

Winter 2012

# NEWS

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This newsletter is published by the Minnesota Chief Engineers Guild.

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Fellow Members:

I hope that you all are having a good 2012. It seems that every year things get busier, and we are asked to do more in our jobs than ever before.

At the Guild, we are busy planning the year of educational opportunities, our scholarship golf tournament, and, of course, our annual conference. I would like to thank everyone who attended the December Quarterly meeting—it was a fascinating look behind-the-scenes at District Energy, and we greatly appreciate TKDA sponsoring this meeting, and providing lunch. Thanks also to Jim Nieswaag, who is in charge of planning all of our educational programs.

Have a good spring, and we look forward to seeing you at a Guild meeting soon.

Ken Schmitz  
President

## Upcoming Meeting Dates

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### Quarterly Meetings

**March 14, 2012** (Inspec Annual Seminar)

**June 11, 2012** (Majestic Oaks)

### Annual Dollars for Scholars Golf Tournament


**June 11, 2012** (Majestic Oaks Country Club, Ham Lake, MN)

### MnCEG Conference and Trade Show

**September 5-6, 2012**

*Save the Date!*

# Create Tomorrow Together



**Change · Grow · Lead**

## MnCEG 2012 Conference & Trade Show

The 2012 Minnesota Chief Engineers Guild Annual Conference and Trade Show will be held on September 5-6, 2012. In 2011, the conference was moved to St. Cloud, and the agenda was condensed, to encourage higher attendance. The end result was, in fact, increased attendance, including many members who had not attended our conference before. The one-day registration option, at this more central location, also brought more attendees as well.

Extensive feedback was gathered following the conference, and although several members voiced a preference to return to the Brainerd Lakes area, the MnCEG Executive Board and Conference Committee decided to hold the 2012 conference in St. Cloud. Following this conference, and with two years of data and evaluations, we will once again evaluate feedback, and set a course for future meetings.

This year our plans are to start earlier on Wednesday, and arrange the schedule for more networking time. If you have any other comments or suggestions, please contact a member of the MnCEG Executive Board.



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## Call for Presentations

### 2012 Conference

Presentation proposals for the 2012 MnCEG Annual Conference are now being accepted.

The conference is scheduled for September 5-6, 2012 at the Holiday Inn Conference Center in St. Cloud. The Wednesday schedule will include a keynote speaker, numerous technical educational sessions and an afternoon trade show. The Thursday schedule will feature agency breakouts and round tables, and managerial sessions (on topics such as finance & leadership).

We are looking for proposals for presentations in all areas. Presentations should be 55 minutes in length, and be of an educational (and not promotional) nature. Please submit all proposals to Jim Nieswaag, MnCEG Education Committee, [Jim.Nieswaag@anokaramsey.edu](mailto:Jim.Nieswaag@anokaramsey.edu). Include your name, organization, presentation title and a brief summary. Proposals must be received by March 31, 2012.

We greatly appreciate the participation of members who present, and thank them in advance for their service to the organization and fellow MnCEG members!

## Quarterly Meeting Update

### **March 14 Meeting**

The next MnCEG Quarterly Meeting will be held on March 14, 2012, at 8:30am - 1:15pm (includes continental breakfast and lunch) at the Golden Valley Country Club, 7001 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley, MN. This meeting is being held in conjunction with the Inspec annual seminar; Inspec is offering MnCEG Members free admission to this event (\$40 value).

The theme of the seminar is "Building Envelope Failures: Lessons Learned and Methods of Prevention." This series of presentations will cover numerous case studies of "real world" premature failures of roofs, exterior walls, windows and waterproofing systems. Our thanks to Inspec for opening this seminar up to all Guild members!

**IMPORTANT!** MnCEG Members must pre-register through the MnCEG web site by March 9 in order to receive this seminar at no cost-- we will then submit our list of attendees to Inspec. If you have already registered....thanks! If you need to still register, and for a complete seminar brochure, go to our [web site](#).

The final quarterly meeting of the year will be held on June 11 at Majestic Oaks—in the morning prior to the annual "Dollars for Scholars" Golf Tournament. Watch for email announcement of upcoming events, or go to our web site for more information.

