

Business Development Meeting for Employees

Getting your employees involved and inspired



SNAPSHOT

The E-Myth Mastery Program

Module 4: Foundations of E-Myth Management

Business Development Process: MG-0030

"You've got to lead and not drive, inspire and not dominate, create respect and not fear, win support and not opposition."

– Anonymous

Overview

Holding company-wide Business Development Meetings is a key benchmark in building your business. Here are some of the reasons why it's so important:

- It's the most effective platform for delivering your vision and securing the emotional commitment to move forward with it.
- It creates a sense of "we're all in this together." Everyone is important. We're all hearing the same message at the same time.
- It allows you to address employee concerns and fears both directly and indirectly; if ignored or handled improperly, it could sabotage your business development efforts.
- It's part of your ongoing management system for keeping everyone focused on and involved in the process of innovation, quantification, and orchestration in your business.
- It's the way to get everyone working on the business, not just in it!

Business Development Meeting Process

Distribute the announcement memo

Meet privately with selected individuals

Conduct your first Business Development Meeting

Plan periodic Business Development Meetings

Key Points

Bringing business development and your vision of the company to your people is an exciting step. And the majority of them will be ready and eager to join with you in this great game of building a business that really works. Some of your employees, however, may not react as favorably as you expect, due to underlying concerns or fears about what the changes will mean to them. You can minimize these fears and help your people face the changes with strength and maturity by:

- Positioning changes in your employees' self-interest;
- Helping them focus on what they truly want;
- Stating clearly people's past accomplishments and positive qualities;
- Emphasizing what will be gained;
- Giving people the opportunity and permission to speak openly;
- Staying calm and not over-reacting; and
- Being steadfast in your commitment to building the business.



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Putting the Pieces Together™

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Engaging Your People’s Hearts and Minds

By now, your people have probably noticed that something’s up with you and your business. Maybe they’ve seen you come to work with more excitement than usual. Maybe they’ve heard you use some new terms, like “Primary Aim,” “Strategic Objective,” or “Key Frustrations.” Or maybe you’ve even had lively discussions with some of them about a “business development program.”

Now’s the time to formally invite all of your people to leave the sidelines and join in the game with you – the great game of building your business so that it *really* works. Now’s the time for everyone to become active players in taking the company to the next step in its evolution and beyond, to its ultimate vision, your Strategic Objective.

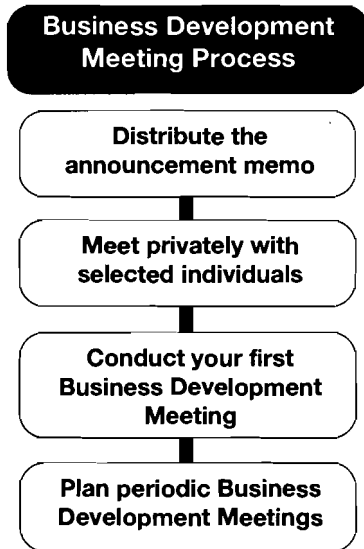
After your own passion and commitment, the best way to turn your business dream into a reality is to captivate the hearts and imaginations of all your people. You need their help, their active participation and engagement. You can’t do it without their commitment.

An Orchestrated Introduction Gets the Best Results

Holding a company-wide meeting to talk to your employees about your new vision for the company and how you’re planning on getting there is a powerful way to create excitement and positive expectations. This process will discuss how to do it and how to get the best results.

1 Distribute the announcement memo. Write and distribute a company-wide memo announcing the date, time, and location of a meeting at which you will introduce to everyone the direction of the company, some new initiatives that will lead to the achievement of the company’s goals, and the nature and purpose of business development work. Do this two weeks in advance.

2 Meet privately with selected individuals. These will be people that you identify as those who will be most affected, either positively or negatively, by the changes you are making in the company right now. Secure their agreement to the changes in advance of the company-wide meeting.



3 Conduct your first Business Development Meeting. The remainder of this process will give you a lot of detail about both the content and spirit of this meeting. In a nutshell, you should be ready to share at this meeting the Strategic Objective of the company, your Company Story, and your new Organizational Strategy. You should also explain the essence of business development work, what it means to work *on* the business and not just *in* it, and how a systems approach can help everyone get better results and more of what they truly want. And more than this, you need to communicate your own passion and conviction for doing what it takes to reach your Strategic Objective.

