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The changing face of meetings: 10 years of facilitation

When Katherine Woods launched Meeting Magic Limited 10 years ago, she had a clear vision in mind: to help managers to have effective meetings. However, she went to great pains to develop a company name and tag line that didn't include the 'F' word (facilitation)!

A professional facilitator will always be there for the group. This is some advice Katherine received when she first started out. It came from her business partner in the US, David Sibbet, founder of The Grove. As you become more expert in a field it's easy to become full of self importance. However, people all want the same things - to be acknowledged, recognised, feel valued and supported. The best thing to do for meeting participants is to support them, so that they achieve what they need to achieve, however they need to achieve it.

Despite working at all levels within organisations, Meeting Magic feel that it is their work with senior leadership teams that has had the greatest impact. This is because decisions made at this level can have an impact upon the whole organisation. By harnessing the intellectual horsepower and experience at board level, powerful decisions can be made.

So, what is next on the horizon for Meeting Magic? As many companies have travel bans, there is a strong push for meetings to be held virtually. With careful pre-work and a realistic agenda, these can be an effective way of getting work done. In response to this market trend, Meeting Magic is preparing to launch a new virtual meetings service in 2010. This new service will incorporate the use of technology, whilst at the same time continuing to support the company's vision of helping managers to have effective meetings.

Katherine Woods comments: "The market is better educated today about the benefits of facilitation. If you search for 'facilitation' online, you will see a long list of results. However, there is a huge variety of offerings from these companies. We've heard some war stories from clients who have experienced appalling facilitation; they are very amusing, but unfortunately give all facilitators a bad name."

As Meeting Magic close the chapter on their first 10 years in business, Katherine has some simple advice for all meeting owners: "Ask yourself, do you really need a meeting?"

If you are swamped with poor quality meetings, talk to Katherine on her blog www.meetingmagicmentor.blogspot.com

EDITORS NOTES

Meeting Magic facilitates participative and productive meetings. From strategic planning with leadership teams, to large group meetings and conferences, the company helps participants to deliver better results. Meeting Magic works with organisations worldwide. Clients include Mars, Microsoft, Coca Cola, Department of

Health, Metropolitan Police and Big Lottery. The company has affiliate partners in Australia and the USA.

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