



Leadership Tips
September, 2019

**Better
Meetings
=
Better
Results**

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***Maximize Your Meetings
for Maximum Impact***



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Recently a manager we know reviewed her upcoming calendar on Monday morning and realized the rest of her week was already filled with meetings. Her surprise turned to depression as she realized much of her month was similarly occupied with meetings. She started thinking about that and wondered how many of those meetings were really worthwhile.

Well-run meetings have their place and purpose in our work lives. Yet often meetings aren't run efficiently, effectively or with purpose. To improve both productivity and morale, look to streamline, condense or even employ alternatives to meetings so that the time freed up can be applied to meeting your real objectives.

To meet or not to meet

Recently we asked a coaching client rushing off to a meeting what it was about. His response: "I have no clue." A one-time meeting had morphed into a regular meeting, long after its initial purpose had been achieved. "We meet because we always have" is not reason enough to keep meeting. It's time to ask yourself if an alternative to some of your meetings exists.

Look at the meetings on your calendar. How many can be replaced with alternatives such as:

- A scheduled one-on-one conversation
- A casual conversation
- A FaceTime, Zoom or Skype meeting
- A memo, report or email requesting updates
- A huddle or short "standing" meeting
- A written status report

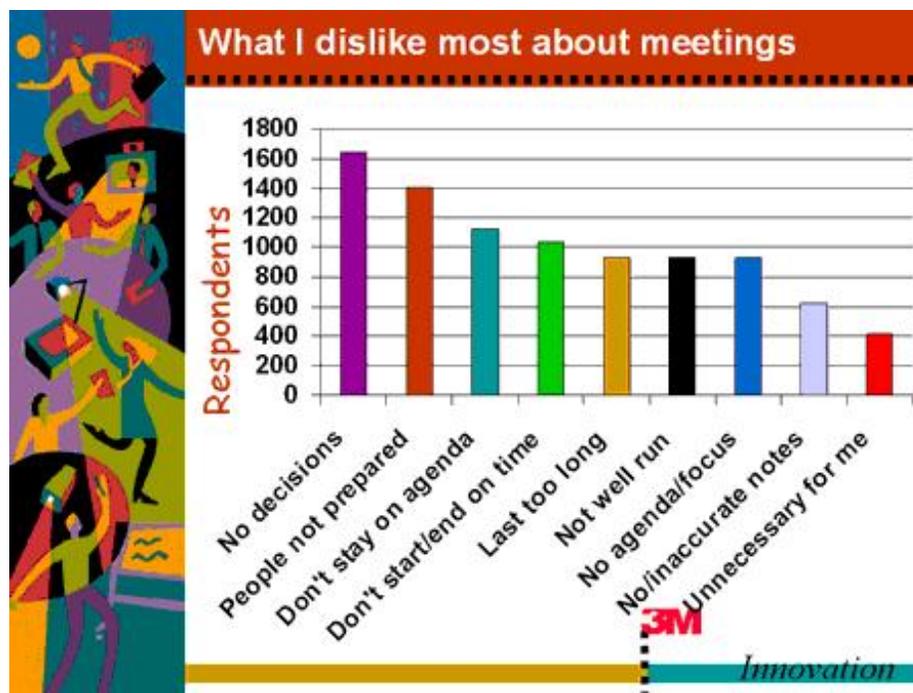
What we most dislike about meetings

We all have pet peeves about meetings. Read the list below and rank these pet peeves for *yourself* from 1-9, with your biggest frustration at the top of your list.

Popular pet peeves about meetings include:

- _ Lasting too long
- _ Unnecessary for attendees
- _ No decisions
- _ Attendees unprepared
- _ Straying from agenda
- _ Not starting / ending on time
- _ Poorly run
- _ No agenda
- _ No or inaccurate notes or minutes

View the graphic below for the rankings of meeting pet peeves from this well-known 3M survey of 3,400 professionals.



If you are like us, you have your own pet peeves that weren't even among the choices compiled here.

6 basic tips to help you master Your meetings:

We teach half and full day trainings on the facilitating effective meetings, so we've culled some of the basics to get you started.

1. Meeting Agenda - Your Roadmap to Success

Create your meeting agenda in advance with input from attendees. Circulate it in advance to give attendees a heads-up of what to expect and how to prepare. This increases buy-in and makes the meeting more efficient.

Your agenda should cover the basics: date, location, start and end time, descriptive title of meeting. The most effective meetings also announce, toward the top, the *purpose* of the meeting. This focuses everyone. Place the most important items early in the agenda.

