

***PRACTICAL MANAGEMENT THAT YOU CAN USE  
TODAY TO HELP YOU BE A MORE EFFICIENT AND  
EFFECTIVE MANAGER***

***"5 SECRETS OF HOW THE  
BEST MANAGERS GET  
WHERE THEY ARE"***

**Gary Dennis MA, PGCE**

Tried and tested practical ways to  
dramatically improve the way you manage a team

"If you are a team leader, supervisor, manager or someone simply  
looking to move into management and are looking for an easy explanation of  
management theory then **STOP**, you have found it"

# ***CONTENTS***

Introduction	3
Welcome	4
Chapter One: <b>Why should you listen to me?</b>	5
Chapter Two: <b>How to develop your management knowledge, skills and abilities</b>	6-10
Chapter Three: <b>Planning your way to success</b>	11-12
Chapter Four: <b>Why being on time is important</b>	13-14
Chapter Five: <b>How to manage information</b>	15-19
Chapter Six: <b>Leading effective meetings</b>	20-22
<b>Share your Success</b>	23

## **Introduction**

This e-guide is dedicated to all those real top managers I have met over the years and who have helped me not only run a training company, but provided me with the best possible ways in which to manage.

The contents of this e-guide are covered by copyright ©2013 by KD Training Solutions. All rights are reserved. No part of this document or accompanying files may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, electronic or otherwise, by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher.

This e-guide is presented to you for information purposes only but is presented by people who are professional management trainers. The contents herein are based on the views and opinions of the author.

While every effort has been made by the author to present accurate and up to date information within this document, it is apparent that technologies change and the author reserves the right to update the contents and information provided herein as these changes occur. The author takes no responsibility for any errors or omissions if such discrepancies exist within this document.

This e-guide contain the 5 main reasons why the top managers are so good and if you follow it, you can become as good as they are, guaranteed!!

## **Welcome**

Are you already a team leader or manager? Maybe you are just thinking about it or like a lot of other people, fell into the role? Don't worry because you are not alone!! Wherever you are in your management career, this e-guide will give you the 5 main reasons why the best managers are as good as they are. And guess what, yes, you can do it too. Simply follow the easy to understand guide and I guarantee that your management knowledge, skills and abilities will improve instantly.

Learning to manage a team properly has brought me great satisfaction over the years and since I have been teaching (too many years to remember), I have seen hundreds of people improve dramatically, when they learn to do it the way it should be done.

This e-guide is designed for people who are thinking of moving into management or have been doing it for a couple of years based on their common sense alone. Even if you have been in management for some years, you will still find some useful things that will definitely improve the way you manage or just make your life a little easier!

OK, let's get started. Everything you read in this e-guide is based on the 5 main reasons why the best managers are as good as they are.

*CHAPTER ONE*  
WHY YOU SHOULD LISTEN TO ME?

## **Introduction**

My name is Gary Dennis and I am the Managing Director of a management development company based in Royal Wootton Bassett called KD Training Solutions.

Over the past 15 years I have been using my management knowledge, skills and abilities to help hundreds of people. I have done this through short management programmes through to a complete suite of National Qualifications, accredited through the UK's largest management institution, the Chartered Management Institute (CMI).

When I started in management some 40 odd years ago (wow, it is really that long), I had to learn the hard way – yes you know it, trial and error! When I took my first management position and “told” a team member what I wanted and when I wanted it, he threatened to “rip my head off”. Nice bloke but was 20 years my senior and did not appreciate the approach I took! Needless to say, lesson learnt!!

After many years in the military, then working in education for a while, I decided to open my own management development company and pass on to people like you, my experiences and tips for managing effectively and efficiently. Since then I have helped hundreds of managers improve and visited thousands of different businesses. This has enabled me to bring to you the 5 main reasons why top managers succeed.

To prove my point, here is a comment from a candidate on a recent high level programme in management and leadership:

"KD Training has positively convinced me that change can happen in the work place through Management Development. The sessions are inspirational, energising, bringing lots of ideas, with both substantial and in-depth knowledge; together with case studies, learning from experience and being fully practice-orientated. The course pulled together a well-balanced composition of participants, which contributed to interesting and focused discussions and exchanges. Not only have I benefited as an individual but I feel that my employees have too. Well done Gary!" David O'Leary, New Store Europe, November 2012"

TIP NO 1 - HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

**Introduction**

Here is the first tip. People who succeed in management always ensure that their knowledge, skills and abilities are always up to date.

