

# Meeting Check-In



“Bring the mind into sharp focus and make it alert so that it can immediately intuit truth, which is everywhere. ”

— Bruce Lee

## HOW TO CHECK-IN TO A MEETING?

Do you ever look around the meeting room and feel like people are not ‘present’? Or feel like you are somewhere else yourself?

A check-in is done before the start of a meeting or workshop and is an opportunity for all team members to consciously express how they are attending before they start participating.

In its simplest form, it's a question, or series of questions, that everyone answers. There are lots of ways to check-in, you have to work out what works for you!

## HOW YOU START A MEETING SETS THE TONE!

Checking-in helps us connect to what we are trying to achieve. It lets people know what you might be 'bringing in' with you that influences how you participate, what role you play in the meeting, or what your expectations are.

Check-in is also a way of getting to know your team-mates and building trust and psychological safety, something research is telling us is critical to effective and resilient teams.

It might be as simple as "How are you arriving today?"

**"Great! I went for a run this morning and I'm feeling focused and ready to get into it today"**

Versus

**"I'm OK, but the kids have been sick, and no one is sleeping well in our house, so I'm happy to be here, but a bit tired and slow".**

The key here is authenticity – if everyone answers "fine", the purpose is lost. There must be an environment where people can be vulnerable without fear of consequences or ridicule.

## CHECK-IN IN ACTION

Here is an example of how a check-in can work....

Polly, the founder of a family run SME, called before the start of a scheduled workshop to say she was running late and to start without her. The team checked-in and got stuck into some tasks. Polly came in flustered after 15 minutes, and rather than interrupt the teams work by getting Polly to check-in, the facilitator chose to continue the workshop. It became increasingly apparent though that Polly was distracted and not participating with the enthusiasm you'd expect. Something else was clearly going on.

The facilitator could see what was happening and asked Polly to check-in before going any further. Polly immediately burst into tears and told the team she'd had some bad news about a contract falling through on the way in. It was difficult for her to focus on seemingly abstract work when she had a looming crisis to attend to. She had tried to soldier on and participate in the workshop, but it was too difficult to compartmentalise the issue at hand. Once the elephant in the room was named, it was much easier for everyone to participate – including Polly.



## PROOF IS IN THE SCIENCE

In his book *The Checklist Manifesto*, Atul Gawande talks about his attempts to implement a series of surgical check-lists through the World Health Organisation to reduce the incidence of surgical errors that have been contributing to ever-increasing numbers of avoidable death and disability.

As part of this check-list, one of the activities that had the highest impact on the success of the program, **was for each surgical team member to introduce themselves and state their role in the team prior to the surgery taking place.**

“ Giving people a chance to say something at the start seemed to activate their sense of participation and responsibility and their willingness to speak up. ”

We believe that the check-in process supports that notion that everyone has not only the permission to speak and participate, but also the responsibility and willingness to speak and participate in the session.

## SO HOW DO YOU CHECK-IN?

### 01

#### HINT ONE

#### COMMUNICATE TO YOUR TEAM ‘WHY’ YOU WANT TO DO CHECK-INS

We have explained why a check-in is important, but before you roll out in your teams, you need to communicate this to the team members.

If you want people to be as authentic and vulnerable in their check-ins as possible, you need to model this behaviour. While everyone becomes familiar with this process, as the team leader, check-in FIRST.

Whether your meeting is between two people or ten, check-ins are worthwhile doing at the beginning of every meeting.





# 02

## HINT TWO

### TEST SOME CHECK-IN QUESTIONS AND WORK OUT WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

At ADAPT we like to use an I, We, It model. For a check-in it might go like this:

How am **I** arriving today? Are you good, bad, indifferent? Are there things you're carrying in with you? If you have multiple roles, are you participating wearing one particular hat? Are you engaged with this work we are doing today? Or your work in general?

How is the **We**? How are things going with your team, your teammates, or the person you are having the meeting with? Has it been a long time since you've worked together? Have you been getting some good work done with your teammates that could be acknowledged?

How is the **It**? How are you going with the work in terms of contribution?

Some other examples might be:

- Check-in with 5-words to describe yourself.
- Check-in by asking each team member to share one word to describe yourself, one word your mother would use to describe you, one word your high school teacher would have used.
- Check-in using a game like two truths and a lie (about yourself). Everyone in the room tells the team three stories or 'facts' about themselves. Two are true and one is a lie. The team has to guess which is which.
- Check-in by asking each team member what their expectations are for today, what is one outcome you'd like to come away with and do you have any time commitments?

You can choose to check-in using whatever method suits the size, style and work of the team!



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