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“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” could be my mantra as I’m a big fan of planning and preparation. I know that if I think things through, plan for the eventualities and some possible pitfalls, than the probability of success increases exponentially.

And for recurring situations, it’s helpful to have checklists, ground rules and other job aides to make it easier on everybody.

In fact, I just changed podcast platforms, (from Instant Customer to LibSyn) and had to rewrite the “process guide” for publishing my two podcasts ([Extraordinary Team Tips](#) and [Powerful Panels](#)). You might want to check them out on iTunes and Stitcher. For those who have already subscribed to my podcasts, you’ll need to re-subscribe, as sadly, my old provider won’t redirect the podcast. ☹

Have a magnificent month,
Kristin

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LAST MINUTE CRISIS PREVENTION CHECKLIST FOR A VERY IMPORTANT MEETING

You've prepared for an important meeting. The agenda has been sent out to all the participants and you're ready to rock 'n roll...or are you?

Before you leave your office, use this handy checklist to make sure you have thought through all the details to leading or facilitating an extraordinarily productive meeting:

Room

1. Tables - Is this a quick stand-up meeting or huddle? You won't need tables! Otherwise, make sure there is sufficient workspace to accomplish the agenda.

2. Chairs - Have enough for each participant plus two. You can even be a little creative with audience-centered seating.
3. Signage - Hang a sign on/by the door so the participants know they are in the right place.
4. Temperature - Know how to adjust the heating & ventilation controls.
5. Lighting - Ensure there is adequate lighting, learn to control the lighting (dimmer switch or master panel?) and make sure all lights are working.
6. Refreshments - Water is nice, and people tend to bond over food!
7. Electrical outlets - If everyone is bringing a laptop for an eight-hour meeting, you might want to consider the availability of electrical outlets and/or use an "octopus."

Team Materials

- Name tents/tags - If the participants don't know each other, consider creating name tags or name tents to make it easier to learn the names.
- "Stuff" - Bring any materials, products, projects, or work samples - especially if you are going to refer to or use it!
- Stickie pads - A great tool for brainstorming!
- Pens - Have these available for people to take notes or write on the stickie pads.
- Removable dots - Have these handy for impromptu voting.

Multimedia

If using a multimedia projector:

- Make sure there is a stand or table for the projector AND the laptop.
 - You may need to bring an extension cord if the electrical outlets aren't very close to the projector.
 - You'll need a clean projection screen or a blank wall. (Seems obvious, but I've run into a few situations where we were casting about for a screen at the last minute!)
 - Do a dry run to make sure the projector is positioned correctly for the screen size, focus is adjusted and the slides are visible with the room lighting configuration.
 - If it's your projector, always carry a working spare light bulb. You just never know!
1. Some systems are integrated with an HD screen and remote controls. Make sure you either 1) know how to work the system or 2) you'll have an A/V person there to set it up
 2. Regardless, make sure you have the right connectors. It might be a standard pin serial cable or an HDMI cable. I use a MacBook, so I bring both adaptors with me as well.
 3. Bring a handheld remote if you are advancing slides during a presentation. Some like to bring a laser pointer - and many remotes have a laser pointer built in. My personal favorite is the [Interlink](#).

Easel Paper - If you are going to capture information in real time, you may want to use easel paper (otherwise known as "flipcharts").

- Paper - Make sure you have enough paper to accomplish the task. If you are using adhesive-backed paper, test the adhesive on the wall. It won't stick to fabric very well, so you may need to use another method to post the papers on the wall.

- Masking tape - I used to carry masking tape with me, until a client claimed that I had ripped the wallpaper in a posh boardroom. (I know I didn't, but what can I say?) So now, I always carry blue painters tape with me.
- Stick pins - Sometimes, tape just won't work, so I bring a little box of [upholstery T stick pins](#) with me for those weird paneled or fabric walls.
- Easel - Get a sturdy easel that you can write on (I use [Quartet](#) easels whenever I can). There is a difference between an easel that holds up a directional sign vs. an easel that you write on.
- Markers - If you are writing on a dry-erase whiteboard, make sure you are using the correct markers! And if you are writing on paper, use watercolor markers that won't bleed through the paper. I always use [Mr. Sketch markers](#) - and they smell good too!

Lastly, don't forget to grab your [facilitator kit](#) - a little bag of goodies that you may need during the meeting - and away you go!

BEYOND THE GOLD WATCH by Joe Sherren

According to Statistics Canada, over 1,000 people turn 65 every single day which means more people are contemplating retirement now than ever in history. Studies show that some are thinking about working beyond the traditional age of retirement, while others are considering early retirement.

The good news is either of these options may be better than retiring at 65. In addition, many pension plans are not sufficient, forcing seniors to look at other options. This begs the question: Who ends up living longer?

A number of years ago, Dr. Ephrem Cheng provided an interesting perspective, suggesting the length of time a person lives may be determined by the age at which they retire. His actuarial study looked at life span vs. age of retirement based on a study of retirees from Boeing Aerospace. Here are just a few samples from Dr. Cheng's table:

- Retire at 50 - Die at 86 - Enjoy 36 years of retirement
- Retire at 55 - Die at 83 - Enjoy 28 years of retirement
- Retire at 60 - Die at 77 - Enjoy 17 years of retirement
- Retire at 65 - Die at 67 - Enjoy 2 years of retirement

Interestingly enough, I have also observed similar trends at organizations with whom I've worked.