Much has been written over the years about personal development and you can even get a Masters Degree in it these days. The thing is, for the average person there is no need to get over complicated. The purpose of this Chapter is to provide you with very practical steps you can take to ensure your knowledge, skills and abilities are kept up to date whatever job role you are in.

OK, whatever anyone else says, if you are not properly trained yourself, there is no way you can ensure others are up to scratch.

Here are some recent research statistics. Nearly 70% of managers do not have the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities to manage a team properly. Not only is that very sad but it makes for a very difficult job for those concerned, especially in the current economic climate. There is also a claim that poor management costs the UK millions of pounds, which is a bit obvious! You will be aware that some pretty big companies are going out of business at the moment and a lot of people are claiming that poor management is to blame.

In order for you to develop your knowledge, skills and abilities, you need some kind of process to work with and although there are many theories around, here is one tried and tested process that I have found works without failure.

**Where do you start?**

Well, your organisation like any other, will be trying to achieve something. Whether that is to increase its income, gain more of the market or simply staying alive week after week, does not matter. Your role as a manager is, therefore, to use the people you have around you to help achieve that aim.

Most managers are thrust into a management role without the appropriate development and that is sad because as I mentioned earlier, poor management costs the UK million of pounds, let alone the heartache of suffering managers!

## **What's next?**

I am going to assume that you are starting from scratch and know nothing about developing yourself. That way, I will cover everyone.

The most practical and straightforward way of starting is to look at "where you are now". In other words, determining what knowledge, skills and abilities you currently have associated with both your job role and you as an individual. I like to separate your job from you because I think it is important not to confuse the two.

Like most things, starting off is the most difficult! I remember when I first started training in Martial Arts. After the first days training, I could not walk for a week!!!! But, I kept going and am now a 3<sup>rd</sup> degree Black Belt. I now help teach people and I can see myself in them when they first start. The simple answer is, just get on with it!

Once done, though, the information you have gathered can be updated regularly with ease. Imagine starting off a list of your friends in a new mobile phone. It takes time to build up your list but once done, is easy to control and change.

"Where does this information come from?" I hear you ask. Well, you can start with these documents – your CV, any recent appraisal, your job description and your personal specification (if you have one). Next, you can gather more information by talking to your line manager, colleagues, friends and family and see if they can add anything about you. You might also be quite surprised about what people think of you compared to what you think of yourself!!!

You can also use lots of forms and questionnaires that apply to management but remember you must include both the positive and negative things about your current knowledge, skills and abilities to get the full picture.

## **What do you do with this information?**

Now you have done the hard bit, you can lump all of your information together and produce what we call a SWOT analysis. This simply means putting all what you have found into 4 boxes, namely your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. I have put an example on the next page:

<p><b>Strengths:</b>          Good communicator          Excellent planner</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses:</b>          No formal management qualifications          Don't delegate too well</p>
<p><b>Opportunities:</b>          Company is expanding with more management posts</p>	<p><b>Threats:</b>          Most colleagues are formally qualified in management</p>

A SWOT analysis gives you a chance to summarise your information and look at how you can turn weaknesses into strengths and threats into opportunities. You can see from the SWOT above that gaining a formal qualification in management would get rid of two weaknesses, brush to one side the threat and put that person in running for the opportunity!

I recently bumped into an old friend and he had just moved into a new job role. He asked me about coming on a programme of mine and I asked him why he has chosen to do that. He said it seemed a good idea!!! Now, whilst I have no problems taking his money from him, there is little point if he has not gone about his development in a sensible and logical way.

I gave him the same information I have given you, plus some questionnaires and pointed him in the right direction to gather some information about himself, and then we sat down and produced his SWOT analysis.

Once you have produced your SWOT analysis, you should look at where you actually want to be, in both the short and long term. Looking at the SWOT above, it would seem appropriate for this person to look at getting some kind of formal management qualification. This will then turn a weakness into a strength and put them on the same standing as the other managers when it comes to the company expansion.

So let's imagine that the decision was to get a formal management qualification. It is always useful to make sure you know "exactly" what you intend to achieve and we do this by producing what we call a SMART objective. By SMART, I mean "specific", "measureable", achievable, realistic and time-bound.

