

QuickTip – 4P Process Check

A process check is a quick break from the content of a meeting to look at four elements of the meeting’s process – progress, process, pace, and people. This is a quick break in the action of the meeting to look at how things are going. Each element begins with a P, which is why this is called a 4P process check.

When to Use

Meeting facilitators should do a 4P process check periodically during a meeting, especially if it is a long or draining meeting. A process check is also a good idea if a meeting seems to be getting stuck or is going off track.

Procedure

For most meetings, do a 4P check every 30 minutes or so. You don’t have to do it out loud every time. Sometimes you may want to just do the checks in your head to keep you aware of how things are going as you lead the meeting. Other times you may want to get everyone’s opinion about whether the meeting is on track.

Progress	“Is the goal of this meeting still being achieved?”	When few ideas are emerging or discussion goes in circles
Process	“Is the technique (e.g brainstorming) that we’re using still working?”	When process is not being followed or technique is not yielding expected results
Pace	“Is this meeting moving at the right pace?”	When not meeting times on agenda, people fidget, or they want to revisit old material
People	“How are you feeling? Have we lost the thread of the discussion?”	When meeting is running long, or people look disengaged, tired or frustrated

Similarly, you don’t always have to check all four P’s. Depending on what is happening in the meeting, some elements may be more relevant than others. Look at the right column of the table for hints on when to use each.

Considerations

1. A 4P process check helps ensure that all participants still believe that the meeting is productive, allowing you to resteer it early if it is starting to go off track.
2. The progress and pace elements look at whether the meeting is where you planned for it to be. Having an agenda to compare against is very handy for this.
3. The process element looks at whether the technique being used to manage the discussion right now is still effective.
4. The people element looks at the energy level of participants. As you think about the people element, remember that some people are more reflective. They may have good ideas, but either can't get a word in or don't think of something to say until later. Are you running the meeting in a way that captures their input?