

# Meetings Effectiveness Inventory

## Self Report



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## **Meetings Effectiveness Inventory - Self Report**

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# Introduction

The Meeting Effectiveness Inventory (MEI) is a simple instrument to help individuals determine whether they are doing as much as they can to make the meetings they run and attend as useful and productive as possible. This includes all kinds of meetings that an individual may call or participate in, whether large and small scale, formal and informal, broadly based or specifically focused in terms of topic(s) covered.

The MEI assumes that there are four parts or progressive stages in a meeting. These are:

- Pre-meeting Planning
- Conducting or leading the meeting
- Encouraging Input from meeting attendees
- Meeting Action-Planning and follow-up

These four areas can be organized into a four-quadrant grid as follows:

<p><b>Encouraging</b> Input from all meeting attendees</p>	<p><b>Conducting</b> The meeting in a firm but democratic manner</p>
<p><b>Action</b> Planning and follow through on agreed meeting commitments</p>	<p><b>Planning</b> To be clear and focused in the meeting</p>
22	22
20	21

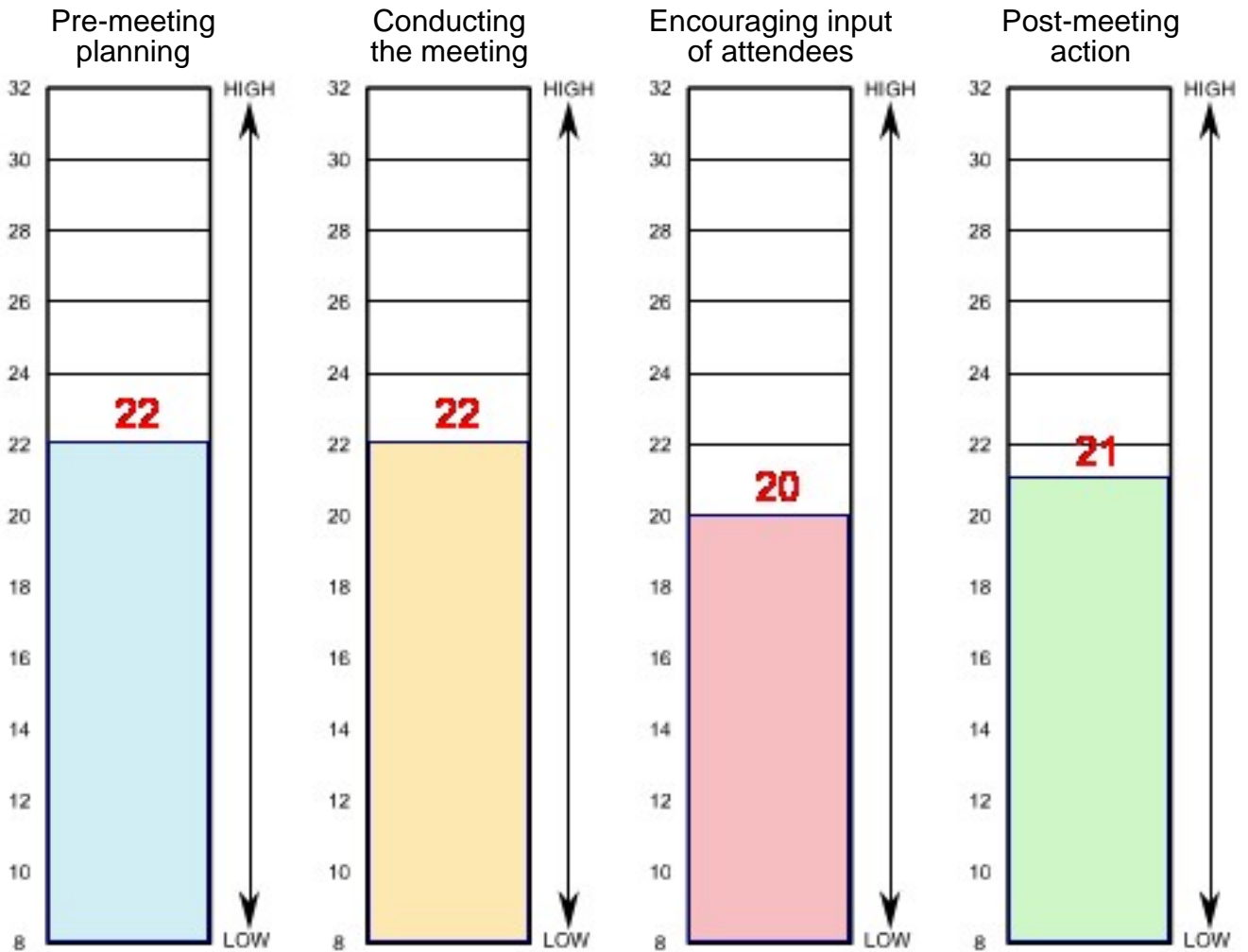
Using 32 questions, individuals are encouraged to assess their current performance in each of the above stages, and in so doing gain insight in which areas future improvement may occur. Individual self scores are shown in the center of this chart.

