

Facilitating an Engaging, Productive Editorial Board Meeting—Not Just a Static Presentation of Stale Facts

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The 2021 CSE annual meeting session, “Facilitating an Engaging, Productive Editorial Board Meeting—Not Just a Static Presentation of Stale Facts,” explored different ways to effectively utilize meetings to better leverage editorial board members’ journal participation.

As a managing editor myself, I have hosted many editorial board meetings and was intrigued by this session to improve my meetings. With the switch from in-person, to virtual, meetings due to the pandemic, I was also interested to learn how I might be able to make my presentations more engaging.

Carolyn M de Court, from J&J Editorial, LLC, acted as the moderator. She started off the session by recognizing that so many different people with different roles attend editorial board meetings. This CSE annual meeting session would offer insight into 3 different perspectives on running more effective meetings: from a publisher, managing editor, and editor-in-chief’s point of view.

The first person to present was Jennifer English from John Wiley & Sons. With her role as publisher, she has had the opportunity to attend and host many editorial board members. When formulating a meeting, she makes sure it comprises 5 different components—appreciate, inform, engage, observe, and utilize—to avoid becoming stale.

Preplanning is essential. With input from the editor-in-chief, meeting coordinators should establish the goal of the meeting, what platform will be used (in-person or virtual), and the timeframe. Involved parties should also consider mixing things up to avoid falling into the familiar rut, such as changing the venue, format, or length of the meeting. English also suggested involving the attendees in the agenda process: What do they want to hear about? This request could be included when obtaining RSVPs. Getting their topics of interest early could lead to a more productive, engaging meeting.

As for the meeting itself, English recommended starting with the positives, so it doesn’t get lost at the end of the day, whether it be progress or milestones. The content of the presentation should be relevant, free of jargon, and easy to understand. If data is being shared, consider displaying this differently with word clouds or a video. If you’re going to be providing information about the journal, consider inviting a guest speaker or offering a live demo of a new feature. Lastly, make sure to leave time for discussion, but avoid leaving it too open-ended. To foster conversation, consider framing this around a brainstorming topic, mini-SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis, or problem-solving activity.

The second person to speak was Dianne Dixon, Managing Editor for the *International Journal of Radiation Biology*. Her editorial board meetings usually consisted of going over reviewer performance; however, their journal reevaluated this approach to make meetings more engaging. During this session, she offered a specific use case of similarity. Checking for plagiarism was something usually only handled by staff; however, Dixon decided to include the journal’s editorial board in this process.

For her journal, they use Crossref’s Similarity Check to monitor for plagiarism. Through this service, the journal found that 32% of papers had a similarity match over the journal’s 20% threshold. After further investigation, this didn’t appear to be a language issue, but going back to the authors to rewrite didn’t solve the problem and took a lot of time to correct.

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Figure. Key takeaways for an engaged board and meeting (Dianne Dixon, Managing Editor for the *International Journal of Radiation Biology*).

Armed with this knowledge, Dixon used their editorial board meeting to address this problem. Editorial board members can play multiple roles within the journal and may be authors or guest editors, which the journal could use to their advantage. They decided to partner with the board to help educate their authors on correcting similarity (Figure). During the meeting, editorial board members were interested, open to discussion, and worked together to problem-solve. Now, a year later, the number of papers that are over the journal's Similarity Check threshold has decreased and authors better understand the issue.

The third person to present was Samir S Shah, MD, MSCE. As Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Hospital Medicine*, Dr Shah has many groups with whom he interacts when leading the journal. With that in mind, he tailors his meetings for each specific group, from meeting frequency to topics discussed. For example, his senior deputy editors meet monthly to discuss more granular items such as manuscript

dispositions, while the editorial board meets less frequently, about 4–6 times a year, to go over broader journal topics like 3-to-5-year goals and strategy. By maintaining a reasonable frequency, Dr Shah was able to better leverage each group's engagement. While more meetings may be helpful, it may not always be possible or reasonable, so alternative communication via email or platforms like Scholar One can support process efficiency.

Dr Shah also emphasized how important it is to recognize and reward those who work and support the journal, including an example of when his journal gifted mugs displaying the journal cover. Recipients were unexpectedly delighted to receive these tokens of appreciation and even posted their journal pride on Twitter, which turned into a contest of more mug giveaways and even more engagement on Twitter.

Time was left at the end of the session for Q&A and discussion. The Zoom chat was lively as people asked questions and bounced ideas off each other. Attendees were interested to know how to best engage editorial board members. Different ideas were suggested such as icebreakers: from cheesy (what animal best represents you) to serious (what's your goal for the journal) to casual (what are you watching on Netflix?). Other attendees wanted to know how to motivate members to help increase submissions. Presenters suggested handing out business cards, including members as participants in special series, or engaging them on social media. There was also discussion on the best way to recognize and thank members for their service and time, from a hot breakfast, journal tokens like coffee mugs, or discounts for meeting registration, if possible.

A general theme of these meetings was that no matter how you choose to engage your members, there should be recognition, dissemination of information, and plenty of time for discussion. There were many ideas presented at this session for me to revamp my editorial board meetings.