Key elements often missing from meetings:
Breakdown of time segments per agenda item,

and a person responsible for leading each segment or portion. Also, toward the end of each agenda, a section to review accountabilities or action items aloud and record them in the meeting minutes. (We have more to say about this in point 6 below.)

Make your agenda easy to read, with headings in bold, and appropriate indentations for nested items. Consider horizontal lines or additional white space to separate sections for topics such as Reports, Unfinished Business, or New Business.

2. Safeguard Time - A Precious Resource

All meetings should start on time and end on time. Encourage people to arrive before the starting time to coordinate or just get comfortable, etc. At the appointed starting time, start the meeting. Bang a gavel if you need to. Some meeting facilitators offer food or beverages to get attendees in the room beforehand. Others are known for a fun or relevant ice-breaker to initiate the meeting. These roles can be rotated too. Latecomers miss out.

Let people know the meeting will start promptly at the appointed time. Even if "important" or ranking members aren't in their seats your responsibility is to those in attendance. Start on time, and don't recap once any late arrivals show up. That only sanctions latecomers and furthers the likelihood your meeting will run long. End on time, even if you haven't finished the agenda. This will allow attendees to preserve their calendar.

3. Minutes Matter

Meeting minutes are an important aspect of any meeting and should be kept, and distributed shortly after the meeting, and reviewed at the time they arrive in everyone's in-box, while memories

are still fresh. Any corrections or clarifications should then be submitted back *well in advance of the next meeting* for incorporation into the record.

Many people never review the last meeting's minutes until the point in the next meeting when it's time to approve them as is or with changes. This practice is a common time-waster.

4. The Art of the Report

Reports are intended to be crafted in advance for crisp delivery during a meeting. They usually are built on a proven template to efficiently impart information, summarize findings, make concise recommendations or share results of actions.

Make sure your reports are tight and deliver them with confidence. If you have too much information consider a table, chart, graph, or attachment to help make your points. Don't get bogged down, or bog others down, with too much detail. If they need it they'll ask.

You'd be surprised what you can impart in under 2 minutes with preparation. When the time comes, *stand and deliver*.

5. Tame Your Meeting Monsters

Bad meeting behavior erodes the effectiveness of your time together, and like a virus it can be contagious. Beware the many monsters lurking:

- Tangent talkers
- Contrarians who love to play devil's advocate
- Wisenheimers: those who cloak their sarcasm as humor
- The Buzz-killers who revel in negativity
- The 'bots addicts who must check their cell phones, smart watches, beeping tablets, etc.
- The interrupters whose rudeness disrupts dialog, debate and decision-making

As the meeting leader or facilitator, strive to keep

these monsters at bay and model productive behavior to get the best out of your team and your meetings.

6. "Who Will Do What By When?"

Before adjourning, always end your meeting by asking this vital question. You will find that your meeting is more productive as everyone is striving for clarity in case they become one of the "Whos."

The meter is running

What is the cost of the human resources being paid to attend a meeting? Look around the table. Think about their salaries. Whether you calculate by longhand or use one of a number of apps available online or on your smart phones and tablets, you can quickly calculate the time per attendee based on a division of their salary to an hourly rate. Once totaled, are you getting an appropriate ROI (return on investment) for these gatherings? We hate to spoil your meeting...but it's not healthy to meet if it's not feeding your bottom-line needs.

Do the math to calculate the cost of your own attendance:

1. How many hours a week are you in meetings?

___ x 48 = ___ (don't count vacation time)

2. What is your cost per hour?
(Divide annual salary by 2080 hours) _____

3. Now multiply each result to calculate \$ spent on your attending meetings: _____.

4. How many of those wasted your time?

5. What do these meetings cost?

Why meetings management matters too

An article from Inc.com columnist Peter Economy, in which he cites [a study](#) from Doodle's 2019 State of Meetings report that showed just how much time and money are wasted in unproductive meetings. Hold on to your hats...in the U.S. alone, bad meetings are predicted to end up costing almost \$400 billion in lost productivity, and that's just during 2019.

The difference is you

Deft meeting facilitation helps your meeting run smoothly, facilitates dialog, debate and decision-making, and moves your organization forward. Productivity will soar when you streamline your meetings and get everyone on-board for a productive session.

Meeting Adjourned.

Editor's note: Next month we'll share advanced tips and phraseology for moving meetings forward.

And the following month we'll turn the spotlight on offsite meetings, council and board retreats, strategic planning and teambuilding meetings.



COACHING:

Do you have a leader or employee in need of coaching to improve their leadership, facilitation skills, communication skills, emotional intelligence, or customer service proficiency? *Let us help.*

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