Now, I realize studies like this can be significantly influenced by the type of profession a person is in, their socio-economic class, and how they have looked after themselves in terms of exercise and nutrition. Although some will want to argue the accuracy of these numbers because of the depth of the research completed, there is enough anecdotal evidence that we should seriously consider the implications.

These statistics show an astonishing inverse probability of life span according to retirement age. One theory is that often people who stay in jobs and retire as soon as possible (at 65) were probably not happy in their position to begin with and experienced significant stress for years prior to retirement.

Conversely, people who chose to retire early often went on to do something they enjoyed doing, likely reducing their emotional stress and physical burnout. This makes sense since people who "choose" to work long after their eligible retirement age did so because they loved what they were doing and did not suffer from damaging external stress.

Another thought is that early retirees took control of their lives early on, and were proactive about planning and managing the important aspects of their life such as their finances, health, and career which enabled them to stop working sooner.

There is also evidence that shows that if you have not retired by 65, and enjoy your job, you should just keep working. Not because you can't afford to, but retirement could actually be bad for your health.

There was another major study that followed participants over eight decades which showed people who continued working after retirement age lived much longer than people who did not. The study showed that it was not the happiest or the most relaxed older participants who lived the longest, it was those who felt needed, were contributing value, and pursuing their goals.

The authors of the study, psychology professors Dr. Howard S. Friedman and Dr. Leslie R. Martin, found some other interesting results: "The best childhood personality predictor of longevity was conscientiousness – the qualities of a prudent, persistent, well-organized person".

My question this quarter: "Are you proactively thinking about the age you plan to retire?"

GROUND RULES FOR PANELISTS DURING PANEL DISCUSSIONS

"OMIGOSH! I knew this was going to happen!"

If you think about it, a good panel moderator can see most of the things that can go wrong during a panel discussion - even before the session starts:

1. A blow-hard panelist who has a tendency to hog the microphone
2. An organization that notoriously starts late, so the schedule gets screwed up
3. Panelists who believe they have to chime in to *every* single question

And the list goes on....

Quite possibly, during your research talking to the meeting organizer and panelists, you were alerted to a few possible detours to a successful panel discussion.

So why not create some "ground rules" to great panels? These are prevention strategies to keep your worst nightmare from happening - and because you have them in place, you'll be able to intervene much quicker and more gracefully without looking like a complete jerk.

Here are some typical examples of ground rules for panelists to follow:

- Be additive. If you agree, say so if you must and move on to a new point.
- Not everyone needs to answer every question.
- Keep your answers crisp and concise. Save the long back-story for the bar.
- Keep it conversational. Jump in if you have something new to say.
- One person talks at a time.
- Generate light and not heat. Let's have a healthy debate.
- No shameless promotion.

Disclaimer: Be advised, these are only examples. Customize your ground rules to the group you will be facilitating!

You can mention these ground rules during your pre-session conversations, the meet-up right before the session is to start - and even at the beginning of the panel so the audience even knows the ground rules!

BTW, I also use ground rules with the audience during the Q&A. My favorite is to follow this process: state your question first (incredibly important so you don't get some long-winded question or rambling statement), whom you want to answer the question (a specific person or anyone) and then one or two sentences for context if absolutely necessary.

What ground rules do you like to use?

FROM THE BOOKSHELF: FASCINATE, REVISED AND UPDATED: HOW TO MAKE YOUR BRAND IMPOSSIBLE TO RESIST

I inhaled [this book](#), *Fascinate, Revised and Updated: How to Make Your Brand Impossible to Resist* over the weekend. Cover to cover. Couldn't put it down. Not only do I love Sally Hogshead's writing style, but the information is so darn brilliant. She made me rethink my own brand, confirmed it with her brand assessment, and gave me words to use (tactics) to make my brand even more powerful (there's a hint in there about what my advantage is!).

I have since gone back to key sections in the book and looked at my own marketing copy...and it's simply not that fascinating.

In a distracted world full of choices, in order to be seen and "impossible to resist," I have known that I have to amp up my copy - and now I have the language and tactics to do it.

If you are a business owner or responsible for marketing some kind of offering in the marketplace, this is a fascinating must-read!

UPCOMING WEBINAR Thursday, June 16, 2016

Using Creative Training Techniques to Engage the Audience During a Panel Discussion

Panel discussions can be dull and boring...unless you tap into techniques that will engage the audience. We're going to learn from the master of creative training techniques, [Becky Pike Pluth](#) how to knock your next panel out of the park!

If you are a meeting organizer or panel moderator, then this webinar is for you! [Register here](#) today at www.ExtraordinaryTeam.com/webinar-series/

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USA: 11890 East Juan Tabo Road | Scottsdale, AZ 85255 | 480.502.2100

Canada: 268 Campbell's Way | Cape Traverse, PE C0B 1X0 | 416.399.9223

U.S. & Canada Toll Free: 1.800.589.4733

www.ExtraordinaryTeam.com