

Building Higher Trust 91 Too Many Meetings

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD

In many organizations, the standard paradigm for meetings means the people feel there are too many meetings. The null hypothesis on meetings is that they are one hour in



duration. Let's say a manager sends a text to her administrative assistant to schedule a meeting. He will assume the duration is one hour unless told otherwise.

We still use the old convention

We come by this paradigm through convention, and it is an opportunity to challenge the status quo. Suppose the administration person scheduled the meeting for 44 minutes. What would be the outcome?

In most organizations, it would mean that everyone invited to the meeting saved about 15 minutes. As a side benefit, the 44 minutes spent at the meeting would be far more productive. It is because we set aside the standard paradigm. People got the message that every minute is important.

Improve time utilization

There are numerous things that can be done to improve the time utilization at meetings, Here are nine of my favorite techniques;

Nine Antidotes:

1. Suggest that the person leading the meeting be extremely mindful of the duration. Our time at work is precious because it is finite.
2. Shock people into a realization of what is actually happening: Set up the meeting to start at 2:20 pm and end by 2:50 pm. That would be a 30-minute meeting.
3. Put a premium on how we spend time in meetings. Make sure the agenda is specific as to time devoted to each topic and stick to that schedule. Have a person assigned to keep things on track.
4. Acknowledge the need for important side issues, but do not let them derail the meeting. Handle them efficiently or find another venue to deal with them.
5. Start and end each meeting on time. Become known as a stickler for this. It is not polite to others to arrive late for meetings. It is also not polite to attendees for the leader to extend beyond the advertised finish time.

6. Have a set of expected behaviors for your meetings and post them. Hold each other accountable for abiding by these rules.
7. Have some time set aside in each meeting to reinforce good behavior. Feel good about things that are going well. If we spend 100% of our time dealing with the bad stuff, we will never smell the roses.
8. Agree to disagree. You do not need to wrestle every disconnect to the ground. Move on.
9. Settle differences outside the meeting environment.

Conclusion

All these rules are common sense. It is too bad they are not common practice, because they help preserve our most critical resource: our time.

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