



1.0 Why

A primary pillar of a Lean culture is Continuous Improvement. One very effective way to strive for this is through Retrospection. Plus/Delta is a quick, simple retrospective to improve meetings, planning sessions or repetitive activities. By using Plus/Delta, teams can continuously improve meetings or activities and show respect for people by discussing the value of or ability to improve the time spent on events. Using this practice appropriately will help develop and sustain the Lean culture. Over time, participants will ideally develop a regular practice of making timely assessments and adjustments.

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2.0 When

Plus/Deltas are typically done in last 10 minutes of a meeting or activity. Projects and organizations that really look to maximize their learning from the practice also use it mid-way through a longer meeting or work session. It can be particularly helpful as a coaching tool when a meeting is going off-track—it will help recalibrate the team around the meeting's objective and potentially help them identify a new objective.

3.0 How

Typically, the facilitator does the following:

1. Plan 10 minutes in the agenda for the Plus/Delta. Make sure the time slot doesn't get used up by another topic. This is not something to be rushed and completed for the sake of completion. Attendees may at first be unwilling to appear to criticize the meeting. They may be afraid to participate. The facilitator should expect to encourage participation until the practice becomes commonplace.
2. Explain to the group every time what a plus/delta is.
 - a. Plus: what brought value and how does the team repeat it?
 - b. Delta: what can the team change or add to bring more value? How can the team do better?
 - c. The team should focus on the process of each particular meeting rather than focusing on people. The facilitator should be prepared to return to emphasizing the objectives of the meeting and how to better achieve these objectives.
3. Draw a line down the middle of a flip chart or white board, label the top with "Plus" and "Delta"
4. Ask the team for pluses and deltas—in action phrase format. They should start their comment by stating whether it is a Plus or a Delta.
 - a. Again, all comments should be discussed in action format. If someone says "There was good conversation" as a plus, ask "What action occurred to allow that to happen?" If someone says "we had too many sidebar conversations," ask "What action can we take to prevent that next time?" Try to get to the root cause so the appropriate countermeasure can be determined.
 - b. This may take some probing. Some teams go around the table so that everyone provides a plus and a delta, others let the group organically respond. If the room remains quiet, wait for a few minutes. You may eventually need to call on some participants to get the exercise started.
 - c. Encourage both deltas and pluses. The intent is to both improve and sustain what is working well.
 - d. Don't let people off the hook. Encourage all to speak up. Validate comments with the group to ensure value to most before helping define the action.
 - e. Ask in terms of "Who has another plus or delta?" or "What else?" until it is time



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to close the session. Then shift the question to “Is there anything else?”

- f. Capture these actions on the flip chart. If an action has too many words or is not easy to write, ask the person who said it to rephrase it in a few words. “Translating” is not recommended as often the intent is missed.
- g. Ask for owners of each action, along with a commitment date. It is O.K. to decide not to take action.
- h. At the beginning of the next meeting, review the status of the actions from the prior Plus/Delta.


Helpful facilitation points:

- No “junk words” allowed. If someone says “the meeting was too long,” ask them to define “too long” or to rephrase the statement into a recommended improvement. (For example: “We should meet for 45 minutes.”)
- If a participant found nothing to be of value in the meeting and has no improvements to offer, ask that participant if he really needed to attend. What action can be taken for the next meeting to ensure the right participants are there at the right time?

- Everything brought up is fair game. Do not discount anyone’s pluses or deltas. Discounting feedback can prevent others from speaking up. Anything brought up that is completely off-topic should then be captured in a “Parking Lot.”
- Pay attention to the mood of the group. The group must be open and feel safe to speak up.
- Ensure your application is appropriate for the environment. For very large groups (like conferences) a technical application may be helpful. Generally, more value comes from the group discussing these together.
- Set the goal of not having the same delta from one meeting to the next. Having the same delta means the action was not implemented the first time.

This process can become stale and not add value if not facilitated as described above. There may come a time when the team agrees the meetings are high performing and do not need a Plus/Delta. However, if the meeting value becomes suspect, begin the practice again, perhaps in a more intentional way to bring the value back.

Meetings tend to become habit, the need for the meetings change with time, the length of the meeting may need to change, or any number of factors may alter the value proposition. The Plus/Delta process can help the change occur as needed.



Quick Reference

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| <u>Facilitation</u> | 57 |
| <u>High-Performing Teams</u> | 113 |
| <u>Continuous Improvement</u> | 179 |

For additional readings and information, please see the below information.

CHAPTER 35 – PLUS/DELTA

Additional Readings

[3 Production Control Principles](#)

[x03-16-05 Plus - Delta Items-MEPS](#)