them.

- “They give the workforce insight into the leaders’ perspective. It is the starting point that allows the mid-level managers and frontline supervisors to then more directly engage on the topic.”
- “There was a compelling leader who triggered new thinking. I felt more connected when I left the meeting.”
- “CEO in eye to eye with audience.”
- “Have only been to 2; they were good because we get to get up close with our GM (it is a physical attendance meeting), and he set some direction for the company and explained financial results.”
- “I attended one where the president stayed to address every single question put to him, for well over an hour past the scheduled stop time. Participants became emboldened to ask tougher questions, and he fielded them honestly and if he didn't have the answer, he said so.”
- “People who don't normally see their CEO get to see and hear them in person.”
- “The leader spoke with candor. He stated where he saw the team now and how it was stuck and his own lack of awareness which contributed to the problem. Then he invited others to share their experience.”
- “When the senior leaders seem to be focused on supporting staff and helping them become more successful.”
- “It's valuable when a leader clearly and concisely states in simple language the organization's higher purpose, and connects him or herself and the people in the room to it.”

2 suggested that it can be beneficial to invite an outsider to facilitate the meeting.

- “Facilitated by an outsider, our group had a values identification meeting that created an agreement from the team that we now can lean back on to routinely get to decisions easier.”
- “...well-led process with external facilitator mandated to silence managers when they take up too much space, or quite the opposite, invite them to offer their perspective when this is beneficial for the group”

1 noted that all-hands meetings are a good way to put his or her particular management methodologies into practice.

- “As a student and practitioner of Open Space and SOAR methodologies I have experienced the benefits of having everyone in the room several times and with several objectives.”

12 mentioned the interpersonal aspects of a big get-together: It’s a good opportunity to network, to mix with those in other areas of the organization (both laterally and vertically), to increase the sense of community.

- “...just plain old getting to build relationships with each other.”
- “I’ve also experienced great networking opportunities in person or large scale team building where you really benefit from the energy of others. You walk away feeling proud to be part of the organization.”
- “Give a lot of chance to collaborate and network.”
- “Opportunities to network and connect personally with people we are virtual to 98% of the time.”
- “There was a mix of executive vision-sharing with social time that caused departments/levels to really mix and not just stay in their hierarchy.”

4 said they found it useful to hear from other employees, not only the big brass.

- “One I found particularly valuable was when we had two different teams NOT from HQ report by video conference on how their efforts to take employee engagement data and to use it meaningfully to improve their working environment and their teams' engagement and satisfaction.”
- “...fun and engaging speakers that were not just senior leaders—employees (the natural leaders, not official leaders) were included in speaking at meeting.
- “Also just had one yesterday that was driven by the employees. CEO had no agenda coming in, just asked employees what questions they had. Meeting was very successful.”

2 said they appreciated occasional customer or client presentations.

- “Providing links to customer experiences...and in between guest speakers, like customers.”

1 said it was a valuable opportunity to dedicate full attention to an issue or issues.

- “People can switch off from their day jobs and focus on the task at hand. Much easier to get feedback and decisions.”

41 touched on the importance of two-way communication during the meetings, even if it turns out to be negative or contentious. All agreed that it’s essential (not just hours of being talked at), and some offered particular methods that they found useful, e.g. breakout groups, prepared questions, online voting, etc.

- “We were able to meet people where they were at, creating a safe space for participants to have valuable small group discussions that were elevated so the whole group could see the commonalities and differences. Dominant voices were managed with process and everyone was able to contribute and be heard.”
- “Everybody has a voice and gets the clan-feeling.”
- “If it can be done in a town hall setting with effective two-way interaction it can be very valuable. However, it is a challenge to do that well.”
- “The best meetings included activities where people were up out of their chairs and interacting with each other in a meaningful way.”
- “Where facilitation methodologies are used, e.g. World Café, Open Space, etc., in a genuine way to allow space for conversation and involvement.
- “...open to questions which get good honest replies even when direct and of critical nature.”
- “My experience has been all-hands meetings are valuable when there is a significant amount of trust in leadership and attendees are comfortable asking questions / sharing unscripted info.”
- “...the only all-hands meeting that I thought was really valuable was a real town-hall meeting where each breakout group’s thinking and ‘voting’ was captured in real time and shared immediately. it was a large group—several hundred—and each group had a scribe with a wired iPad and every person had an electronic "voting" machine. As the scribes were typing, the information was being collated then and there and the large group facilitator then shared with the whole group what was learned/gathered at the end of each. When there was something that warranted a vote, the vote was taken then and there and the outcome known right away. If that vote warranted further small group discussion, the process was repeated.”
- “Yes, great to get Q&A directly with leadership.”

8 concurred that the meetings need to end with takeaways and/or plans of action.

- “Yes, call to action was present.”

This comment touched on several of the points above; it simply doesn’t fit neatly into any one of the categories. I include it because it seems like a good illustration of a successful all-hands meeting in which the management honestly informed and greatly moved the staff, who came out of the meeting and collaborated on a solution.

- “I have been to one where the VP advised the employees that the contracts are shrinking and company may have to lay off some employees if the situation does not improve.

Letters were sent to all personnel including the management regarding impending serious economic situation. The employees were all in unison to help the organization succeed, and they suggested voluntary days off so that all employees can have [keep] their jobs while the sales and marketing were successful in reversing the situation.”

Some people responded with positive comments when they addressed Question 2. I felt it was better to include those here.

19 gave overall positive feedback about all-hands meetings, a few indicating they’d not attended one that was without value. Others said that these meetings are useful opportunities for management to address particular concerns, to allay rumors, or to disseminate new information. One person said the meetings are especially useful when staff lead the discussions (rather than management).

- “The ... all-hands meetings that were driven by senior management are very helpful in providing answers to questions in employees’ minds.”
- “All-hands meeting can be invaluable if the meeting is well planned out, the manager or chair knows how to engage people and to leverage the collective talent in the room.”
- “Only those with new info seemed valuable or those that reassured employees during big changes in some way.”
- “I always learn something.”
- “Even if people question why they are there, it's still better to include than exclude.”
- “When topics or discussions were staff-led...”

About the Author:



Over twenty years ago I started looking deeply at why people resisted change in organizations. This resulted in my book, *Beyond the Wall of Resistance* (1996, 2010). I soon realized that what I was learning applied to anyone who needed to get others interested in their ideas. As a result, I wrote *Why Don't You Want What I Want?* (2002) to help individuals influence others more effectively. Sales people, clergy, hourly workers, middle managers, executives, and even parents have told me that the approach I developed works.

Over the years, I kept looking for ways to simplify (but not dumb-down) my approach. *Batteries Not Included™* is the latest tool to help people engage and influence others more effectively. It seems to be equally effective helping people who lead major changes to individuals who are just trying to get their ideas heard.

I have worked with a pretty wide variety of organizations including Lockheed Martin, Sandia Labs, Deloitte & Touche, National GeoSpatial Intelligence Agency, Rohm & Haas (Dow Chemical), Verizon, Syngenta, Charles Schwab, National Education Association, The Washington Post, NASA, Urban Libraries Council, Tulane University Hospital, Kaiser Permanente, and many government agencies. I work in the US, Canada, the United Kingdom, Russia, Denmark, and Belgium. And with clients in many other countries via Skype. *Beyond the Wall of Resistance* was recently translated into Chinese.

And I play jazz as often as I can.

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