A typical SMART objective might look like this:

“To gain a Diploma in Management and Leadership through the Chartered Management Institute at Level 5 by attending a series of monthly workshops at KD Training Solutions in Swindon by the end of 2013. The qualification will be achieved after submission of 8 assignments and an integrated project”

It is specific because it is detailed. It is measurable because there are 9 pieces of work to be completed at certain times. It is achievable because this person has 3 X A levels and this is sufficient for entry to this programme. By the way achievable means “can it be done”. As this person has studies at "A" level before, there is no reason why not. Realistic means, does this person have the resources required to achieve it, like the money, time off to attend workshops and support from someone or somewhere.

### **Where do you get your development?**

There are many ways in which you can achieve your aims. For example, you could go on a course, watch someone else, read a book and many others. In the case of the person we are using as an example, it would have to be an accredited centre of the Chartered Management Institute.

Talking of courses, I am sure you have been on courses and come out at the end thinking how bad it was! It could be because of a bad trainer but quite often it is down to the fact that the “way” in which the development was delivered, was not right for you.

One simple model I use is this. There are people who like to “do things” and there are those who like to “think about things”. There are also those who like to “plan things” and then those who “like to know all about it”. The thing is that you need to do them all if learning is to take place.

Now, during one or maybe two of these areas, you will learn the most. For example, I learn more when I am planning and actually doing something. Over the years, though, I have learnt to take in more theory and reflect on what I have done. Put these together and you can learn in most situations.

If I go on a course, I like it to be dynamic, full of discussion and lots of role play! I can already hear some of you saying “role play, I don’t think so”. What would happen, though, if we went on a course together and this is what it was like? I would love it, you would probably hate it.

There is a test you can take and it will inform you of the way you like to learn best. If you search for learning style questionnaire at Honey and Mumford you will find one.

### **Do you need any help?**

I can tell you now, there is nothing like doing it alone! You need to find someone who has done it before or knows a lot about it. Why re-invent the wheel and start from scratch? When I did my management development programmes, I enrolled the help of my line manager who had an MBA. He helped me gather information so I could complete my assignments. He also showed me his assignments so I could see roughly what was expected.

So you need to get support from someone – don't try and do it alone. It could be someone at work or a friend.

It is also a good idea to have someone monitor what you are doing. Whilst you can do this yourself, you may be tempted to put things off. In our example, that person needs someone to ensure they attend the monthly workshops and put their work in on time. They should also check the results of the work so it can be ticked off as complete.

### **Putting it all on paper**

Putting it all on paper in some kind of personal development plan has two main pluses. It can be used by the person monitoring what you are doing and act as a permanent record of your development.

### **And when it's over?**

When your development is complete, make sure you go back over it all and see what went right and what could be improved for next time. For example, did you gather sufficient information and was your SWOT accurate? Did you set yourself a SMART objective? Did you achieve that objective? Did you choose the right place to learn? Did the learning match your preferred style? Did your support turn out to be as good as you had expected? Did the monitoring process work?

Final thought .....

Don't wait for someone to develop you. Take responsibility and do it yourself. Get your SWOT completed **now** and work out what you need to do.

TIP NO 2 - PLANNING YOUR WAY TO SUCCESS

**Introduction**

No self respecting top manager would get where they are if they are unable to plan their work and that of their team.

Planning is probably the one task that managers must be good at because everything depends on it. Poor planning gives poor results. It also upsets everyone involved and before you know it, you have been removed from the Xmas card list!

This is because, done properly it can provide direction to people and gives you an opportunity to look at different ways of doing things. It also reduces the uncertainty in a task and helps with the "what if" situation.

It also helps use resources the most efficiently and draws the team together so they are committed to achieving the plans aim.

A plan is, however, only a plan and quite often things go wrong. In Alice in Wonderland there is a quote that says "if you do not know where you are going then any road will take you there". So, be prepared for your plan to go wrong but make sure you at least have one!!!

As with all other topics in this e-book, planning can get complicated so I have taken lots of ideas and put them together in a simple process that is tried and tested that you can use straight away.

**What are you trying to achieve?**

In Chapter One we discussed having an aim or goal to achieve and the same applies to planning. Go back to Chapter One and have another look at the SMART way in which aims should be put together. Once you have produced your SMART aim, you should then agree it with your team. (They might even be involved in producing the SMART aim in the first place).