For those that wish to go further, a 360-degree feedback version of this inventory is available to send to one or several colleagues.

# Meeting Effectiveness Inventory

## jon warner's MEI Results

Your scores from completing the on-line questionnaire are shown in the four columns below. The higher your score, the more effective is your perceived ability to Plan, Conduct, Encourage input and coordinate planned actions when meetings are held.



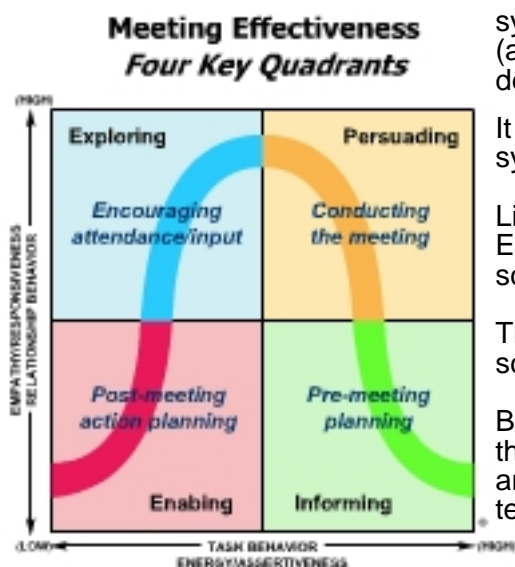
A measure of your overall effectiveness of meetings that you lead is represented by the "total" score derived by adding your scores from the 4 columns together. Your peers/colleagues total score is shown below.



# The Meeting Effectiveness Inventory Model

## The four preferences:

Because meetings are simply a form of communication, the Meeting Effectiveness Inventory model is based on the Situational Communication®



system developed by Jon Warner and Aubrey Warren in 2003 (and of course, the wider Situational Leadership® model developed by Dr Paul Hersey).

It uses the same labels as the Situational Communication® system for all four of the grid quadrants.

Like the Situational Communication® system, the Meeting Effectiveness Inventory model uses 2 style differentiation scales. These are the scales of Energy and Empathy

The Energy scale relates to assertiveness and the Empathy scale to responsiveness.

Both the Energy and Empathy scales are broad generic labels that attempt to describe the external observable behaviour of an individual or individuals, not his or her or their inner traits or temperament.

## Energy

Energy is a collective name for a scale that is fundamentally concerned with the visible vocal and physical behaviour that an individual brings to a meeting. In simple terms this scale runs from high to low.

At the high end of the scale energy levels are likely to be observed as powerful and strong, enthusiastic, faster, louder, vocally active and verbally assertive. High energy is most often seen when an individual is seeking to control or direct a meeting (both before it commences and at the outset).

At the low end of the scale energy levels are likely to be seen as much more reserved, slower, gentle, understated and quiet, with calmer and limited verbal expression. Low energy is most often seen when an individual is seeking to involve others in contributing to a meeting or in acting in a facilitation role.

## Empathy

Empathy is a collective name for a scale that is fundamentally concerned with visible or experiential relational behaviours that an individual brings to a communication. In simple terms this scale runs from high to low.

