



The Key to Successful Projects

“Projects” are an effective means to achieve results. “Projects” are a part of our work life. We have “projects” we’re “working on” at home. Some projects are more successful than others; some seem to go smoothly; some seem to exhibit great teamwork, while others have no semblance of direction, coordination or accomplishment. What distinguishes the really successful projects?

While many factors make projects successful, one fundamental element is to begin with a **project creation meeting**. In this article, we’ll look at the benefits of project creation meetings and how to maximize their effectiveness.

Nature and Benefits

A “project creation meeting” is, literally, a meeting that “creates” the project. Sounds simple doesn’t it? It is, and it isn’t. First, note that we used “create” rather than “plan” or “design.” The purpose of a creation meeting is to bring the project into existence *as a team* before formally designing the project. The creation meeting is the first step in launching your project with your team, and in some cases, with having organizational approval.

Holding a project creation meeting is a trimtab action. It’s the place where the structure and nature of the project are established. The purpose of the meeting is to put in place the foundation for a successful project. Specific results of your project

creation meeting include:

- Creating a shared vision and mission for the project. (What difference will the success of this project make?)
- Aligning on project purposes and intended results
- Defining individual roles and accountabilities
- Generating ownership of the project by team members
- Creating a common understanding of the issues, background and importance of the project
- Aligning on the time line and how the major units of work fit together
- Defining lines of communication and authority — both within the project team and within the organization
- Inventing the agreements and principles for how the team will work together — the environment for success.

A creation meeting brings your team on board quickly and is a key step in oldingteam focussed on the success of the project.

Such a meeting saves time and energy — everyone hears the same thing at the same

time. This creates a common background and understanding of the project, its purpose and its intended results.

Elements of a Creation Meeting

A successful project creation meeting requires preparation and set up. Important elements to consider in designing your meeting include the following:

- Have the “right” people in the meeting. In addition to all team members (and even potential team members), include people affected by your project and any managers who must sign off on your work.
- Articulate the outcomes for the meeting clearly and ensure that they are aligned on by the participants at the outset. This includes management.
- Describe the project — its nature, background and the results to be achieved.
- Generate a “vision” for the project. What makes this project worth doing? What difference will it make? How does it contribute to the long term direction and objectives of the organization?
- Establish how the project is organized, including lines of communication.
- Provide an opportunity for team members to declare their commitment to the success of the project and the team.
- Establish the agreements and ground rules for this team, so that everyone will work as *one* team, committed to

the result and to each other’s success.

At the end of the meeting, identify the next steps in designing the project and make clear assignments, with due dates.

When a large project beckons, there’s always a temptation to dive into the work. Be assured, a project creation meeting will *save you time*. The power of having every team member as a partner — enrolled in the project, aligned on why it matters, clear on the results to be produced and how it will be done, and focussed on appropriate actions — cannot be overstated. Your project creation meeting provides a foundation on which you will build and a structure for monitoring your progress. It is your launching pad to outrageous success.

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