

Why Bad Meetings Are Bad News

From the *Insider's Guide to Better Meetings*

If you add up all the time people waste in bad meetings every day worldwide, the cost would probably equate to the annual GDP of a small country. So why do we all go along with it? It's time to take a stand. But first, we need to get a few things off our chest!

Rant
#1

Most meetings are too long.

The average person's attention span is 35 minutes in a face-to-face meeting and just 23 minutes on a conference call. When people aren't actively engaged in a discussion or presentation, they tend to tune out – furtively texting, checking email or playing video games on their smartphone.

Rant
#2

Meetings are expensive.

Normally, business expenditures require a business case to justify it. Yet meetings are organized every day with little consideration that time is money. Multiply the number of meeting hours by the attendees' hourly rate, and you'll be staggered by the hidden cost of getting people together!

Rant
#3

Most meetings are unproductive.

Office workers consider over a third of all meetings to be a total waste of time – ouch! And yet we continue to attend them out of habit. Email makes it all too easy to invite a whole bunch of people to meetings, when we really should consider whether the goal could be accomplished another way.

Rant
#4

A lot of meetings are pointless.

Meeting organizers often fall into the trap of not having a defined outcome – a decision to make or a problem to solve. As a result, the discussion gets bogged down in planning and due diligence but doesn't reach any sort of resolution.

Rant
#5

Traditional meetings stifle innovation.

If someone introduces a novel solution or radical idea in a meeting, it often ends up going nowhere. Similar to the bystander effect, the large number of people present inhibits action. Nobody takes ownership, so the new idea gets watered down to a “safe” option or gets ignored entirely.

Rant
#6

Bad meetings are bad for business.

Meetings tend to be a barometer of a company's health. If you find yourself attending mind-numbing meetings with tedious people, or discussions are regularly argumentative, hostile or defensive, there may be an underlying cultural problem. Either way, it's not good for staff morale or retention.

The light at the end of the tunnel.

Just because many meetings are a waste of time doesn't mean yours will be. Check out the rest of our *Insider's Guide to Better Meetings* and let your best work shine through.

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