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CUSP (CU I&E) Submission: OCG Stand Up Meetings [1]

Description

The Office of Contracts and Grants (OCG) has had great success with twice weekly 15 minute stand up meetings to replace the traditional two hour staff meeting every Monday morning. In addition to consistent, high quality information sharing, the format contributes toward building community and organizational pride. These standup meetings foster professionalism, collegiality and personal development by providing a wide variety of opportunities for each staff member to contribute individually or as part of a team.

At 9 AM on Tuesdays and Fridays, every staff member that is in the office makes their way to the common lobby area, gathering in a circle. With coffee mugs in hand, there is considerable chatter (sometimes quite loud) as staff members greet one another for the first time that day. The conversation immediately stops when the designated leader commences the meeting. Each standup meeting is different. Sometimes the topics are serious and weighty. Other times, we engage in fun learning that often illicit so much laughter that staff members from other units will join our stand up meetings—in part because they enjoy the camaraderie, but also because they are learning.

Generally, about 35-40 people attend each standup meeting. New hires immediately engage with everyone on the OCG team providing an opportunity to get to know their colleagues quickly. Staff members are encouraged to invite guests from other units as an opportunity to learn about other parts of the University.

We began experimenting with the standup concept by conducting daily meetings beginning at 9 AM for 10 minutes, Monday through Friday. After several months, we changed the format to try 15 minute twice weekly meetings which we have been doing for the past year. The first meetings were led by the director and deputy director. We then rotated amongst all supervisors such that each had multiple experiences with leading the daily stand up meeting. It further evolved such that each and every each staff member had the opportunity to lead the standups. Now standup meetings are led by teams (proposal, grant, contract, compliance, administration). Each team decides among themselves the topic and how they will run the meeting. The only rule is to respect the 15 minutes.

Topics are wide and varied including latest federal regulations or policy, status updates on various operational matters, strategy for responding quickly to unexpected events (government shut down), professional development, team building, health and wellness. We sometimes discuss seemingly mundane things such as assigning responsibility for keeping the refrigerator clean. We share best practices, providing support and guidance to one another. Staff members will routinely solicit others to join them on new projects. By getting to know one another, staff members have created a culture where they feel safe to take risks whether it be a new approach with conducting standup meetings or an innovative strategy for

improving operations. We celebrate successes large and small.

How does this impact the University?

Communication channels within OCG have vastly improved. The culture has changed to one that values each individual and their importance to the organization. Because we routinely gather and communicate, concerns are quickly addressed keeping unhealthy rumors at bay. Individuals seek out others to accomplish goals and objectives, creating high caliber teams. There is a high level of trust across the organization. By leading standup meetings, staff members have the opportunity to successfully experience a leadership role in a safe environment, allowing them to confidently practice with leading teams. Some staff members successfully transitioned into supervisory roles, practicing the skills and strategies that had been modeled in the standup meetings. Multi-generational issues simply dissolved.

Implementation Status

Fully implemented. OCG has been conducting stand up meetings since June 2013. Because standups have shown to be an effective way to transmit information and create meaningful professional and social connections, we expect to continue using this form of communication, allowing the format and content to evolve to meet the changing needs of the organization.

If you want to see a stand up meeting in action, stop by any Tuesday or Friday at 9 AM in Administrative Research Center building (ARC). You'll walk right into the standing up when you step out of the elevator on the 4th floor. Everyone is welcome.

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