4 Plan periodic Business Development Meetings on an ongoing basis. The energy and enthusiasm that can be generated when everyone in your company comes together to talk about the future is one of those intangible elements that may not be directly measurable in dollars and cents, but will surely pay off in increased employee commitment and accountability. These are not to be treated lightly, for they are the very foundation of a business that really works.

Let's take a look at each of these benchmarks in more detail.

1 Distribute the announcement memo. Whether your company is large or small, whether you have frequent group meetings or not, this first Business Development Meeting will have a significant impact, because it will set the stage for what will follow after this point. You might think of this initial Business Development Meeting as a turning point, because it marks the beginning of bringing a whole new way of doing business, and *thinking about* business, into your entire company.

Think of your announcement memo in a marketing context, as the first contact with employees about an idea that you'd like them to "buy." How can you address their unconscious needs and motivations?

When asked to do something new, a very common reaction is, "How will these changes affect me?" And this reaction may be operating at both conscious and unconscious levels. If you begin to address this underlying concern in your announcement memo, you will be setting the stage for a Business Development Meeting in which people will be their most open and receptive.

For employees, building a business that works using the business development program will increase the effectiveness and success of the business, while at the same time providing an environment that brings them what they most want. It can do this by:

- Helping them realize their potential;
- Making their work more rewarding and forward moving;
- Increasing their sense of working with purpose; and
- Opening possible career opportunities.

In your memo, let your people know that, while they may see changes, this doesn't mean you're discounting what they've already accomplished. Rather, you regard what they've done so far as the foundation upon which your business will continue to grow.

Acknowledge that some people may resist change – even positive change. Ask them to think of business development not as mere change, but as an advancement to a more rewarding work environment.

And, of course, clearly state the “logistics” for your first, company-wide Business Development Meeting: the date, start and end time, and location. Make it clear that this meeting is not optional. Everyone is expected to attend.

There is a sample announcement memo in the Worksheets section of this process for you to use as a starting point for writing your own memo. Use your own words to speak directly to your employees, keeping in mind the points we've just discussed. Be honest and considerate of their feelings, while at the same time firm in your commitment to this path you've chosen. Don't be afraid to let your passion show.

2 Meet privately with selected individuals. Before the scheduled date of your company-wide Business Development Meeting, review your organizational strategy and listing of employees' position assignments. In the comments area, you may have already indicated people who would be positively or negatively affected by organizational changes. Let's clarify what we mean by “positively affected” and “negatively affected” and identify things to keep in mind when conducting your private meetings.

Someone may be positively affected if the organizational strategy results in a promotion, expanded or more prestigious accountabilities, or reporting to a higher level manager than previously. Don't assume that the individuals you've chosen will be as pleased about the change as you might expect. Although in most cases they will, don't make any announcement of this kind publicly, until you've met with the individuals privately to confirm that they accept. If they don't accept, leave the position “open.”

In your meeting, use the organization chart to show them the position you would like them to take and its relationship to other people and departments; and tell them who will be their manager and who, if anyone, they will be managing. Congratulate them on their new position or accountabilities and assure them that they'll receive the training and support they'll need to be successful. It's also very appropriate and helpful at this time to tell them exactly what skills, accomplishments, and qualities led to the new role, and what areas they will need to strengthen to be successful.

The key is to be sure to ask for, and get, the person's commitment to fulfilling their new accountabilities and to your new direction for the company. Most often the response will be, "Thanks for this opportunity and your vote of confidence. I'm with you all the way!"

If any of your positively affected people give a neutral or indifferent response to your offer, ask them to think about it overnight and discuss it with them again the next day. Decide together if they would be willing to "give it their best shot" and if this level of commitment is acceptable in order to move ahead. If not, you'll need to reconsider what role, if any, they will have as you move the company forward. But, better to know now that the fullest level of commitment is not there, than to have the person accept the position "under false pretenses." The bottom line is that half-hearted commitment won't work, either for you or for the employee. So if your employee can't come to terms with this new direction of building a healthy business, the best thing may be to consider a parting of the ways.

