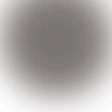




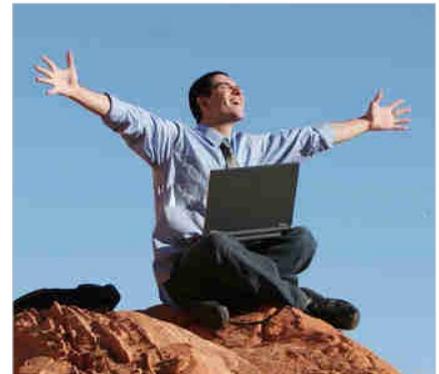
MANDAT  GR  WTH LETTER[®]

Growth Focus: Communication

CEO-Tip *of the Month*

by Guido Quelle

How to Make Managerial Board and Senior Management Meetings More Productive



If you had a freighter ship that could carry 1,000 tons of cargo, would you fill it up with 1,500 or even 2,000 tons of goods, and then leave part of the cargo hold empty so that anyone who wanted to could still throw anything on board that they didn't manage to get packed up before it leaves port? Not likely. But that's exactly what many meetings of the Senior Management or Managerial Board look like: The agenda, assuming there is one, is packed with 50 to 100 percent too many points, and at the end, say around agenda point number 17, comes "Other Business." It's the perfect recipe for frustration.

Senior Management and Managerial Board meetings can offer valuable tools for promoting growth, provided they fulfill ten conditions:

1. They are held on a regular basis, i.e., at least every two weeks. If this format is something new, it is advisable to use a weekly rhythm for the first two months so that everyone can get accustomed to it.
2. For members of the Senior Management, participation is mandatory. To allow for vacation, potentially more important appointments and unforeseen events, a limited number of permitted absences per participant can be agreed upon.
3. There is a standard agenda that can accommodate special topics and also includes breaks—e.g. for making phone calls.
4. There is a goal that should be reached in the meeting—and for every topic. A helpful pattern: I-D-C: Is the goal simply to inform, to discuss, or to make a choice?
5. Except for the Senior Management, only those people who actually have something to contribute should take part, and should only be there for the duration of the relevant agenda point(s).
6. There is a moderator, who can either be someone external or a member of the Senior Management. If the latter is the case, it shouldn't always be the CEO who

moderates; instead, there should be a rotation of this responsibility among the Senior Management.

7. Everyone sticks to the agenda.
8. Minutes are recorded and sent to all participants no later than 48 hours after the meeting. The minutes should also include work packages.
9. All smartphones and laptops are turned off, unless they are needed to discuss the content at hand.
10. If someone is unprepared for their topic, said topic is postponed without further discussion and the person in question is reprimanded. If a topic is to be covered that requires all participants to prepare in advance, but the necessary paperwork was not provided to them in time: Here, too, postpone the topic and reprimand the person responsible for the blunder.

The standard agenda should include the following elements:

- o News: Should be the first point on the agenda. Here, those things that the other members of the Senior Management should be aware of are talked about (in a purely informative manner) within a fixed timeframe. Clarifying questions are allowed; in-depth discussions are not, and would require a separate agenda point.
- o Status quo: Here the focus should be on growth-relevant information: Revenues, the latest performance figures, important customers gained or lost, and the outlook.
- o Personnel: Personnel changes, new employees and their responsibilities, personnel bottlenecks.
- o Status of relevant key projects, especially those intended to expand your business. The prerequisite is a prioritized list of the company's key projects. By no means should every single project be mentioned. Also, the activities between now and the next meeting should be covered.

As a rule, this standard leaves room for additional agenda points, provided there are mandatory meetings scheduled for (at least) half a day to a day, every two weeks. The effects: more commitment, less frustration and more growth.

