

Common Retreat Mistakes

Bob, the CEO of a \$400 million manufacturing company decided to bring his leadership team together for a two-day off-site retreat. He determined who needed to attend, what topics they needed to cover, and handed it over to his executive assistant (EA) to arrange the details.

Sounds like a great plan, right? Wrong. Bob is headed for a marginally successful meeting. If he took a bit of time to avoid these common mistakes executives make, he could achieve extraordinary results with a high degree of commitment to the resulting plan, course of action, or major decision.

Let's review a few of these common mistakes and what you can do to avoid them at your next off-site meeting:

1. Create a Topical Agenda. Most CEOs like Bob have a general idea of what they want to cover and describe it to the EA, who then puts together a "topical agenda." Whoa! So what's the mistake? We all know that having a clear, concise agenda is the key to more effective meetings. True, having a topical agenda is better than none, but it's not going to get you the clear, definitive results you and your team are striving for.

Instead, create a results-oriented agenda with clear objectives and deliverables. For example, you can talk about "increasing sales" or you can create a "plan to increase sales by 10% in the next six months." Huge difference in the focus of the conversation.

2. Ratify Your Decision. If you have already made up your mind on the course, direction, outcomes, and plans, don't ask the team what they think. What happens if they don't agree with you? Are you willing to change your mind?

If the answer is still no, don't ask the team to simply ratify your decision. Be transparent by informing the group of your decision. Share the logic and reasons for making that specific



Boring to Bravo Receives Axiom Award

The Annual Axiom Business Book Awards honors the year's best business books, their authors, and publishers. A distinguished award in the publishing industry, Kristin's latest book, [*Boring to Bravo: Proven Presentation Techniques to Engage, Involve, and Inspire Your Audiences to Action*](#) received a bronze medal in the networking/communications category.

The Axiom Business Book Awards are intended to bring increased recognition to exemplary business books and their creators, with the understanding that business people are an information-hungry segment of the population, eager to learn about great new books that will inspire and help them improve their careers and businesses.

You can view the full list of award winners [here](#).

decision, what your concerns are, and then ask for their help in implementing it.

3. Invite Everyone. It is easy to bring in the entire cast of characters – absolutely everyone who touches the various topics on the agenda. It is much harder to strike the right balance of people. Each person you invite costs the company – in wages, opportunity costs, and increased meeting complexity. While the optimal group size is between 6-13 attendees, executives tend to invite a far greater number “just in case.”

Who absolutely needs to be in the room for the entire meeting? It is probably a core group – your direct reports, people you consider to be your “leadership team,” and other key stakeholders critical to the meeting objectives. Everyone else can be put on “standby” to dial or video in remotely. If you just need them there for a portion of the meeting, coordinate the time frames so they arrive just in time to participate.

Want to know the other seven mistakes leaders commonly make when conducting an off-site retreat? Download your copy of all 10 mistakes [here](#).

Extraordinary Team Ground Rules

Think back to the best team you have ever been on. You know the one. You know the one that had great results, the team progressed quickly, and you really enjoyed working with them. Oh yes...and wouldn't it be great if everyone brought that same ethos to each and every team?

One of the best teams I have ever been on was the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve Quality Team. A rag-tag band of ten would congregate in Washington DC once a month for two days – and accomplish some amazing things for the U.S. Coast Guard. To this day, I still remember our guiding principles or “ground rules” for effective team behavior:

- The team is an entity that is greater than the sum of its parts.
- Active cooperation from every team member is vital for team success.
- Team members must work closely together and make every effort to support one another.
- Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
- Rules of Behavior for Effective Teamwork
 - Ask for ideas from everyone.
 - Offer help without being asked.
 - Accept all suggestions as valid for consideration.
 - Consider the needs, motivations, and skills of other team members when offering help or advice.
- Work together to solve problems.



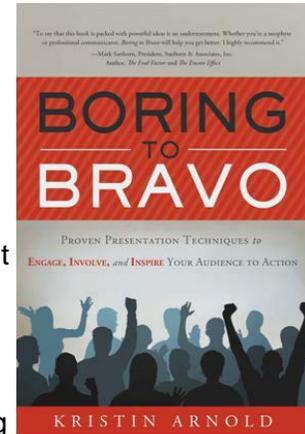
From the Bookshelf

On January 1, I made a New Year's resolution to surround myself with positive energy, feed my mind with transformational information, and [take the stairs](#), even when it doesn't feel good to do so.

So I was absolutely delighted to receive a copy of [Chad Hymas'](#) new book, [Doing What Must Be Done](#). I have tremendous respect for Chad as a fellow NSA colleague and a great board member. He gets more things done than most people, is a genuinely great guy with a beautiful wife and family...and became a quadraplegic a decade ago. Chad shares his journey, inspiring readers to become much more than they think they can be. I think of this book as food for my soul, and it has inspired me to reach farther in 2012!

to support

- Recognize and consider others' ideas.
- Give your undivided attention to the person speaking.
- Respect each other by not interrupting.
- Set a time frame for each deliverable.
- Start on time and end on time.
- Plan each day, every day.
- Minimize distractions (debate).
- Breaks – called by the team or by individual judgment, recognizing that it affects the team dynamics.
 - Be open to constructive “Reminder of Our Rules.”
- Finally, have fun and be joyous!



We started each meeting by going around the table with each person reciting ground rule. At the end of each meeting, we would debrief what went well and what two ground rules we could do differently.

June 21 Webinar

Interestingly enough, I can still remember these ground rules, even though it was twenty years ago. And I bring these ground rules to each and every team.

Team Quotable

"A major reason capable people fail to advance is that they don't work well with their colleagues."

Lee Iacocca, CEO Chrysler Corp

No one wants to sit through a boring presentation. Worse yet, no one wants to give a boring presentation! Join Kristin Arnold of the award-winning book, [Boring to Bravo: Proven Presentation Techniques to Engage, Involve, and Inspire Your Audience to Action](#), Kristin Arnold, as she shares 10 tips to make your presentation more engaging and memorable.

About Kristin Arnold

Kristin Arnold is one of North America's most accomplished professional meeting facilitators. A consummate author, speaker, and trainer, she is on a crusade to make all events in the workplace more engaging, interactive, and collaborative. [Contact us](#) for more information about how we transform your teams from ordinary to extraordinary!

[Register](#) for this free webinar today and you may be the winner of your own signed copy of the book, [Boring to Bravo!](#)

Call me: 480.502.2100 (w) 800.589.4733 (tf) 480.502.2102 (f)

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