

10 Steps to an Energizing Lessons Learned Session

Lessons Learned sessions at the end of a project can feel like drudgery or even self-flagellation. It does not have to be. Follow these straight-forward steps below to lead a Lessons Learned Session that your team will find positive, energizing, and will have you looking like an enlightened project leader!

1. Find a team member with a positive, more optimistic outlook. Every team has one. If they are a trusted colleague of yours, so much the better. Book a meeting with them.
2. Brainstorm some of the 'wins' on the project with them. These can be large or small. Start a list. Ask them to think of some team members who have done something worth celebrating, acknowledging or recognizing.
3. Choose a facilitator, external to the project team. Usually your change management, training or communications person has experience in doing this. Make sure it's not you! You own the content, let the facilitator own the session process. Let them design the session with your input.
4. Schedule the Lessons Learned session in conjunction with a project-end celebration activity.
5. Invite participants and ask each person to come prepared with: three examples of things that were done well; the name of at least one team member they were impressed with and why; and, three examples of things the team would do differently the next time.
6. Book room. Order pizza, bagels, cake, samosas, sushi, drinks, and/or whatever else you think is good to have, and is within your budget.
7. Kick off the session, again focusing on the positives you want to list first. Tell everyone they will get their opportunity to 'vent' right after.
8. When you get to the venting portion of the session, insist that each 'mistake' be accompanied by three recommendations of how to do it right the next time.
9. Document everything (again, not you – assign a scribe). Now go celebrate!
10. Finally, develop a summary report. Circulate for additional comments. Add comments (if any) to the summary report. Distribute final report and add to repository. That's it!