

Large Group Activity: ‘Positive Comments Only’ Meeting

Empowering colleagues promotes growth, increases confidence, builds trust and boosts morale. As a result, an empowered team fosters a supportive work environment with improved productivity.

Have a meeting with your team, encouraging everyone involved to participate and give input. The main rule for this activity is that no one may make a negative comment...

Only positive comments are allowed!



Instructions

1. **Pick a Topic/Situation:** Define a situation that needs to be addressed in your laboratory. **Schedule 30 minutes** for all staff to work on the topic, so you can talk through solutions together. If you have a large number of staff, consider meeting with smaller groups of staff who are familiar with the topic.
2. **Agenda:** Send out an agenda with information about the meeting at least one week before, as some colleagues need time to think through a topic before offering input.
3. **Meet and Discuss:**
 - In no more than **10 minutes**, go around the group to hear and record every team member’s ideas. Ensure everyone is heard by:
 - In-Person Meeting: Sit in a circle and go around.
 - Virtual Meeting: Establish a speaking order and call on each person individually.
 - Take **15 minutes** to go through each idea to refine it or group potential solutions together. Determine which ideas provide realistic and impactful solutions. Assign staff to oversee potential solutions.
 - Remember: Only positive comments allowed! Potential solutions should be affirmed on their positive attributes, not on the potential negatives for other solutions.
4. **Debrief:** Use the last five minutes to debrief by restating the issue addressed, possible solutions and staff assigned to tasks.
5. **Follow-up:** Schedule a follow-up meeting to evaluate progress and realign expectations as needed.

Use this in conjunction with the other Empowering Colleagues resources in the [Effective Communication for Aspiring Laboratory Leaders Toolkit](#), designed by Cohort 17 of the [APHL Emerging Leader Program](#) to empower public health laboratory professionals to be better leaders by improving communication skills.

The toolkit has three sections: **Relationship Building**, **Empowering Colleagues** and **Conflict Resolution**.



Running a ‘Positive Comments Only’ Meeting

Below are examples of topics, actions and facilitation tips that can help make your meeting productive and enjoyable.

Discussion Topics	Activities/Actions	Facilitation Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve laboratory testing coordination. • Streamline workflows. • Equitable division of work. • Providing opportunities for individual growth. • Staff retention/staff recruitment. • Succession planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorm and/or list ideas. • Group common themes and prioritize the most impactful solution. • Solve disagreements to build consensus. • Evaluate different options to find the most appropriate choice. • Determine final solutions and action items. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set rules and assign roles (notetaker, timekeeper, facilitator). • Have an agenda with clear objectives and stick to the time allotted. • Ensure all meeting attendees have an opportunity to voice their opinion. • Encourage active participation, questions, and feedback. • End with a meeting summary.

Reflection

Ask for staff to provide anonymous feedback regarding the activity. Reflect on the feedback you receive and use it to adjust future meetings and activities.