



MONSTERS IN MEETINGS - PART 4, QUIET PARTICIPANTS

Sometimes you have people who appear to be spectators in a meeting.

There are many reasons why someone would decline to participate. For example, the person may feel reluctant to speak out, may disagree with the approach endorsed by others in the meeting, or may be tired.

And yet, your job is to put the participants to work.

In fact, an effective meeting depends upon fair and equitable participation from everyone. Here's how to make it easier for quiet participants to contribute.

Approach 1: Encourage participation

When you notice a quiet participant, ask for contributions by looking at the person and saying:

"How do you feel about that, Chris?"

"What results do you expect from this, Pat?"

"Chris, how will this affect you?"

Sometimes a quiet participant will test the environment with a tentative reply or a minor, safe point. Respond positively and with encouragement to any response that you receive. Then probe further to explore for more ideas.

Sometimes you can encourage quiet participants to contribute by making direct eye contact, pausing, and letting your expression say, "What do you think?"

Approach 2: Change the process

Use sequential participation (a round robin) to collect ideas. This provides quiet participants with opportunities to speak. Introduce this process by saying,

"We want to hear from everyone, so let's use a round robin. Who wants to start?"

Use these techniques to involve all of the participants.

This is the fourth of a seven part article on Managing Monsters in Meetings.