

ALL-IN-ONE MEETING GUIDE

How to Win Over Mission-Critical Colleagues

Overview

Getting other people excited about your projects is crucial to your success. But it isn't always easy. Your coworkers have their own goals, priorities, and competing claims on their time.

This guide will give you tools to bring others on board to help you meet your goals.

Meeting Goals

- Learn new skills to win your coworkers' support
- Practice using them

Pre-Meeting Prep

- Encourage each member to come up with a work goal that requires bringing other people on board
- Remind everyone to bring a copy of this PDF
- Remind everyone to bring her One Action Update (if you're doing this)



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Joanna Barsh, director emerita at McKinsey & Company and author of *Grow Wherever You Work*, *Centered Leadership*, and *How Remarkable Women Lead*, with thanks to Kayvan Kian from McKinsey & Company, who collaborated on the exercises in this guide.

Meeting agenda

🕒 Approx. 120 minutes for total meeting (based on a group size of ten members)

1

Check-in

🕒 Approx. 25 minutes

Warm up, catch up, and get going

2

Educational activities

🕒 Approx. 75 minutes

Learn from experts and one another

- Activity 1: Kelly's story 🕒 5 minutes
Read the book excerpt about bringing on board resistant team members
 - Activity 2: Key takeaways 🕒 5 minutes
Take a few minutes to review the core concepts conveyed by Kelly's story
 - Activity 3: Bringing your "blocker" on board 🕒 20 minutes
Brainstorm how to persuade a reluctant team member
 - Activity 4: Learn extreme listening 🕒 30 minutes
Improve your listening and speaking skills
 - Activity 5: Ask great questions 🕒 15 minutes
Broaden your question "toolkit"
-

3

One action

🕒 Approx. 75 minutes

The little push you need to go for it

4

Wrap-up

🕒 Approx. 10 minutes

What's next and a few final words

Optional worksheet

One action update

Meeting guide

Check-in

Warm up, catch up, and get going

🕒 Approx. 25 minutes

Step 1: Icebreaker

👥 Group activity

🕒 1 minute or less per member

An icebreaker is a powerful tool to help us become present with one another and ourselves. One by one, fill in the sentences below and share them with your Circle. Listen carefully as each member takes a turn and say thank you when she's finished. Avoid the urge to slip into conversation.

- Today I am feeling . . . (choose one word)
- The challenge of bringing coworkers on board with my ideas makes me feel . . .

Step 2: Member Updates

👥 Group activity

🕒 2 minutes or less per member

Once you're warmed up, go around your Circle and share personal updates. As a general rule, personal updates should be brief and focus on big changes and important decisions in your life. (It's OK not to have one every month!)

If you have a One Action Update, share that with your Circle at the same time. (A One Action is one concrete action you committed to take at your last meeting; the goal of a One Action is to step outside your comfort zone or practice a new skill.)

For example, a member update might go like this: *"Since our last meeting, I asked my boss for a big assignment and got it. I'm thrilled but a little nervous [personal update]. For my One Action, I asked that coworker I've been struggling with out for lunch. She immediately said yes, and I was surprised by how easily we got along. I can see it helping in the office, and we're going out for lunch again next week—her invite! [One Action update]."*

Education activities

Learn from experts and one another

🕒 Approx. 75 minutes for all activities

Activity 1: Kelly's story

👤 Individual activity

🕒 5 minutes

Read Kelly's story about how she overcame her "blockers," the coworkers who could have slowed down her mission the most.¹

***"It took deeper listening skills to recognize what the team really wanted.
It's rarely about what people say, but what they feel."***

Kelly had a trust advantage: her openness helped her adapt. Case in point, she grew up with no interest in having kids—until meeting her future husband's large and close-knit family. Today Kelly is a mother of four. Being open enough to adapt drove her success in the body shop manufacturing plant. Kelly was only twenty-five at the time:

It was a complete unknown, a recipe for disaster. I was nervous. There were 60 United Auto Workers (UAW) employees, and the lowest-seniority guy on my team had 30 years in the plant. After 2008, we went from unlimited overtime to zero. The employees had relied on that money to pay for homes. I was thinking about how people were going to take it and how this was going to reflect on my performance.

We also had a very tough target: 80 jobs an hour. First, they tried to not make rate in order to get the overtime back. I was worried about anger and sabotage. I had to find a way to motivate them.

Kelly used emotion—fighting negative with positive—to find common ground and win over the team:

I thought, *Really? No, they can't just hate me! These people are going to like me!* I pictured them as grandparents, parents, friends, and neighbors. That made them human. I told them about my children and showed them photos. It's hard to watch someone you know struggle. I let them know I cared about them and their work experience so that they would care about me.