We greatly appreciate the sponsorship of our quarterly meetings. Thanks to Inspec for sponsoring the March meeting, and to TKDA who sponsored our meeting in December. Any firms interested in sponsoring an upcoming meeting should contact the MnCEG office.

## **Newsletter**

### **Articles**

### **Wanted!**

We are always looking for articles for our quarterly newsletter. If you, or someone from your organization, is interested in providing an informational article (not promotional) for our newsletter, please let us know!

Articles should be of topics that would be of interest to our general membership, and should be approximately 400-600 words. Articles can be emailed to us at [office@mnceg.org](mailto:office@mnceg.org).



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# Effective Meetings Produce Results: Tips for Meeting Management

By Susan M. Heathfield, *About.com*

People spend so much time in meetings that turning meeting time into sustained results is a priority for successful organizations. Actions that make meetings successful require management before, during, and after the meeting. If you neglect any one of these meeting management opportunities, your meetings will not bear the fruit you desire from the time you invest in meeting. Take these twelve meeting management actions to guide meeting attendees to achieve expected, positive, and constructive outcomes.

**Plan the Meeting** Effective meetings that produce results, begin with meeting planning. First, identify whether other employees are needed to help you plan the meeting. Then, decide what you hope to accomplish by holding the meeting. Establish doable goals for your meeting. The goals you set will establish the framework for an effective meeting plan. As Stephen Covey says in the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, "Begin with the end in mind." Your meeting purpose will determine the meeting focus, the meeting agenda, and the meeting participants.

**Make Sure You Need a Meeting** Once you've developed your meeting plan, ensure that a meeting is the appropriate vehicle for accomplishing the set goals. To schedule and hold a meeting is expensive when you account for the time of the people attending. So, make efforts to determine that a meeting is the best opportunity to solve the problem, improve the process, or make an ongoing plan. Make sure the meeting is needed and not just convenient for you – you'll get better results from attendees.

**Ensure Appropriate Participation at the Meeting** If a meeting is the appropriate means to accomplish your goals, check with the participants who must attend for the meeting to succeed. The needed attendees must be available to attend the meeting. Postpone the meeting rather than holding a meeting without critical staff members. If a delegate attends in the place of a crucial decision maker, make sure the designated staff member has the authority to make decisions – or postpone the meeting.

**Distribute and Review Pre-work Prior to the Meeting** How many meetings have you attended that started out with the meeting facilitator passing out a ream of handouts or projecting a Microsoft PowerPoint slide for discussion? Frustrating? You bet. The meeting becomes a group read-in, hardly productive for goal accomplishment. You can make meetings most productive and ensure results by providing necessary pre-work in advance of the actual meeting. Providing pre-work, charts, graphs, and reading material 48 hours before a meeting affects meeting success. The more preparation time you allot, the better prepared people will be for your meeting.

Documentation that will help you achieve the meeting goals can include reports; data and charts such as competitive information, sales month-to-date, and production plans; Microsoft PowerPoint slides that illustrate key discussion points; and minutes, notes and follow-up from earlier or related meetings and projects. Pre-work distributed in a timely manner, with the serious expectation that attendees will read the pre-work before the meeting, helps ensure meeting success.

**During the Meeting to Ensure Effective Meetings** Effective use of meeting time builds enthusiasm for the topic. It generates commitment and a feeling of accomplishment from the participants. People feel part of something bigger than their day-to-day challenges. Therefore, a well-facilitated, active meeting, that sets the stage for follow-up, will produce meeting results.

**Effective Meeting Facilitation** The meeting leader sets a positive, productive tone for interaction among the meeting participants. Effective meeting facilitation starts with a review of the goals, or anticipated outcomes, and the agenda. The facilitator helps group members stay focused and productive. Meeting design and the agenda set the framework for the meeting. An effective facilitator, who keeps participants on track, ensures the accomplishment of expected, desired results from the meeting.

**Use the Pre-work in the Meeting** Use or reference the pre-work and other information supplied prior to the meeting during the meeting. You reinforce the need for participants to spend the time needed upfront to review material that is integral to accomplishing the desired results. You participants will prepare prior to attending your meetings and your results will bear testimony to solid preparation and leadership.