**Where are you now?**

Knowing where you are now allows you to see what you can actually do, plus it helps identify "gaps" so you can fill them. You can, actually, use the SWOT analysis from Chapter One to determine your current position.

## **Who is going to do what?**

Here you can determine what needs to be done; who is going to do it and what resources are required. Make sure you take into account what workload your team members already have and whether their knowledge, skills and abilities match what you are asking them to do. Maybe their experience in certain areas also comes into play. You also need to consider when it is going to be done and what standards you expect (i.e. the quality of the end product).

What if.....

I have always encouraged managers to consider the "what if" scenario and am always surprised that not many of them do. In other words, look through your plan and see if you can identify where things might go wrong. Once you have done that you can put what we call "contingencies" in place to cover any problem when or if it occurs.

## **Let's get on with it!!**

Ok everything covered, let's get on with it. Your job now is to keep an eye on what is happening to make sure it matches your agreed plan. How you monitor it up to you, just don't interfere too much.

## **Making changes**

As I mentioned earlier, no plan is secure. Something will always go wrong, guaranteed. But if you have planned properly, changes can be made quite easily. If you have ever watched the Apprentice, Alan Sugar often tells the apprentices that if something is clearly not working, then maybe they should have changed what they were doing. Of course, you should try everything possible first, but at the end of the day maybe what you are trying will simply not help you achieve your aim.

## **Reviewing what you have done**

This will come in all sorts of management topics. I cannot stress enough the importance of going over what you have done and identifying what you did well and what could have gone better. That way you learn for next time!

## **And finally.....**

As a final issue, when your team has completed a plan that you have put in place, make sure you provide them with constructive feedback so they know how well they carried out the work. Constructive means both positive and negative points.

TIP NO 3 - WHY BEING ON TIME IS IMPORTANT

**Introduction**

This tip is one that takes a little while to get hold of completely because things have to change one at a time, however, the very best are not seen running around like headless chickens from one job to the next. They are calm and in control.

You can do this as part of a national qualification or a simple one day programme. The fact remains that as a manager you must be able to effectively manage your time.

When people join our programmes, we ask them to score themselves out of 10 for their time management. Most people admit they are not too good and scores range from 5-7 out of 10. After we have gone through the topic, the areas that can be improved emerge very quickly and clearly so here goes.

**Where do you start?**

Guess what? Yes, you start by analysing what you are currently doing with your time. How do you do that? Well, you can keep a separate log or write down what you do in your diary and use that. Do it for around a week to 10 days and then analyse what you have written. These are some of the things you will find:

- **Unexpected visitors** – these could be from outside or internal. Have you ever been visited by someone from a different department and spent 20 minutes discussing something that has nothing to do with your work? Of course you have! – Tell them how much time you can spare and if it is none at the moment, tell them!
- **Telephone calls** – are you in the unfortunate position of having a phone quite close to you? Have you ever spent the same 20 minutes mentioned above, only on the phone??? Of course you have! – Move your phone or get someone else to answer it
- **Meetings** – oh my! I wish I had a pound for every meeting I attended that went over time. Normally, it is because the person chairing the meeting does not have the necessary skills to keep the meeting on track – see the comment below
- **Procrastination** – that's a big word! It means putting things off. That is something we all do. You don't need me to tell you that whatever you put

off will come back and bite you later on. Simple – don't!!!! Get on with things!

- **Inability to say "no"** – you will be surprised at the amount of people who will not say no for fear of offending someone – this is a skill you need to develop but you will be astonished at the response the first time you politely say no to someone. Remember, be nice and give them an alternative that you can do
- **Bad delegation** – again, without the skills, it is difficult to get things done properly through team members – this is an area that I will send you some information on later

Try working out the percentage of your time that is taken up by all of the things above because then you can work on each one and see if improvements can be made. As an example, I know a teacher who attends many meetings at his school. When I asked him how many he actually "needed" to attend, the result was quite startling. Out of 8 meetings each week, he only needed to attend 3. That means he could save himself 5 hours (which is nearly a whole day!!).

### **Where do you go from here?**

I think I have given you quite a bit to work on and put into practice but you will soon get used to it and be doing it without thinking. I am also sure you are aware, that learning something new always has its difficulties but if you put the effort in, you will get the results out.