At the other end of the spectrum, someone may be negatively affected if your organizational strategy results in a demotion to a lower level position, a reduction of accountabilities, reporting to a less prestigious or less popular manager, or any other unexpected or less desirable change – whether perceived or real. And there may be people in your company – you probably know who they are – who feel threatened or fearful of any change, even if they have little idea how it will affect them. For all of these negatively affected people, your private meeting with them will help diffuse any demotivation, fear of loss, or emotional resistance that might otherwise be overpowering. Your reassurance and personal attention will go far in helping people maintain their self-respect and manage their emotions constructively.

Your private meetings with negatively affected individuals may be uncomfortable for you. Your best strategy is to be straightforward, honest, rational, calm, and resolute. Explain the new

organizational structure, your view of where the company is headed, the change of role for the employee, and how the change fits into the bigger picture. Be prepared to deal with the full range of negative feelings. People could feel offended, anxious, unappreciated, inadequate, or even hostile.

To diffuse the intensity of these emotions:

- Tell them how they are valuable to the business.
- Position their new role as a realignment of accountabilities. Don't speak in terms of "demotion," but of "reassignment," "redeployment," or "realignment." Be as positive and reassuring as you can be; but be honest.
- Let them know that there will be no reduction of salary or benefits associated with the reorganization. (Even if you believe that someone's salary should be reduced for reasons of performance, generally it's best not to do so at this time.)
- Ask for their support and commitment to moving forward together.

While you should be sympathetic and patient with any objections that may come up, let them know that you're committed to implementing the changes as planned and on schedule. Ask them to suspend their judgment, give the process a fair try, and see what positive results may come out of it for them.

What if they flatly refuse to agree? Give them some time to think about what you've said and what you're asking of them. Don't consider them "irretrievable" just because they can't commit in the moment. Some people need a day or two to get the big picture and get their emotions under control.

Although it's okay for people to be uncertain, confused or even angry when initially confronted with change, when you meet with them again, they must be ready to give your program a chance. If not, you'll need to consider a parting of the ways. While this may sound harsh, you really have no other choice. You can't have resistant people creating obstacles to the implementation of your plans. Their negativity could do more damage to your company's progress than any technological challenge you ever face. Ultimately, it's best for both you and them if they find a place where they can fully support what's going on.

Plan your schedule so that you hold your individual meetings within the one- to two-week period before your company-wide Business Development Meeting. Ask people to keep their conversations with you confidential until the group meeting is over. Start at the top of

your organization chart and work your way down, meeting with positively affected and then negatively affected employees at each level. Depending on your specific situation, you may be meeting with every employee or only a small percentage.

3 **Conduct your first Business Development Meeting.** Having set the stage with your memo and private discussions, you're ready for the big event. Here are some recommendations for your meeting agenda.

Basic Agenda

1. Explain the purpose of this meeting.
2. Explain the concepts of business development and its role in your company.
3. Present your Strategic Objective as your vision for the future of the business.
4. Share your Company Story and how it embodies the spirit of your company.
5. Address any fears or concerns people may have.
6. Present your new Organization Chart and explain the key changes that it represents.
7. Describe the current- and near-term business development activities for your company and how employees will be participating.
8. Ask for and respond to employees' questions.
9. Announce the next company-wide Business Development Meeting.

In the Worksheets section, you'll find examples of a Business Development Meeting Agenda and Presentation Script. The agenda contains vital elements for this meeting. Don't leave anything out. You may want to add other items that are important to you, but be wary of introducing too much, too fast, too soon. It's best for people to absorb a little at a time. As for the presentation script, this is where you'll really want to revise, edit, enhance, improve – in other words, *truly make it your own!* Reading something prepared for you just won't work. Your people must hear the real you – your words, your passion, your commitment, your spirit. It's serious business; but have fun with it too.

