

A WEEK IN *Learning*

Coordination: The Five W's & One H Carla Scherf, Executive Assistant

Coordination is a process to establish harmony among different activities to achieve desired objectives. It is the synchronization and integration of activities, responsibilities, and resources utilized efficiently in the pursuit of specific, defined objectives.

On a day-to-day basis, we experience multiple undertakings that may need coordinating. Even as simple as our morning routines. Have we decided what is for breakfast, what to wear, or how long it will take to get to work? Once we arrive at work, we are still faced with daily directions to take. Who should a task be delegated to? What are the urgent issues to be addressed? Are there any meetings you need to prepare for?

In these instances, coordination plays a significant role in everything we do. Our thoughts set into motion what course of action is needed to achieve a successful resolution. It may start as we consider known facts, engage those who could contribute to the situation, and brainstorm ideas or processes to obtain this goal.

In the workplace, there are plenty of situations where careful coordination is essential. For this article, I would like to use the example of organizing a team-building event/meeting. In the beginning of March, I volunteered to help coordinate HR and L&D's team meeting, which involved a significant amount of organizing for that day's agenda. A committee was formed to address a variety of action items and questions, such as: who will lead the committee? What should the day consist of? What is the purpose of doing this and how will it benefit the departments?

It is essential to take these sort of questions into consideration in order to coordinate a successful event/meeting. To help answer them efficiently, I always follow a simple breakdown of *who, what, when, why, where, and how*.

- 1) **WHO:** one of the very first questions I need to ask is, who is this for? I refer back to the audience with every decision that is made. It is important to truly *know* who your audience is, so that every part of that event is applicable to the group you are working with.



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- 2) **WHAT:** you establish what the teambuilding is in this area. I like to think of this as the actions that are going to take. What are they going to do? What are the big actions going to be on the agenda?
- 3) **WHY:** perhaps the most important area you need to consider is the purpose behind holding this event. This should be well communicated to not only those who are coordinating it, but to the audience it is directed at. This will help engage team members, as well as help them understand their own purpose for being there.
- 4) **WHERE:** this is much more than just selecting a location for the event. It specifically connects back to knowing *what* sort of actions are taking place, which will help you be strategic about where the event/meeting will be held. It is critical that you identify the right amount of space, directions, parking, travel time, and if there are multiple locations. If the location does not take place off-site, it is still essential to take into account the spacing, which also builds off of your audience (how many team members will there be?)
- 5) **HOW:** this is the more task-oriented area; how it is done. Depending on the size of the team building, you may need a committee or a few team members to assign tasks to. Other things to consider when establishing *how* it will be done, are any outside resources that may be needed and if a budget plays a part in that.

Applying the five W's and one H is a great guide that can help equip you with the knowledge to achieve defined objectives in your coordination of any event or meeting. Remember that coordination can lead a unity of actions – a process necessary to direct us through both our personal and professional lives.

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