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PACE makes meetings more productive

WOMEN AT WORK

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Fifty percent of meeting time is wasted, according to the September 2013 Ayers Report by Career Partners International. With an estimated 25 million meetings taking place daily in corporate America, the economic impact is staggering.

Leaders have a responsibility to ensure that meetings are a fruitful use of time. As Patrick Lencioni, author of *Death by Meeting*, says, "...the solution to bad meetings is not the elimination of them, but rather the transformation of them into meaningful, engaging, and relevant activities."

To accomplish this, I like to think of the acronym PACE.

P: Preparation. Solicit input on the agenda from team members. The agenda, plus relevant background information and pre-work, should be distributed in advance. Identify the primary objective of the meeting and the desired outcomes. Prime the pump by formulating one or two questions for the team to consider.

A: Agreements. High-performing teams establish agreements or norms for how they will work together. These norms include meeting logistics, standards for treating one another, handling differences of opinion, making decisions, and holding each other accountable. Agreements that are posted at every meeting remind team members to walk the talk.

C: Commitments. An outcome-producing meeting ends with clear priorities, action steps, and accountabilities. Deliverables are assigned and a timetable developed, with progress check-in points.

E: Engagement. To reap the benefit of each team member's ideas, savvy leaders create a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere. They foster open dialogue, make sure all voices are heard respectfully, and welcome diverse perspectives. They ask open-ended, non-biased questions that challenge team members to mine deeper for solutions. "We've tried that; it didn't work,"

is replaced with, “What do we need to do differently?” Engagement can be strengthened by communicating how each team member contributes to overall performance and by consistently acknowledging team progress.

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