The question-and-answer portion of the meeting may well be the most crucial part. In fact, you can make or break your program as

you field your employees' questions and objections. But, don't be alarmed and don't put too much pressure on yourself. The secret to successfully handling employee questions, and even the possible objections, is to simply let your enthusiasm for growth, your commitment to your employees and to your business, and your trust in the business development program shine through every response.

Also remember that you don't need to be, or even be perceived as, the expert on business development.

You're likely to hear questions you haven't a clue about how to answer. You can simply respond, "I don't know, but I'll find out," or "That's something we'll figure out together," or "That's something I can't answer yet, but you'll know as soon as I do."

Admitting you don't know everything shows your people you have enough self-confidence to be honest. And honesty doesn't diminish their respect for you; it enhances it.

It also shows them you have trust in the business development program and the people who are guiding you through it. And that's exactly the kind of trust you need from your employees.

You don't want a company full of people who blindly say "yes" to everything you say and every request you make. That type of acquiescence is short-lived and doesn't encourage the kind of maturity and responsibility that is the hallmark of the best employees. Nor do you want "nay-sayers" who doubt and question you at every turn. You don't have time for that kind of unproductive behavior.

So, in this Business Development Meeting, you are the role model for the open and trusting attitude you want your people to emulate. You may not have all the answers at your fingertips and you may not know the exact outcome of every new thing you try, but your grounding in the business development point of view and your vision of what you want your business to become will carry you through. This kind of confidence and integrity will give your people the sense of security they need to confront the changes you're asking them to make. If you feel secure about what you're doing, they will, too.

4 Plan periodic Business Development Meetings on an ongoing basis. These meetings help employees feel like they are all part of the continuous growth process and keep them involved in what the company as a whole is doing.

How often should you hold company-wide Business Development Meetings? We recommend holding them at least once each quarter (every three months). The criteria to keep in mind are:

- **The logistics of getting everyone together.**

Are people geographically dispersed? Do you have adequate meeting space? How do your employees' work schedules affect their ability to meet? How will your clients be impacted?

- **The amount and nature of what you want to communicate.**

Is there enough of interest and import to share? Can some information be communicated more effectively in writing? You want to be sure the meetings are engaging and worthwhile. You don't want them to degenerate into a boring routine – this can happen if meetings are held too frequently.

- **The emotional impact of the meeting.**

You're probably the best judge of what your employees need emotionally to keep them involved and inspired. As the leader of the company, your presence and ongoing interaction with your people will help keep them emotionally engaged.

You can use the following basic agenda for your subsequent Business Development Meetings. Whenever possible, have the actual individuals involved do most of the talking. Taking the spotlight off you makes it shine brighter on them. This kind of active participation also heightens their commitment to business development and to your company, because it demonstrates that your people really do make a difference. Recognize employees' efforts publicly and in a sincere way – your recognition and appreciation enhances the individual's sense of self-worth and inspires everyone.

Basic Agenda

1. Open the meeting with a positive welcome.
2. Present a general overview of the key events since the last Business Development Meeting.
3. Present more specific information about business development initiatives that have been completed.
4. Invite employees to describe their personal achievements since the last meeting.
5. Discuss business development initiatives currently under way and invite employee comments.
6. Announce and discuss upcoming initiatives and invite employee comments.

7. Close the meeting on a positive note, expressing your approval of your people's accomplishments and the company's progress, and reaffirming your complete faith in their future successes.

There's No Substitute for Being Prepared

Because the nature of the Business Development Program is so fundamental to your employees' working lives, you'll need to prepare yourself for a broad range of reactions. Listening to your people and being able to understand what may be going on inside them will help you gain their emotional commitment. And make no mistake – you need your employees' emotional commitment if your business is to succeed. Verbal commitments – agreeing to do the work – and physical commitments – showing up at work every day – are not enough to get the kind of results you're looking for.

As you implement this process, from the announcement memo, to private meetings, to company-wide meetings, and beyond, you will see many different reactions. Some people may jump for joy and come on board immediately, throwing their energies into building the business. Others may appear neutral, quietly doing whatever it is you want them to do, while maintaining a "wait and see" attitude. Still others may openly exhibit their anger, anxiety, or discomfort, and they may blame you for whatever pain they may be experiencing.