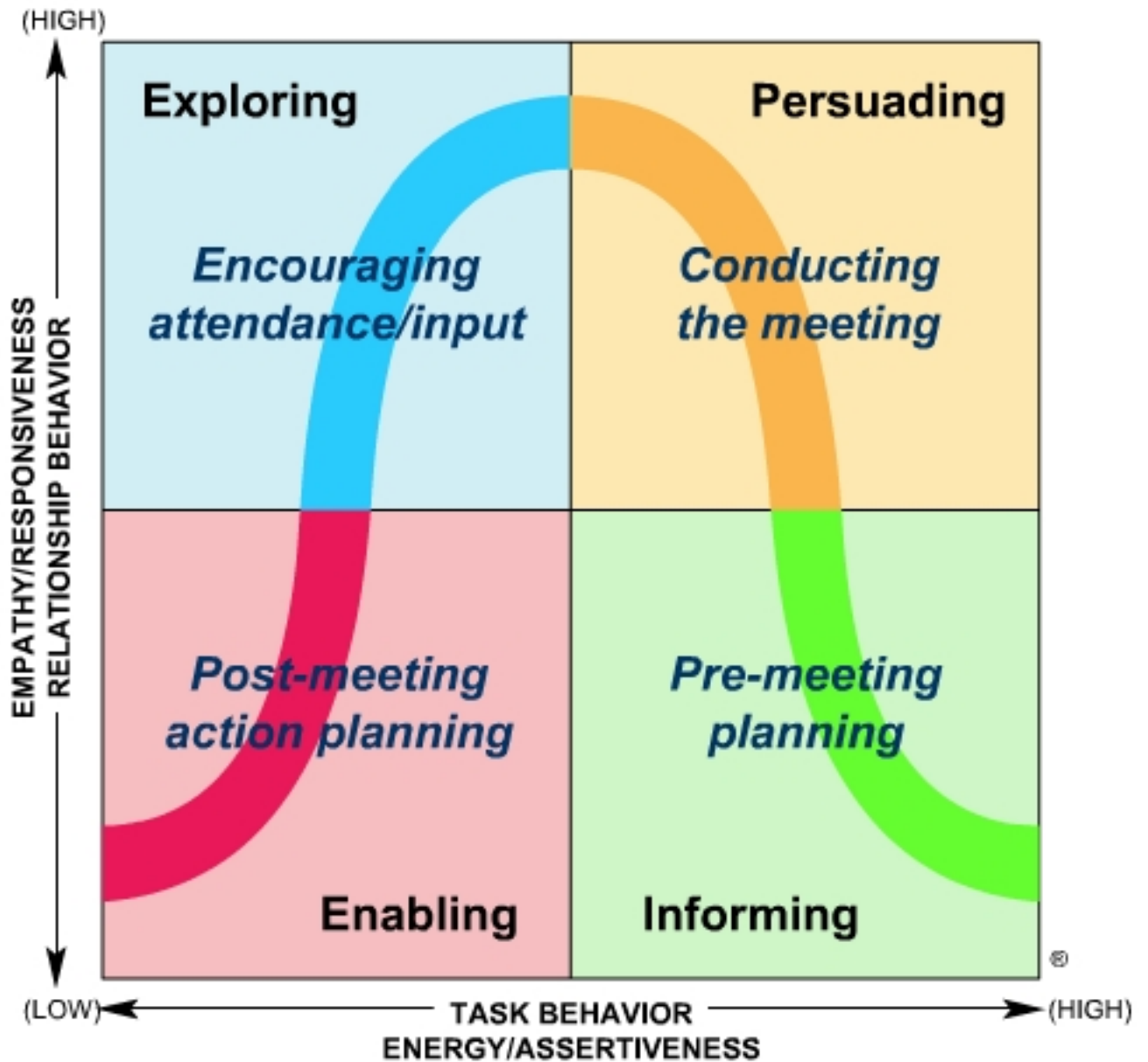
At the high end of the scale empathy levels are likely to be seen as warm, cheerful, positive, affirming, inquiring, reassuring, caring, amiable, genial and affable. High empathy is most often seen when an individual is seeking to bring quieter people into a meeting or keep all meeting discussions friendly and constructive.

At the low end of the scale empathy levels are likely to be seen as cool, calm, relaxed, dispassionate, placid and reserved, even detached. Low empathy is most often seen when an individual is seeking to stick to a meeting agenda, control time or adhere closely to meeting rules.

The 2 scales are interspersed as a four-quadrant grid as shown below. This creates four communication quadrants with the one-word labels of Informing, Persuading, Exploring, and Enabling (which is entirely consistent with the Situational Communication® model).

# Meeting Effectiveness

## *Four Key Quadrants*



# Development Action Planning

Your results shown earlier in this report, will indicate in which areas you may have the potential to improve your meeting control or influence effectiveness in four areas or categories – Planning, Conducting, Encouraging or Actioning.