Strategy & Leadership

by Guido Quelle

Growth-oriented Communication: Rules and Best Practices



The problem isn't that people don't communicate enough; it's that they communicate too much. Not a day goes by in which some member or the other of a project team complains that they have too many emails, talks, meetings and "not enough time." Our fastest-growing clients have recognized that the form of communication used plays an essential part in connection with their own growth, because:

- o Communication costs time. That's time that can only be used once and should ideally contribute to the growth of your company.
- o In many cases, communication costs money. Think about how much a one-day meeting involving twelve well-paid managers from different areas costs. Our rule of thumb: 800 to 1,500 euros per day for each manager, depending on their rank in the hierarchy and the size of the company.
- o Though communication can certainly overcome barriers, it can also—when done incorrectly or misunderstood—create new ones.

Everything, including communication, starts with a goal: "What do I want to achieve?"—that's the real question. Once we know our goal, we can decide on the proper medium.

- o Is an email enough?
- o Do I need a meeting?
- o Would a telco be a good idea?
- o Or maybe a video-call so that I can also see my counterpart?
- o Is it enough if I put the information in our intranet?
- o If I decide to call a meeting or telco: Who should attend? Who should contribute what? And what preparation is necessary?

If the goal of a given type of communication is not defined in advance, the likelihood of achieving the correct, implicitly desired effect drops below 50 percent. But holding a 20,000-euro meeting that has a 50 percent chance of being a failure surely isn't what you had in mind.

Here are a few rules and best practices for communication instruments. We use them on a regular basis in the growth projects we support, and work to ensure that the form of communication used helps to reach our project goals:

Emails

- o The most important thing to remember: As a medium, email is great, but it's not well suited to discussions. Exchanging information, Q&A, sending documents—emails are ideal for these purposes, but we should discuss things in a dialogue, not asynchronously.
- o The right tone: Many emails are written in a tone the author would never dare to use in the real world.
- o Short but sweet: When you read some emails, you get the feeling the author got caught up in "write-thinking," as in: "How should I know what I think until I've written what I wrote?"—Don't let this happen to you!
- o Unnecessary people in CC: Careful, you're stealing other people's time.
- o BCC: An absolute no-go! Not only are you stealing people's time; you also have a hidden agenda.
- o Less is more: Do you complain about getting too many emails? Then write fewer emails yourself. Daniel Goeudevert once said: "He who sows streets ... harvests traffic jams." The same is true for emails: He (or she) who sows more emails will harvest more.

Telephone conferences

I recently read an article in the German newspaper FAZ that essentially claimed telcos were a major productivity killer, a statement I find patently wrong. We've been using national and international telcos since 1993 damals mussten die Konferenzen noch über den Diensteanbieter hergestellt werden, and they have saved us countless hours of travel and meeting time.

- o Arrange for a teleconference room with a provider. Some providers even offer these rooms—which deliver outstanding HD speaking quality—free of charge, even with international dial-in numbers. This means that every participant can independently dial in from his or her location; you don't need to go through the lengthy process of adding each person to the group one by one.
- o Use services like doodle to agree upon dates.
- o Always bear in mind that a telco is just a regular meeting in another form. The same is true for phone calls. They all call for preparation—in some cases, even more precise preparation than a conventional meeting, since you can't just quickly hand new documents around the table. It takes an agenda, a starting and stopping point and—of course—a goal.
- o It's absolutely essential to have a moderator.
- o A major advantage: The social bantering and small talk disappear entirely, which saves considerable time.
- o Minutes should be taken.

Telephone conferences are a good thing when they avoid travel time and streamline a topic. We recently held a telco with the jury to select the recipient of the 3rd International Brands Colloquium® Award: twelve participants in nine cities, and spread over three countries. Duration: 75 minutes, even though every participant had a last chance to argue for their preferred candidate and a two-stage voting system was used. We had planned for the meeting to take 90 minutes. Needless to say, everyone was very well prepared. But, in addition to the time we saved: How much planning time do you think we would have needed for a face-to-face meeting (which would have certainly involved some cancellations)? In this type of situation, telcos can offer tremendous advantages.

Meetings

Of course we should also talk about meetings. Does this seem familiar? In meetings, the participants ...