Why? Because business development is a walk into the unknown. You have a perspective far different from theirs – you know the benefits and rewards of building a business that really works. But they'll be dealing with all kinds of fears and uncertainties. Let's look at a few of them, so you can understand and address them in a way that can truly serve your people to rise above what's in their way.

I'm Going to Lose My Job!

Some employees will love the idea of business development, others will be indifferent, and some will actually believe that you're trying to get rid of them. These are the fearful folks who suspect that any of those "outside experts" or "consultants" you're talking with are merely hatchet people. You brought them in to help you decide who gets fired.

These people are terrified of being "found out." Rather than focusing on what they have accomplished in your business, their fears cause them to exaggerate their shortcomings.

Suddenly, a successful salesperson feels he should have sold more last month. An effective manager believes she has some personal

flaw that blocks her path to success. In other words, they exaggerate their inadequacies, while forgetting all their achievements. No wonder they're afraid of losing their jobs!

Why Do I Have to Change?

Change, in and of itself, can be terrifying to some people. And it doesn't seem to matter if the change is for the better – it's still change.

Underlying people's aversion to change is really the fear of loss.

They may feel the loss of security because they don't know what the future holds or where they stand at work. Or the loss of territory, whether it's physical space or psychological space related to accountabilities they're used to handling. Or it may be the loss of competence, as they're faced with new tasks they feel unsure of being successful at. Or it could even be the loss of relationships, if they find themselves on a new team or with a new manager.

I'm Not Good Enough.

Some employees will see your new involvement in business development as an attack on their past performance. "Why are we changing what *I* did?" they may think. "I guess it wasn't good enough" – and maybe "*I'm* not good enough." Not only might they feel incompetent about doing new things, they could even convince themselves they've been incompetent all along!

People who feel this way may react with some measure of hostility to what you're doing in the business. But what's deceiving is that their hostility will rarely come out openly and directly, but rather in an apparently rational way – in the form of objections that seem perfectly reasonable – logical objections to your organization chart, reasonable objections to a particular system, and seemingly intelligent objections to the whole idea of business development itself.

Don't be fooled. While these objections may seem logical, reasonable, and intelligent, don't give in, because these objections are designed to derail you from the path to your future.

Now that you understand the common fears and are prepared for them, what can you do about them?

- Remember to always relate what you're doing to how it's in the self-interest of your employees. Remind them how they can achieve their own aspirations through the work they do.
- Focus on people's accomplishments and positive characteristics.

- Emphasize what people will be gaining, rather than what they may be giving up.
- Allow your people the opportunity to speak openly about their fears and concerns and show them that you hear them and understand. Encourage your managers to keep the lines of communication open with each of their reporting employees.
- Handle objections calmly. Be caring, yet direct. Don't over-react or take the objections personally, even when they sound personal.

Over time, with your support and understanding, most of your employees' fears and concerns will lessen. Particularly when your people regain their secure footing and experience the benefits of growing with your business.

Don't lose sight of your role as the leader of your business. You'll need to be the one who fires up the hearts, minds, and souls of your people as you keep them focused on their common goals. The one who convinces them that the answer to "What's in it for me?" is nothing less than the achievement of *their* dreams!

What about Your Own Resistance?

By now you may be thinking, "This isn't my style. I'm not used to doing things like this. And I certainly didn't bargain for having to deal with all these 'negative emotions' of my employees!"

First, keep in mind that your own expectations will have an effect on how your people act and how you perceive them. Don't look for or create problems where they don't exist. The vast majority of people, if they're "worth their salt," will fully support you and the business development work. It provides everyone with so much opportunity! And remember that what employees *really* need from you, you are more than capable of providing: direction, guidance, enthusiasm, and emotional support.

Secondly, adapt the process to suit your own style. Do it your way – but do it! It's essential that you get your people engaged and involved in the business development process as soon as possible.

Thirdly, use E-Myth Worldwide Mastery and your Consultant as a resource to help move you through any uncertainty you might have. Acknowledging your own resistance and being willing to talk it through will propel you to being your absolute best.

Becoming a "leader who facilitates change" may well be one of the most important roles you play as you develop your business. ...and your people. We're with you every step of the way!