I was friendly, and over time, they became friendly. Even when they were mean and disrespectful, I was nice to them every day. I had an older brother, and that helped because he's on the rougher side.

¹ From Joanna Barsh, *Grow Wherever You Work* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2017).


I looked at what else motivated them. The guys worked close together and talked a lot. I walked the line and listened. One guy would give me clues, like his kids' sports scores. I found that they just wanted to have fun every day—not doing the same thing. We identified appropriate job switches. I included them in focus groups on how to improve the work-station. I realized that they were motivated by attention.

No one liked to be the slowest, so they all worked at the same pace. I started to post their times on the wall—all three shifts—and they began to compete. Some people wanted to win and worked faster. Most just didn't want to be last, so everyone's time sped up. In days, they went 10 jobs an hour faster. They liked the competition.

Some stations were slower, like the door line. I was working hard for months and not getting there. My internal goal was to narrow the gap—80 sounded impossible. I told everyone we could get there, but I didn't believe it. I never let on. The first time one of my door lines made the goal for an entire day, it was amazing. We had cake and celebrated as a whole team! I was pretty surprised. After that, the guys kept their momentum, the overtime issue was no longer the focus, and we moved on.

Activity 2: Key takeaways

 Individual or group activity

 5 minutes

In *Grow Wherever You Work*, Joanna Barsh identifies the following seven key takeaways from Kelly's story. Review them individually or as a group:

- **Understand that what other people want is often different from what you want.** Kelly wanted to meet her auto factory's production target. Her team wanted to have fun on the job and variety in their work. Kelly had to accommodate her team's goals for them to get on board with hers.
- **Make coworkers feel heard and valued.** If you're worried sick about a stretch assignment, it's normal to obsess about your own to-do list. Instead, take the time to learn what's important to the other people involved. Build in listening time in one-on-ones and group discussions. Take notes. (Hint: People love it when you write down their exact words—they feel as if their contributions have been recognized.)
- **Ask good questions.** If you want to influence other people, get curious about what they think and feel. Ask open questions—for example, "What does great look like to you?" or "What is in the way of achieving our mission?"
- **Seek input from everyone on how things are done.** Ask for ideas that improve things and find out what people enjoy in their work and help them do more of it.

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- **Listen more, talk less.** Often we listen without hearing. It takes intention and acceptance. Listen with your ears but also your eyes, your mind, and your heart—focused on the other person. Don't be afraid to leave a silence after you ask something.
 - **Help other people.** There's always something that you can do for your team members. If you go out of your way to help with their issues, you're more likely get their help in return. Sometimes, the simple act of hearing the other person is enough.
 - **Celebrate small wins together.** Kelly marked her team's success with a celebration. This helps to underscore that success is won by group effort. Put others in the spotlight. Spread the love and feel it come back to you.


Activity 3: Bringing your “blocker” on board

 20 minutes

Using these key takeaways, Kelly was able to overcome blockers—people who were resistant to her reaching her goal. In this activity, you'll identify a goal you want to pursue and work on overcoming any blockers who stand in your way.

Step 1: Name your goal

 Individual activity


 5 minutes

Write down an upcoming work goal. For example, “increase sales by 10 percent in the next quarter” or “improve customer satisfaction for every customer I interact with.”

Goal: _____

Step 2: Identify your blocker and how to relate to them

 Individual activity

 5 minutes

Think of the person who is most resistant to you successfully reaching your goal. That person is your “blocker.” Write down the name of that person.

Name: _____

We learned from Kelly's story that people's motivations are often different from our own. Think about your blocker's goals and priorities, then answer the questions below:

- What do I need from this person? What resources do they control?
- Why is this person resistant to my goal? Where is their hesitation coming from?
- How will this person be affected by my initiative?
- How much does this person care about my goal?
- How can I address their concerns?
- What is their goal and how could I be helpful to them in achieving it?
- What interests and values do I share with this person that could help me connect with them?

Step 3: Problem-solve together



Pair activity



5 minutes per partner, 10 minutes total

Get into pairs. One of you should read out your goal and your answers to the questions in the previous step.

With your partner, brainstorm how you could win over your “blocker.”

Then switch roles and repeat.

Activity 4: Learn extreme listening

 30 minutes

In Kelly's story, she brought her team on board by learning their deeper motives. She did this by listening carefully and responding thoughtfully. In the following exercises, we'll build listening skills to help you better engage reluctant team members.

