

# Action Clarity by Tony Jeary

Action clarity occurs when agreements are translated into timed action plans. Next steps are clearly defined and someone is assigned the responsibility for making them happen. A major cause of lost productivity is a lack of action clarity, where a meeting occurred and agreements were made, but no one is clear on exactly what is to happen next and who is responsible.

Many meetings, otherwise successful, fail because action plans weren't spelled out and written down. Action clarity wasn't achieved, and the meeting did not accomplish all it could. Stirring speeches by executives that clearly identify why action is needed can fail when clear messages about timing and responsibilities aren't included.

An effective way to achieve action clarity is to make a list of every "what" – actions that need to be taken -- and assign a "who" and a "when". This may sound simple but it's very effective and often overlooked.

- In the context of speeches, the "Who Does What By When" needs to be incorporated after you've "sold" the concept to be implemented and well before the close. Recapping this action plan as part of the close and in follow-up communications increases your chances of success immensely!
- In meetings, action planning deserves its own segment, following agreements about what is to be done. A simple flip chart with three columns (What, Who and By When) is an easy way to achieve action clarity. If the issue is complex, one of the line items in the action plan should be something like "develop a detailed action plan with inputs from others not in the meeting".
- Follow-up is essential. Whether it's a speech, a major meeting or a simple hallway discussion that generates an agreement on action, you must follow up to assure that the agreement "sticks". A brief e-mail or detailed meeting minutes can do the trick, but the key message (along with thank you!) is who is expected to do what by when.

## Action Plan:

- Include an action plan segment in your outline for your next presentation. When writing your text or notes, make sure you specifically identify your expectations as to who will do what by when. Include a reprise of the same material in your closing comments.
- For the next meeting you conduct, include an action-planning segment on the agenda following each "decision" or "agreement" point. Establish step-by-step plans needed, with realistic timing goals, and establish who is responsible for each item. Reconfirm them in your closing comments for the session. Document assignments for follow-up purposes by publishing the action plan in your meeting notes or minutes.
- Make action clarity a priority in meetings you attend. Don't let the meeting conclude if it's not clear who is supposed to do what by when, especially if you or your organization may have challenging assignments.

## Benefits:

Simply put, action clarity gets results. People know what is expected of them and when assignments are due. Overall, you'll find that you will have a higher level of productivity if all your presentations and meetings generate action clarity.