If I were you, I would take each of the topics and work through them one at a time and introduce them into your normal working day. Try things out and see if they work for you or not. Get some feedback from your team members and see what they have to say. If there are some issues in your ability to lead your team that have improved, your team members will notice right away. If you are honest with them as well, they will be happy to tell what is working and what is not.

Of course, not everything will work straight away. If you try something and it does not go right, why not email me at [garydennis@kdtraining.co.uk](mailto:garydennis@kdtraining.co.uk) and I will try to help you. I won't be able to tell you **WHAT** to do because I do not know your particular job or industry, but I will be able to tell you **HOW** to approach the problems you come across.

**And finally** Simple - Get hold of your time; don't let it get hold of you

TIP NO 4 - HOW TO MANAGE INFORMATION

**Introduction**

I am sure you are aware that there is far more information around now and a few years ago and this can make things more difficult as it takes time to sift through. The best, though, can find what they want quickly and when they do find it, it is of such a high quality that decisions can be made instantly.

It has been said that information is the foundation of managerial control so without it, you are in trouble! Information management is seen in today's business as a key to competitive advantage and more and more you will find people employed just to oversee information systems.

In my experience, you would not be able to plan effectively, organize, lead or control if you did not have access to good information. This topic can also get complicated so I am going to simply split it into 3 areas, namely gather/select, store and use.

**Data or information**

Data is raw facts and figures such as a list of numbers showing how many students enrolled on management courses. This only provides an overall figure which is of limited use by itself. It does not, for example give any guide into income or profit

Information on the other hand is data that has been selected and processed for a specific purpose. For example, these numbers are now related to the level of each management programme and data is collated into different years.

**Why is information important to you?**

The gathering of information is almost limitless thanks to the growth of IT and regardless of what industry you are in, it is the key to success for yourself as a manager and your organisation. This is because you can monitor progress against agreed targets, keep up to date, make better decisions and deal with actual and potential problems. You can also plan and allocate work more efficiently.

You can also meet with customers or use questionnaires to get feedback on what they think about your organisation and the products and services it provides.

## Gathering information

There are basically 2 main types of information. Quantitative (or hard) information which is normally expressed in figures and asks questions like how much, how many, how frequently, how likely and how quickly, whilst qualitative (or soft) information cannot be expressed in figures and answers questions like what, why and how. Let's look at both in more detail.

Quantitative or "hard" information contains facts and figures from some type of measurement. For example, sales and waste figures, time spent on manufacturing products, number of police arrests or convictions, number of planning applications approved etc

Unfortunately, there is a tendency for people to rely on quantitative information because it is seen as being hard fact that cannot be influenced and can be measured objectively. A lot of this type of information exists in organisations and many even employ specialist firms to gather such information for them.

To transform quantitative data into useful information, it is necessary to find patterns and trends by using statistical techniques.

The main problem with quantitative information is that it is objective and ignores the subjective, presuming that "figures never lie" yet research shows that quantitative information alone cannot provide the "absolute truth". An example of this is that 1 and 1 is 2, but in management, even on a good day, it may only be 1½!

Qualitative or "soft" information is about quality, for example the experience of a customer in a taxi ride, cinema, restaurant or theatre. It could also be about the quality of service when reporting an incident to the police, being interviewed about a planning application or speaking to a social worker. As qualitative information is about quality, it is more subjective than objective and can be difficult to both gather and interpret.

I think the best ways to collect qualitative information are by watching a member of your team carrying out a task, interviewing someone, holding focus groups and joining in yourself.

Because figures are not involved, it is important to carefully select the source of qualitative information to ensure both accuracy and adequacy and be prepared to ask the right questions.

## **Primary and secondary information**

Information can come from 2 basic sources: primary and secondary. Primary information is that gathered by you for your own purposes and could include notes from meetings, customer survey results, networking with colleagues, focus groups, interviews, production statistics etc.

Secondary information, on the other hand, is that gathered by other people for their own purposes and you are using it for yours. It may include journal entries, published reports, sales figures etc

Some secondary information may be more accurate than what you can produce so why not use it instead of "reinventing the wheel". An example of this could be an assignment for a Management and Leadership programme on a particular topic. If an author has written a book on the topic and you are looking for a structure for your report, why invent your own structure when you can use theirs? All you need to do is credit them with the original!

