



So you want to have a NEMO Meeting?

A short primer by Rose Young with thanks to Jenny Beatty for being my mentor NEM

If you have been to a NEMO meeting, or heard of one and thought “I can do that!” you may want to read further, because this thought may have lead you to many questions. You may know some of the answers already, but for completeness here is a short compilation of the FAQ’s. Hopefully, the answers are helpful.

What is NEMO and what is a NEM?

NEMO stands for Non-Engineering Mentor Organization, and members are Non-Engineering Mentors (NEMs). But what makes them “non-engineering” is not that they lack the skills or willingness to be engineers; many are, in fact, great engineers. But they are also really good logisticians, no-nonsense field marshals, creative problem-solvers, gifted fundraisers and fantastic mediators. In short, NEMs do all the rest of the work of running a FIRST team that is NOT about building a robot. And that is a lot of stuff. If you can do all of that, you can set up and moderate a NEMO meeting. You’ll be glad you did.

When and where should the meeting be?

These talented and underappreciated folks, which we call NEMs can be found at robotics competitions, so that is a great venue if the time is carefully chosen. Right before lunch, when they need to make sure 40 people get fed, including the drive team, is a bad time. Mid-morning on Thursday or Friday works fairly well for a three-day event. One day events are tight on time, but mid-morning and not too close to alliance selection is usually good. Your event organizer should be consulted to help find a room that is not too far from the action but not so loud as to make conversation impossible. Other great options for NEMO meetings besides regular and off-season competitions are off-season training sessions or any events that draw teams together.

Who do you invite and how?

Finding NEMs is complicated because they can be anywhere, but you can’t rely on pit announcements to reach them, since the pit area tends not to be their natural habitat. Start by including the scheduled meeting time and location in team information sent by event organizers. At the event, post a flyer announcing the meeting in public places, near concessions and check-in for teams, restrooms, first aid stations and entrances. A sample follows at the end of this paper – edit appropriately. Announce the time and location, if possible, to spectators in the stands. Send the meeting details (time, location, contact person) to Kathie Kentfield, Director, NEMO, at kathiek@firstnemo.org. She will include the

NEMO meeting on the NEMO website calendar. Be sure to post a thread on the Chief Delphi NEMO forum.

What do you do once you get there?

There is no set agenda for a NEMO meeting, but there is a basic agenda that works fairly well. Make sure you make it clear that coming and going is okay. Even drop-ins can gain and/or contribute, and we all know how many other things NEMs have to do on a competition day.

- Introductions. Go around and have attendees give a name, team and either something they do for the team, a concern they have or a success story. Have the moderator(s) start this.
- Resource identification. Provide a bit of info about NEMO, and refer attendees to the website. Also tell them about the ChiefDelphi private forum, and other resources. (See www.firstnemo.org for all of the links and information.)
- Follow up discussion. Something may come up which seems to be of interest to a majority. Flesh it out and allow the discussion to flow.
- Optional: give a prepared presentation on a topic you feel all would benefit from. Suggested topics include fundraising, team building, networking, dealing with school administration, starting a 501(c)3, and feeding a team.

Moderator tips-

- Don't allow a speaker to dominate. Be prepared to move discussion along. Likewise, avoid negativity and airing of gripes. This is intended to help attendees with useful ideas, not reinforce negative hang-ups.
- Allow for local needs and interests. Find out what areas are represented and encourage some cross-pollination while respecting the 'hot topics'. These may include district model discussions, local government or school policies, or funding concerns.
- Overall, keep it lively and encourage the sharing of (brief) success stories.
- Use a sign-in list to get contact information.

What happens next?

This part is up to the moderator. You may have contact information to follow up with individuals, some of whom want to have another meeting. You may have feedback or a suggestion for a white paper to share on the NEMO website. You may just want to take your notes and provide them to the attendees (if you are so organized and efficient as to have taken them!). Hopefully, some of those who came took away a bit of advice, a new contact, a source of information to make life as NEM easier. You are welcome to post comments about your meeting in the private NEMO forums on www.chiefdelphi.com.

Mission accomplished.



You Are Invited to Attend

[NAME of EVENT]

Date:

Time: (You are encouraged to come and go as your schedule dictates)

Where: [Add if needed: "Sorry, no food/drink allowed in this room" or "Bring your lunch"]

Facilitators:

What: [This will be an opportunity to meet your fellow NEM's. We will be discussing NEMO resources and will have an open discussion, addressing any immediate concerns brought by the group. Bring your best practices to share] or [We will be sharing lessons learned with *your topic*]

Who: This meeting is open to any **adult**, including any mentors, parents, administrators and sponsors.

About NEMO: Since 2004 the Non-Engineering Mentor Organization has been a support group and information exchange for those adult mentors who help teams as part of the *FIRST* programs, including JFLL/FLL/FTC/FRC as well as the VEX Robotics Competitions. NEMO has a central clearinghouse for information that will benefit all teams. NEMs on teams help with all the behind-the-scenes-glue holding the teams together including mentor recruitment and retention, travel, hotels, meals, parent involvement, fundraising, business plans, public relations, community service, team building and logistics.

Joining NEMO: Visit www.firstnemo.org to find out how to join NEMO and the private online forum. There are no dues to join. Visit the "Resources" page to see all the papers written by NEMO members.

Questions? [Put your contact info here]