- o ... focus on boosting their own image,
- o ... beat around the bush,
- o ... say the same thing up to three times with slightly different wording,

- o ... repeat what someone else already said in their own words (or even worse: repeat it word for word),
- o ... change their minds three times in one meeting, depending on who seems to be winning at the moment,
- o ... come unprepared,
- o ... come prepared, but not for the real topic,
- o ... check their smartphone or tablet,
- o ... interrupt others,
- o ... or—a favorite trick that often goes unnoticed—connect two completely separate topics: "I don't believe that what X said is right and would like to point out another topic: ..."

These problems are usually due to one of four factors: The meeting isn't important, has no clear goal, is too long or has no moderator.

- o If a meeting isn't important, it shouldn't come to pass. If there's really nothing to discuss at an upcoming jour-fixe, call it off. Ask yourself: Do we need a jour-fixe? Do I have to take part in a given meeting format (every time)? Is the group of participants still suitable and sensible? Unimportant meetings should be cancelled, and everyone attending meetings should have something to contribute.
- o Meetings without a goal are doomed to fail. Even if the outcome of a discussion is unclear, it still has to have a goal. For example: "The goal of the meeting is to exchange and discuss all relevant arguments, so as to provide the basis for a decision."
- o In my experience, people's attention span tends to sink rapidly. Accordingly, the rule of thumb is: It's better to have a streamlined meeting than a rambling one. You don't have to talk about everything, not everyone has to chime in on every point, and there's no need for everything to be repeated in a slightly different form. Pay attention to the time, and especially to when you take breaks.
- o You should never have a meeting without a moderator, who also attends to its preparation. Period.

We could go on to discuss how some managers think it's enough to put information in their intranet, or that textbook communication deficits can be found between departments—here Sales is our favorite, since it has to maintain connections to nearly everyone else. In fact, there are plenty of other points we could talk about, but I would be perfectly satisfied if every reader who is interested in doing so took home at least one of these points and used it to improve his or her own communication.

Profitable Growth—Release Internal Growth Brakes and Bring Your Company to the Next Level

Almost every company wants to grow—at least officially. Shareholders are demanding further growth and no management team would deny that the growth of their company is one of the top issues they are working on every single day. However, there are barriers to growth, and these are not only external barriers. Most often it is not the economy, not the market and not the customer who just “hasn’t got it.” The main barriers can be discovered inside every company, because growth always comes from within. If the organization is not ready to grow, initiatives to increase market share, to enter new markets, and/or to increase profitability are destined to fail. This book systematically addresses the main internal barriers to growth and provides practical guidance not only for discovering these barriers, but to systematically overcoming them.

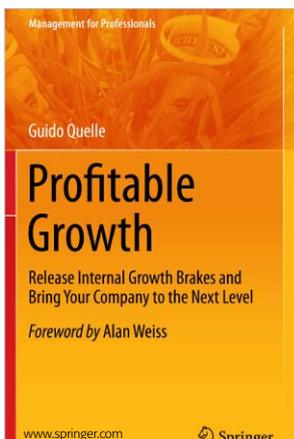
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Author



Professor Dr. Guido Quelle, “The Growth Driver,” is one of the rare people worldwide who focuses on creating profitable and sustainable growth as an entrepreneur, consultant, author and speaker for more than 20 years. His clients are active CEOs, general managers, senior executives, and entrepreneurs who are committed to consistent growth. With his consulting firm, Mandat GmbH of Dortmund, Germany, he successfully conducted more than 350 projects with 120+ renowned private and listed companies. More than 5,000 people were involved just in those projects that he himself managed. Prof. Quelle is always in demand when companies are seeking the support that will enable them to continue on a course of sustained profitable growth.



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“The nuance that distinguishes this book is the orientation that growth is measured, planned, and pursued in an orderly fashion, never growth for growth’s sake. Guido wisely takes the reader through a strategic approach which leads to intelligent tactics, not a frenzied tactical charge that undermines strategy.”

Alan Weiss, PhD, President Summit Consulting Group, Inc., Author Million Dollar Consulting and The Consulting Bible

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