As we have already suggested, the above categories line up with the four Situational Communication® styles of Informing, Persuading, Exploring and Enabling. This linkage is shown more clearly in the table below:

The table below gives some summary detail on what each of the four key financial areas covers:

Meeting management Category	Linked Situational Communication Style	Link Description
<b>PLANNING</b>	Informing	Meeting Managers prepare in advance and give clear and focused information to meeting attendees to help make the experience as productive as possible for all parties.
<b>CONDUCTING</b>	Persuading	Meeting Managers control the meeting format and process and engage in persuasive steering or meeting agenda.
<b>ENCOURAGING</b>	Exploring	Meeting Managers encourage all attendees to contribute and allow as much topic exploration as possible.
<b>ACTIONING</b>	Enabling	Meeting Managers facilitate the process by which individuals commit to follow up and action on specific agenda items.

When reviewing your scores, you may find that you have the greatest improvement potential in one of the four categories, and this is the one upon which you may therefore wish to concentrate your future attention. Equally, there may be improvement potential in two, three or all four categories and you may therefore want to work on all of these at the same time.

Whether the development focus is on one or more categories, the remaining pages in this booklet provide some useful background information and ideas on all four of the Meeting Effectiveness categories. Please use the notes boxes at the foot of each page to record any ideas of your own in terms of what you might do to improve your effectiveness in the future.

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# Meeting Effectiveness Inventory

## Pre-meeting Planning

Unfortunately, for every good meeting, there are often many more poor ones, or ones that demotivate those who attend them. A poor meeting is one in which the following outcomes often occur.

Poor meetings...

- waste time
- can lower people's morale
- waste money
- can be all talk and almost no action
- are often disruptive to time and tasks important tasks
- slow down individual or team progress
- may breed office politics
- create confusion or even chaos
- can be divisive

As depressing as all this sounds, most of the above can be avoided with a little careful pre-meeting planning by the meeting coordinator, and with a focused intention to give people clear information about what is required of them.

On the page overleaf are eight key questions that every meeting coordinator should be asking well ahead of any actual meeting (and this can be used as a preparation checklist). However, of these eight, three are critical.

'Is this meeting really necessary?' Perhaps, the most critical of all because there may be several other more efficient ways to achieve your communication goals. For example, instead of a meeting circulate a memo or report, send e-mail, or even call the key participants individually.

'What goals or objectives do we want to achieve?' Also extremely important. If the meeting coordinator hasn't clearly defined the goals or objectives, how will he or she clearly inform all the other meeting attendees?

'Who needs to be at the meeting?' A huge difference maker. This saves time for the people who really had no interest, knowledge or contribution to make in the first place, while assisting those that do attend the meeting simply by keeping it as small and as focused as possible.

To be well prepared, it is well worth your time to assess all questions on the page overleaf, making notes as appropriate, at least until this can be done confidently as a mental exercise.

Personal notes on greater effectiveness in the Pre-meeting Planning category

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# Meetings Effectiveness Inventory

Effective Meeting Preparation Sheet	
Meeting title/focus: _____	
Questions	Responses
1. Is this meeting really necessary or can we use another means to achieve the ends?	
2. What goals or objectives do we specifically want to achieve?	
3. What particular decisions need to be made at the meeting?	
4. Who needs to be at the meeting?	
5. What type of meeting should be held (formal/informal, chaired or loosely facilitated)?	
6. What should be included on the agenda of the meeting?	
7. How long does this meeting need to last at the maximum?	
8. How will I clearly communicate agenda items of what people should be prepared to discuss?	

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# Meeting Effectiveness Inventory

## Conducting a Meeting

Once a meeting has been convened and is underway, it rarely goes well if it lacks good control (or becomes an open free-for-all for everyone). This simply means that someone needs to be the meeting manager or coordinator and needs to keep a firm (albeit fair and democratic) steering hand on the proceedings.

**In specific terms, a meeting manager's role is to:**

- Focus attendees' attention on the meeting's overall aims and objectives (and not let it get side-tracked).
- Introduce meeting agenda items and gently persuade people to keep to the relevant subject.
- Keep all discussions reasonable and constructive .
- Guide people towards firm decisions and outcomes on agenda items, as much as possible.
- Ensure that any debate (which is generally a healthy thing) does not deteriorate into destructive conflict of any kind.
- Keep good meeting order (and particularly keep discussions on time and on track).