Step 1: Gain listening awareness

 Pair activity

 3 minutes per partner, 6 minutes total

Designate one person in your pair as the speaker and one as the listener. With your partner, brainstorm how you could win over your "blocker."

- Speaker: Spend three minutes speaking about a specific issue at work that is important to you and be sure to express your feelings. Use the full three minutes.
- Listener: Say nothing. Listen as fully as you can, in complete silence. Stop the speaker when the time is up.

Next, switch roles and repeat the activity.

Step 2: Check in with each other

 Pair activity

 5 minutes per partner, 10 minutes total

First, close your eyes and take a minute to observe how you feel. As the listener, what urges did you have? Was it easy to stay silent? Did you want to give a solution or empathize? As the speaker, how did you feel having had the floor for three minutes? Did you feel heard and accepted? If the listener interrupted, how did you feel about it?

Then, take turns asking and answering these questions:

- As the listener, share with the speaker what you heard, what you observed, and what you think the speaker was not saying but thinking or feeling.
- As the speaker, how well did the listener hear you? What could the listener have done to make you feel (even more) heard? What could you have done differently to be heard more clearly?

Step 3: Experience listening as a group



Individual or group activity




5 minutes

The following fun exercise is designed to deepen listening (and speaking) skills.

1. Designate one person to stand in front of the group and tell a two- to three-minute story that is important to her. It can be work related or not.
2. Everyone else should listen well and be prepared to retell the speaker's story.
3. Have the storyteller randomly assign a second person to retell the same story.
4. If there is time, ask a third person to retell the same story.
5. As a group, discuss what happened. Did the story change? What did people observe during each retelling?
6. Ask the original storyteller for her reaction. What could she do differently to make sure her message is heard clearly?

Activity 5: Ask Great Questions

 Pair activity

 Approx. 15 minutes

Another way Kelly brought her team on board was by asking questions about what motivated them on the job and how they'd improve their workflow. In this exercise, we're going to learn about the kinds of questions that bring out the best in others.

Designate one person in your pair as the coach. The other partner will receive coaching on the work goal they workshoped in Activity 3.

If you are being coached, describe your goal to your coach.

Coaches: Ask these questions exactly as they are written:

- What exactly is the problem that is blocking you from your goal?
- When did you start having this problem?
- Who is responsible for causing the problem?
- What have you tried that did not work?

Stop the discussion after three minutes and debrief as a group. How did it feel to be asked these questions? How did it feel to ask these questions? In what situations would these questions be best suited?

Now, have a fresh conversation about the same challenge. Coaches, use these questions:

- What are you hoping to create in this situation?
- What has succeeded, even if only in small part?
- If you knew you couldn't fail, what would you do?
- What have you learned so far?

Stop the discussion after three minutes and debrief again as a group. How did it feel this time around? What was different?

What do you take away from this experiment? Why would you use the first type of questions? The second?

As you conclude this part of the meeting, please note: Neither set of questions is better or worse. The first set helps you focus on the problem, whereas the second set helps you focus on solutions.

One action

Learn from experts and one another

🕒 Approx. 10 minutes

We recommend you close every meeting by committing to a “One Action”—one concrete thing you’re going to do before your next Circle meeting to step outside your comfort zone or practice a new skill.

Share your One Action with your Circle

👥 Group activity

🕒 1 minute or less per member

One by one, go around your Circle and complete the following statements:

- Over the next month, the work challenge I’ll address is _____
- I’ll focus on winning over _____ [insert coworker’s name(s)].

Move quickly from member to member, and consider cheering one another on as you go.

Housekeeping note: We recommend you give an update on your One Action during your next meeting. On page 14 of this PDF, you’ll find an optional worksheet to help you prepare your update.

Wrap-up

What's next and a few final words

🕒 Approx. 10 minutes

Step 1: Finalize logistics of your next meeting

👥 Group activity

🕒 10 minutes

Before you break, make sure you have the basics covered for your next meeting, including day and time, location, and food and drink responsibilities. Decide what you're going to do when you get together or who is going to send out ideas. You may also want to talk through what worked—and what didn't—in today's meeting so you can brainstorm improvements going forward.

Step 2: Close on an energetic and inspirational note

👥 Group activity

🕒 2 minutes or less

Appreciate all the good work done in today's session! Go around your Circle one by one and complete the sentence:

- Now I am feeling _____ (choose one word)

Congratulations on a great meeting.

See the following page for a [One Action Update Worksheet](#).

One action update

Use the following prompts to prepare your One Action Update before your next meeting, to maximize your time with your Circle.

- What was the challenge that you planned to address?

- How did you address it?

- What was the outcome?

- In the end, what did you learn?