Fulcra

6 Ways to Improve Your Meetings

(Because you can't be a great organization if you have bad meetings)

1 – Is a meeting the way to move this work forward? Don't meet to give status updates, activity reports, business updates, or anything you can learn by reading. Save your precious meeting time for reviewing decisions, considering implications, and looking at interdependencies.

2 – Have an agenda + outcomes + pre-work. What if your organization adopted the rule "No agenda? No meeting." If you are the leader, your agenda should clearly state the purpose of the meeting and what outcomes you expect. Give pre-work so that you can use meeting time for discussion, not reading information from slides. If you are a participant, demand an agenda beforehand and come prepared.

3 – Keep it small.   Get over your need to feel important by going to a meeting. What if your default reply to being invited was, "Tell me what contribution you want from me" and you could say "no" if you wouldn't add value? Limit them to the core people involved in the topic. Meeting size increases when we don't do pre-work (so instead of being able to represent 3 people's ideas, I bring them all with me) and when we don't write down our outcomes (so I have to go or I'll never learn what happened.)

4 – Facilitate well, participate fully.   People don't mind going to meetings when they are well run, use their expertise, and make decisions. Learn to facilitate well because it is part of your "professional life and legacy," says Tom Peters. Meetings are the leader's "stage."

5 – Recap. Take the last 5 minutes to recap the decisions made and the action steps. You'd be surprised how differently people remember what seems like a clear decision. Write down the actions and decisions and circulate.

6 – Halve the time. Why is a one-hour meeting the standard?   Try for shorter meetings, and end 10 minutes before the hour – think like high school where you had time to go between classes.

Want the quickest way to have positive impact in your organization? Improve your meetings.

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11 Million Meetings Per Day in the United States

When was the last time you attended a great meeting? One where you left thinking, "That was productive. And brisk. And had the right people in the room. And built on everyone's insights. And made a clear decision. And had real action items come out of it. *And* ended early."

Has it been a long time? *Never?*

Senior managers spend 30-50% of their time in meetings for an average of 23 hours weekly

Meeting participants rate 50% of their meetings "not useful"

On average, participants daydream 15% of the time in face-to-face meetings. And rate themselves as "engaged" only 55% of the time

Adapted from Rogelberg (2007), Pittampalli (2012), Bungay Stanier (2012), Hall (2007).