## **Storing information for retrieval**

In most organisations there are a variety of methods used to record and store information and this could be in the form of databases, reports and filing systems (manual for electronic). In any event, the way you record information will depend on the main purpose of the information, your organisations policy and any requirements by law.

## **Why store information?**

As we have already discussed, since the improvements in IT, there has been a massive growth in information activity and it has also become much easier to store. You only have to think back a few years and look how we have moved from tapes to CD's and beyond. There are a few reasons why we store information and they appear to be for operational or financial needs.

## **Storage systems**

Your information needs to be retrieved when you require it and there are many ways in which it might be stored for later retrieval and come under the general headings of manual and electronic.

## **The Data Protection Act (1998)**

The Data Protection Act (1998) is an extension of the Data Protection Act (1984) and covers information held about individuals on certain paper files as well as computer data.

In essence, to comply with the act people must be open to individuals about information held about them and be very careful about passing that information to third parties.

The main reasons that the Act was introduced into the UK were:

- To counteract people's rights to privacy bearing in mind the amount of information that a computer can hold, transfer and process
- To enable the UK to meet its commitment to European law

The 8 basic principles of the new Act state that data must be:

1. Fairly and lawfully processed
2. Processed for limited purposes only
3. Adequate, relevant and not excessive
4. Accurate
5. Not kept longer than necessary
6. Processed in accordance with the data subject's rights
7. Secure
8. Not transferred to countries without adequate protection

Data of a personal nature also covers both facts and opinions of an individual and they are entitled to:

- Be informed by anyone who is controlling the data whether or not such data is being stored or processed
- Have a description of the data being used and be informed for what purpose the data is being processed and stored
- Be informed of where the data came from

## **Accessing information**

It does not matter what system is used provided it is user friendly and that information is easily accessible when it is needed, only to authorized people and in an easy to use format.

## **Quality = relevancy, adequacy, currency, timely and reliability**

In order to ensure that the information you are using is good enough, when you retrieve it, it must be relevant (only what you need), adequate (enough for you to make decisions), current (up to date), timely (in that you get it when you need it) and reliable (can be trusted).

## **Protecting electronic information**

Information stored by electronic means is only safe if it is properly protected. This means looking after your pc and associated hardware/software, disks and preventing loss or damage of information. For example there are risks to your hardware through fire, dust or smoke, liquid spillages, magnetic field, power surges and accidents.

Although CDs and DVD are more durable than the old floppy disc, they can still be damaged or lost.

A lot of people assume that any data that has been deleted, either on purpose or accidentally, will be lost. Anything that you delete from your computer only wipes off its "address" so that you cannot find it again, but it is still there. There are many software packages around these days that may be used to retrieve data that has been deleted. Having said that, I have tried a few with little success!!

The answer to most of these issues is to make back-ups and make sure no-one can steal your information.

TIP NO 5 - LEADING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

**Introduction**

Have a think about the last time you went to a meeting and it started and finished on time! Those who do it best organize, run and follow up meetings in a structured and methodical way that enable them to get the very best out of the time people are spending with them.

I don't think anyone actually knows when the first meeting took place but I am willing to put money on it that it lasted far too long, the wrong people were there, nobody really knew what they were going to talk about, was boring and achieved very little.

Anyway, leap forward thousands of years. Does it seem any different these days? The problem is that meetings costs money because while you are attending one, you are arguably not producing. I have been to some public sector meetings that last for a whole day!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Many people have written about meetings and I could write a whole book on them myself but here are some interesting facts. 70% of managers consider many of the meetings they attend a waste of time, lots of managers spend up to 75% of their time in meetings, the higher up the management chain you are, the more meetings you seem to attend and unproductive meetings are a significant source of job stress!

Meetings do, of course, serve a purpose and as someone famous once said "Consider this; our national economy is based on a 35 to 45 hour working week. Without meetings, this figure would dwindle to a few hours at the most. Our whole system as we know it would collapse"!!!!!!

**Advantages and disadvantages of meetings**

There are, of course, some great things that come out of some meetings such as exchange ideas, making decisions, people feeling as though they are joining in, getting to know people more and getting people to work together.

The downside is that valuable time could be used better elsewhere, money would be saved, managers are forced to make decisions by themselves and stress is added to an already overworked workforce!

