

Facilitation guide: Retrospective

A retrospective is a forum dedicated to reflecting on a recent initiative or change. Use this guide to surface “pluses,” or aspects of the change that are going well, as well as “deltas,” or aspects of the change that are challenging, so you can iterate and improve.

Preparing for the meeting

✓ Get dedicated time on the calendar

- Allocate at least 30 minutes for the conversation
- Proactively schedule a retrospective 2-3 weeks following the initiative’s launch date
- If calendars allow, consider a recurring invite to keep tabs on how implementation is going

✓ Choose your facilitator

Choosing the right facilitator is an important step to surface candid, actionable feedback. There are three good choices for who should facilitate a retrospective:

Facilitator	Strengths	Limitations
 <p>The executive sponsor or initiative leader</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knows the intricacies of the change and rationale behind decisions • Has personal responsibility to act on the feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants may find it difficult to share feedback with the leader • May have to document critical feedback about their own role or performance • Leader is not able to participate in the exercise
 <p>A neutral third party</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can encourage more honest feedback and conversation • Gives initiative leader a chance to participate in the exercise • Usually has more formal facilitation experience (such as a clinical educator or PMO consultant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not steeped in the specifics of the program • May not have power to immediately inflect change • May not have personal relationships or trust with participants
 <p>Peer physician or physician change champion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has personal relationships with the group • Provides an opportunity for peer-to-peer feedback • Creates an opportunity for physicians interested in facilitation, process improvement, and leadership opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not have full visibility into the ‘behind the scenes’ work of the change; is not positioned to answer many questions on the spot • May have to document critical feedback about their own role or performance



Invite (and equip) participants

To ensure you're getting a full picture of how things are going, think strategically about who should be in the room.

- **Limit the meeting to no more than 12 participants** to allow time for discussion. If you have a large group, consider splitting into smaller groups with multiple facilitators.
- **Match your attendees to your scope:** Include representatives from different impacted groups to get a holistic perspective. If you want more detailed feedback, schedule a dedicated retrospective with each stakeholder group.
- **Give participants a heads up:** Retrospectives are most effective when participants have time to reflect in advance. When you send out your invite, let them know that the goal is to reflect on how the initiative is going and that it will be a participation-heavy meeting. You might also include example prompts you are hoping to discuss.

Sample scripting:

"Thank you for joining us to provide your feedback on [initiative]. During this meeting, we'll discuss what's going well and where we need to make improvements, including:

- *What's your overall impression of how the [initiative] is going?*
- *What's been easier or better as a result of [initiative]?*
- *What barriers or challenges have you encountered since [initiative] launched?*

No formal participation is required, but if you have any questions, concerns, or observations you want to share, please bring them along with you. We look forward to the conversation."

Facilitating the meeting

Retrospectives can range from 30 to 60 minutes. Below is a sample agenda for a 30-minute discussion.

1 Set the tone for an honest conversation (3 minutes)

To solicit candid feedback, start the session by underscoring the purpose of your meeting: process improvement. Reiterate the importance of open and honest feedback and explicitly state that your role is to ask questions only to better understand the challenges, not to defend or make judgements about the feedback that's shared.

Sample scripting: *"Thanks for taking time out today to reflect on [initiative]. Our goal is to create an open, safe space to share feedback about how [initiative] is going: what's going well and what isn't.*

As the facilitator for today, my goal is to capture takeaways from our conversation and ask questions to better understand each of the barriers and successes you're experiencing. After our conversation, I'll share this feedback—in aggregate so it's anonymous—with [stakeholders] to inform how we evolve this work moving forward."

2 Introduce the plus/delta frame (2 minutes)

- Ask participants to take a piece of paper and fold it in half.
- Instruct participants to write "plus" above the left-hand side of the paper and "delta" on the right-hand side.
- Ask participants to reflect on how the initiative is going by noting what's going well in the "plus" column, and what's going poorly in the "delta" column.

Sample scripting: *"We'll take the next 5 minutes to individually reflect on how [initiative] is working today and what could be improved.*

Under the "plus" column, write down what's going well today. This can include any "wins" – small or large.

Under the "delta" column, write down what's not going well – places where you've hit challenges, roadblocks, or points of frustration that are getting in the way of change."

- Ask if there are any questions before you start the clock.

3 Allow time for individual brainstorming (5 minutes)

Give participants a heads up when they're halfway through the allotted brainstorming time.

4 Facilitate the report out (10 minutes)

- Starting with the plus category, ask a volunteer to share their list.
- As they share their feedback, write it on a flip-chart, whiteboard, or blank powerpoint slide. Capture the takeaways using the participant's language – resist the urge to editorialize or comment on individual feedback.
- Go around the room and ask each volunteer to share their “pluses”. If you have large group, ask each participant to “add a plus” to anything you've already captured and then add any new ones from their list.
- After everyone has shared their pluses, ask the group if there's anything they would like to add.
- Repeat with the deltas. Resist the urge to comment or explain away critiques. If participants appear uncomfortable or hesitant to share negative feedback, refer to the purpose of the exercise: to continuously improve.

5 Distill takeaways and pressure test next steps with the group (10 minutes)

- **Thank the group** for their feedback.
- **Start with the pluses.** Share your observations and debrief them with the team. As you review the feedback, consider:
 - What are the 1-2 themes you observed?
 - Did anything surprise you?
 - How might you sustain those wins—or expand them in the future?
- **Shift to the deltas.** Share your observations from the list. As you debrief the list with the team, consider:
 - What are the 1-2 themes you observed?
 - Are there any “quick fixes” that we can immediately act on?
 - If there's a long term-challenge, what are some ways we could address it? How might changing that impact others?
- **Recap takeaways from the debrief and outline any next steps**, including how you'll elevate the feedback from the group and when they should expect to hear from you with an update.



Want to learn more? Retrospectives are one of many Agile principles you can use to boost team performance and efficiency.