**Involve Each Participant in Actions** Every work group has various personalities that show up for meetings. You have quiet coworkers and people who try to dominate every platform. Whether facilitating or attending the meeting, you need to involve each attendee in the accomplishment of the meeting goals. This ensures that each participant is invested in the topic of the meeting and in the follow-up. You'll accomplish more results with the whole team pulling than with one dominant staff person trying to push everyone else up the hill.

**Create an Effective Meeting Follow-up Plan** During the meeting, make a follow-up plan with action items. Effective plans include:

- the specific action item,
- the name of the person who committed to “owning” the accomplishment of the action item,
- the due date of the action item,
- an agreement about what constitutes completion of the action item.

Discuss real life scenarios and barriers to success that team members may experience as they try to accomplish the items that will produce the required results. Set a time for your next meeting, if needed, while participants are in attendance.

**After the Meeting to Ensure Effective Meetings** Actions and planning before and during the meeting play a big role in helping you achieve expected, positive, and constructive outcomes. Your actions following the meeting are just as crucial. Follow-up at the next scheduled meeting is never enough of an investment to ensure results.

**Publish Meeting Minutes** Begin by publishing your minutes and action plan within 24 hours. People will most effectively contribute to results if they get started on action items right away. They still have a fresh memory of the meeting, the discussion and the rationale for the chosen direction. They remain enthusiastic and ready to get started. A delay in the distribution of minutes will hurt your results since most people wait for the minutes to arrive before they begin to tackle their commitments.

**Effective Meeting Follow-up** Respecting and observing deadlines and follow-up will help you achieve results from your meetings. The deadline was established during the meeting. Following the meeting, each person with an action item should also make a plan for their personal accomplishment of their commitment. Whether they write the steps in their planner, delegate the tasks to another staff person, or just complete the task, the individual is responsible for follow-up.

So is the meeting planner. You can improve meeting results by following up with each person who has an action item mid-way between meetings. Your goal is to check progress and ensure that tasks are underway. Remember that what you ask about gets accomplished.

**Accountability for Follow-up during the Next Meeting** Have you ever sat in a follow-up meeting that consisted of each participant telling the group why they were unable to accomplish their commitment? I have, and the result is deplorable. Establishing the norm or custom of accountability for results begins early in your meeting cycle.

Follow-up by the facilitator mid-way between meetings helps, but the group must make failure to keep commitments unacceptable. Report on progress and outcomes at the next meeting and expect that all will have been accomplished. Alternatively, check progress at the next meeting and if there is a real roadblock to progress, determine how to proceed.

**Debrief the Meeting Process for Continuous Improvement** The practice of debriefing each meeting is a powerful tool for continuous improvement. Participants take turns discussing what was effective or ineffective about the current meeting process. They also discuss the progress they feel the group is making on the topic of the meeting.

Taking continuous improvement to another level, successful teams debrief their entire project as well as the process to determine how effectively they managed to create results. Future meetings reflect the evaluation. Meetings evolve as an even more effective tool for creating organization results.

**Conclusion** Results are achievable and predictable from well-planned and implemented meetings. Follow these twelve recommendations to ensure that meeting attendees achieve expected, positive, and constructive outcomes from the time invested in meetings.



## Minnesota Chief Engineers Guild Scholarship Tournament

The Minnesota Chief Engineers Guild Scholarship Tournament provides scholarship funds for worthy students. Through participation in this event, hole sponsorships, and cash donations, revenue is generated to help support this effort. The 2012 tournament will be held on Monday, June 11, at Majestic Oaks Golf Club in Ham Lake.

A MnCEG quarterly meeting will be held at Majestic Oaks the morning of June 11, so members are encouraged to come for the meeting, and stay for the tournament. Registration and lunch are at noon, with a shot gun start at 1:00pm. The format is a four-person scramble. The day concludes at 6:00pm with dinner and prizes.

Hole sponsorships are available for \$150 each, and include signage at the hole and one dinner ticket. Sponsors are encouraged to provide "entertainment" at their holes.

Marketing of your company is suggested, and promotional materials are allowed. Sponsors may provide staff as required. Please arrive early enough to be ready at tee-off.

Registration will be open later in March, so mark your calendars!

For more information, please contact any committee member:

Frank Sahlin, Committee Chair 612-270-3664

Rick Lucio 651-748-1100

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Mike Remington 763-546-3434



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