## **Reasons for ineffective meetings**

Meetings are often considered ineffective because no-one bothers to produce an agenda, they nearly always over-run, people are more often than not, unprepared and nothing particularly interesting is decided upon.

In essence, you should only hold a meeting when something is going to happen as a result and you can't come up with an alternative method to achieve this result.

## **How to do it properly**

At some time in your managerial career you will be required to chair a meeting and you do not want to fall for some of the silly mistakes we have already discussed. Chairing a meeting is actually quite an art, so let's have a look at the basics.

Your role as a chair is to ensure that your meeting is well run, that you provide direction, establish boundaries and keep things moving. You can achieve this by paying attention to the 3 main components:

- **Preparing to chair** – Before a meeting starts, your responsibility is to ensure that:
  - The meeting has specific objectives
  - The appropriate people are invited and attendance is confirmed
  - An appropriate venue is selected
  - The agenda has been produced in advance
  - There is someone designated to take minutes
  - Introductory remarks are planned in advance
  - Relevant papers are circulated beforehand
  
- **During the meeting** – here you are responsible for:
  - Arriving on time and starting and finishing promptly
  - Managing the introductions to ensure everyone knows everyone else
  - Introducing each item to be discussed
  - Managing time
  - Allowing disagreement but managing conflict
  - Dealing with difficult people

## **Dealing with difficult people in a meeting**

Having mentioned managing conflict, it might be useful to discuss the type of conflict you are likely to encounter. Everyone who attends a meeting should have the same objective, but this is rarely the case and it is important that certain types of behaviour is managed effectively so as not to destroy the aim of your meeting.

These could be people who try to dominate the meeting (don't let them!), those who always seem to want to argue (don't get drawn into arguments and lose your cool), people who hold their own meeting in yours (normally just looking at them and saying nothing works a treat!). The final group of people is those who never contribute. Perhaps they lack confidence, experience or knowledge so try and induce them to contribute by asking them a question you know they can answer.

The important thing is that you deal with difficult people and not allow them to disrupt your meeting. If you have anyone else in your workplace that disrupts meetings and you want advice, email me at [garydennis@kdtraining.co.uk](mailto:garydennis@kdtraining.co.uk)

### **After the meeting**

When your meeting is over you should ensure that a review takes place to see if your meeting was effective or not. For example, were the right people there? Did you handle conflict appropriately? Did people read papers in advance like they were asked to do? You should also ensure that any agreed after-meeting actions are monitored to make sure they are carried out.

Using the framework above and the questionnaire on the next page, analyse the last meeting you chaired and write down some ideas about how you can improve in this area.

### **Assessing your own skills**

If you need to improve the way in which you chair meetings, then you really need to look back over what you have done in the past and assess it. This way you can identify changes that you need to make and try them out in future meetings.

Think about these things: do you use agendas, do you stick to the agenda, do your meetings always start and finish on time, do you state the purpose of the meeting at the start, does everyone join in, do you deal effectively with those who try to disrupt, do you summarise decisions made and actions that need to be done, do you thank people for their contribution, do you try to involve everyone in decision making, do you issue minutes within 24 hours of the meeting and do you follow up on actions that should be carried out?

## **SHARE YOUR SUCCESS!!**

Well, that's it!! I hope that you have found this e-guide useful and that you have been able to introduce into your management style some of things that the top managers do.

I would love to hear about your successes following the use of advice in this e-guide so we can share it with other managers.

Send your story on how you successfully used a KD Training Solutions suggestion to improve your management knowledge, skills or abilities to [garydennis@kdtraining.co.uk](mailto:garydennis@kdtraining.co.uk)

We may contact you find out more and we might want you to feature in one of our newsletters if you don't mind.

### **Have you enjoyed this e-guide?**

You can email us to let us know what you thought of this e-book at [garydennis@kdtraining.co.uk](mailto:garydennis@kdtraining.co.uk) Also, why not get a colleague or friend to register on our website at [www.kdtraining.co.uk](http://www.kdtraining.co.uk) and get a copy for themselves. They will also receive many other free benefits from registering with us.

### **Come to KD Training Solutions event**

If you go to our website at [www.kdtraining.co.uk](http://www.kdtraining.co.uk) you will see that we have a few FREE places left on some of our ½ day workshops between now and June 2013. We would love you to come along and see for yourself how we can help you whether you are a practising manager or are thinking of starting a career in management.