

# Death By Small Group Meeting?

By Marc Lucenius

## Creating Narrative Tension

Patrick Lencioni's book *Death By Meeting* offers great principles for us as we consider how to run a great small group meeting. Let's be honest, if the meetings aren't good, the group won't be good. So we need to really focus on getting them right.

### I. Create Drama

"...imagine if I were to ask a room full of executives which they enjoy more: meetings or movies? They would probably think I was joking. And yet, meetings should be more interesting than movies because they have more inherent potential for passion and engagement than movies do. ...And so, how is it that we can enjoy one activity that is inherently passive and irrelevant, and loathe another that is interactive and relevant? Because screenwriters and directors have figured out long ago that if you avoid nurturing conflict in your story, no one will want to watch your movie. And they also figured out that it is during the first ten minutes that they must use drama to hook their viewers, so that they are willing to stay engaged for another two hours."<sup>1</sup>

What are the sources of drama in the life of a Small Group Meeting?

How can conflict be a resource to draw the interest in a group?

**Narrative tension** is what keeps the reader reading, because they're wondering what's going to happen next. We up the urgency in our meetings by giving careful thought to the narrative tension we feel. As leaders you set the tension on the front end by creating expectations in those who attend the small group. Consider casting a vision for your group meeting on the front end with statements like this:

- "By the time we leave tonight, we want God to meet us and to show us \_\_\_\_\_ (this aspect) about himself. We want to respond to him in a way that honors him and edifies one another."
- "Jenny has a need. As the folks in her small group, we are the first ones who ought to be on the scene to care for her. We need to take the time we need tonight to figure how God would want us to care for her."
- "Tonight, we are going to spend extra time praying. We need to spend enough time and give it enough attention so that each of us leaves here knowing that we met with God personally tonight."
- "By way of reminder. We are studying Ephesians because it particularly speaks to us as members of community. God calls each of us to be a part of community and we want to take that seriously. I expect each of us will come away tonight having learned something significant that will affect the way we relate with each other."
- "Have you ever experienced joy the way the Bible teaches us about joy? Do you believe you can?"

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Lencioni, *Death By Meeting*, p. 227-228

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## Different Types of Meetings

### 2. Different Types of Meetings

“The single biggest structural problem facing leaders of meetings is the tendency to throw every type of issue that needs to be discussed into the same meeting, like a bad stew with too many random ingredients. Desperate to minimize wasted time, leaders decide that they will have one big meeting, either once a week or every other week. They sit down in a room for two to three hours and hash *everything* out. Unfortunately, this only ensures that the meeting will be ineffective and unsatisfying for everyone.”<sup>2</sup>

Just like a corporation can fall into this, so can a small group. 30 minutes coffee and icebreaker. 45 minutes in Bible Study, 15 minutes wasted on who-knows-what, 30 minutes talking about prayer, quick let’s go!

- A. Is it possible to burden a weekly or bimonthly small group meeting with too much agenda?
- B. What other possibilities are there out there for ways we can build our small groups through different types of meetings?

### Different Types:

- Classic Small Group—A well executed Bible study with thoughtful guidance given towards personal prayer requests and prayer time. Administrative things are discussed with reminders about the vision of the group without it becoming unwieldy
- The Fellowship Night—This can be dinner, dessert, games, etc. The goal of this evening is to build community and friendship in a more casual setting. For some groups, *getting out of Dodge* is the best course of action, either going out to dinner, to an event or a beach house, etc.
- The Night of Prayer—This is an evening that helps the group grow their involvement in prayer. A guide from the group sets up a schedule that has the group praying together for much of the evening. Well-chosen places for briefly sharing prayer requests, etc. This could be a gathering to particularly pray for one particular topic, event, etc. or for the needs of a community. This night needs narrative tension also. This needs a compelling vision greater than the outbreak of influenza among the children of the group.
- Gender nights—Men meet on an evening after kids go to bed to hang out in front of a ball game or just to talk and pray with each other. Women get together during an evening or a Saturday morning breakfast to build their friendship and to pray for each other.
- Outreach Night—Share with each other two-three friends who do not know Christ and pray for them. Plan an outreach together that will give those friends an opportunity to meet some of the members of the group.
- Service events—Portions of the group gather to help each other or the community with various service projects and special needs.
- One on ones—Lunch and coffee between different group members to build friendship and collaborate.

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<sup>2</sup> Lencioni, p. 235