In reading such a list, many meeting leaders may feel that such steps can be overly strict or even create resistance from people within the meeting (with too much firm control, order and procedure acting to stifle debate and overall progress). However, the reverse is actually the case most of the time.

A good meeting conductor will therefore seek to strongly manage all the meeting process issues, but in so doing, become a single voice or contributor when it comes to meeting content.

In other words, the trick is to define and police the rules and let the group play the game. Like a good sporting referee or umpire, if this is done well, the meeting coordinator's role will operate smoothly and almost unnoticed by the attendees (who will feel free to focus their time and energy on the agenda items to be discussed).

To be well prepared, it is well worth your time to assess all questions on the page overleaf, making notes as appropriate, at least until this can be done confidently as a mental exercise.

Personal notes on greater effectiveness in the Conducting a Meeting category

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# Meeting Effectiveness Inventory

## Encouraging Input

Although we rarely want to see any meeting elongated unnecessarily, an important part of the process (especially for an effective meeting coordinator) is to ensure that there is adequate and representative discussion and/or decisions from all the attendees (and not just the few more extraverted characters that may dominate much of the debate). A clear, focused and well-run meeting will help to achieve this, but the meeting coordinator's role is often much more subtle. This means that the meeting coordinator's contribution is not to command people to involve themselves, but to gently encourage people to enter into the discussions and ensure that each agenda item has been fully explored and debated by all parties.

The main skill for a meeting coordinator in making sure that all meeting attendees contribute is initially one of carefully watching people and listening to the proceedings. This allows them to make the most appropriate interventions given the circumstances. This may include:

- Gently asking open questions of individuals (and of the group as a whole from time to time).
- Stopping some people (often the louder or impatient ones) interrupting before other individuals have finished speaking.
- Giving people time (especially the quieter or more introverted ones) to clarify any input given.
- Carefully acting to stop some individuals from monopolizing the conversation or taking a lot of the meeting air-time.
- Using gentle humor where appropriate to deal with unhealthy disagreement or conflict in the meeting.
- Actively summarizing input regularly and asking the whole group to comment to check that understanding is common before moving on.

The more effectively each one of the above can be done, the more efficient the meeting and the more that all attendees will enjoy coming to your future meetings.

Personal notes on greater effectiveness in the Encouraging Input category

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# Meeting Effectiveness Inventory

## Post-meeting Action, Commitment and Follow-through

However well planned a meeting may have been, expertly conducted or democratically run, it will all count for very little if the whole process doesn't come to some firm conclusions and create a basis for future action. Put another way, any meeting always needs to resolve what next steps should be taken, when and by whom (even if the action is to do nothing further).

Contrary to many individuals' beliefs, it is not the role of the meeting leader or coordinator to be responsible for taking action or following through. His or her role is to steer the most relevant meeting attendee to take accountability for taking the next steps on each agenda item under discussion.

Hence, although this is a strong prompting task, the meeting coordinator facilitates or enables the process by which attendees commit to action (and in ideal circumstances, ensures that these commitments are summarized in writing so as to become an open record of what is to be done, how, by whom and by when.

In fact, it is more important to record decisions made and action steps to be taken as part of the notes or minutes of a meeting, than to keep a full log of what was discussed in detail.

Hence, a meeting coordinator should always ensure that a person taking notes or minutes has a clear format or template for emphasizing the action elements of the meeting. Once such notes have been circulated to all attendees, there should be no confusion about what needs to be done, and the next meeting can start with a review of these commitments and the relative progress that has been made since the previous meeting.

Personal notes on greater effectiveness in the Action and Commitment category:

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# Personal Action Planning Sheet, Commitment and Follow-through

Use the following questions to help guide your future meeting effectiveness improvement effort.

- Pre-meeting

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- Conducting

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- Encouraging input

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- Post-meeting action planning

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Which of the above categories needs the most time and focus in helping to improve my meeting coordination effectiveness and what are the things I can put into practice immediately?

What are my poorest meeting habits or shortfalls?

What are the top three changes that are likely to have the greatest impact on future meetings or help to overcome my current shortfalls?

(A)

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(B)

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(C)

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How will I track or measure my progress in terms of bringing about greater personal effectiveness in attending or running future meetings?

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