Engaging through team meetings.

Team meetings are vital in gaining and sharing first-hand knowledge of a process, direct experience of issues and initiating wider conversations. Engaging process players together in owning the outcome strengthens long term success, through a fuller understanding of the situation and addressing the right problems or changes.

Team meetings will usually be led by the team manager who may be the process owner but the facilitator may also take part. The aim of the facilitator or process owner is to create a safe environment in which team members feel comfortable in sharing information and ideas, expressing concerns expressed and identifying problems. However, the atmosphere must also be a positive one, in which the team is encouraged to work through possible solutions. The use of different methods to encourage everyone to contribute will reassure team members emphasising the benefits of the engagement approach, which will encourage them to participate further.

Pros and cons

**Pros**
- Different perspectives
- Enthusiasm to share and be honest
- Engagement at the team level will strengthen long term success in achieving the recommended changes
- Unforeseen positive outcomes
- Better communication and sharing of information
- Tapping into a broad range of skills and knowledge.

**Cons**
- Time pressure – particularly with large groups
- Staff opposing change and not contributing
- Space/encouragement required to engage
- Reluctance to speak in front of others
- Unpredictable future implications
- May raise the expectations of process players that their suggestions will be adopted.

Hints and tips

- Be prepared for reluctance, remain positive.
- Ensure all key team members are invited.
- Consider location and timing which will attract, involve and connect people.
- Hold pre-meeting(s) with key players and agree meeting objectives.
- Prior to the meeting, ask the team to note down thoughts, ideas and questions.
- Start with good news.
- Explain the objectives of the meeting.
- Encourage movement within the meeting – talking to different colleagues, writing on a board.
- Provide opportunities for the whole team to share their views, a success, what they are concerned about or where there is room for improvement.
- Look out for those who are quiet and encourage them to contribute.
- Value individual contributions but encourage dialogue.
- Conclude your meeting with a summary of agreements and actions.