



How many meetings would you say you attend every day?

Every month?

Have you ever counted?

I'm guessing it's probably more than you could even guess.

It's a good exercise to go through your calendar, say from the last month, and see how many meetings you actually are a part of.

There's nothing wrong with meetings in and of themselves.

In fact, there's a lot of value that can and should be had from having meetings. The problem comes when we have too many meetings that are not productive and not purposeful and are just wasting everybody's time.

As a leader, it's your responsibility to make the meetings that you run and facilitate as valuable as possible.

This matters because time equals money equals impact. If we are in meetings that really don't have a purpose, that aren't really accomplishing anything, that are a waste of time and money and prevent us from having the maximum impact that we're seeking, it is a waste of valuable time and resources.

The data show us some interesting things about meetings.

This first data point is really interesting to me- 15% of meeting time is wasted time.

By wasted it doesn't mean the natural chitchat that happens before and after a meeting starts. That's actually really valuable time.

I'm going to jump in for a minute here to talk to those of you who run virtual meetings. In virtual meetings, this space isn't generally accounted for so we're missing a lot of that natural relationship -building that happens in person at the beginning and end of a meeting. If you run virtual meetings, be intentional about creating that space so people can still build those relationships, okay?

So that's not what I mean by wasted.

This data point means that 15% of meeting time is wasted with things like: the technology is not set up yet, or the facilitator is late, or they have to run out of the room to make extra copies. Stuff that's really, undoubtedly a waste of time.

If you think of a 60-minute meeting and 15% of that is wasted, say it's about 9 or 10 minutes.



Which might not sound like a lot to you- it does sort of sound like a lot to me- but then multiply that by how many meetings you have every day and then every week and every month and that time really adds up. Whatever you're doing for your meeting, make sure you're prepared and ready to go.

The average person attends 62 meetings a month. The C-suite- your CEO, CFO- are spending nearly half their time in meetings.

So when you look back at your calendar, where were you in terms of that average?

Were you right around 62?

A little bit higher?

A little bit lower?

Keep in mind there are maybe 24 or 25 working days in a month. So that means on average you have at least 3 meetings every day. That's a lot of meetings.

We can see on a national scale how much money it costs when we're wasting time on meetings without a purpose or value. It also matters because there are really powerful, wonderful, valuable things that can happen in meetings when they're run effectively.

Too many meetings are really just glorified status updates, which are not helpful to the people in the space. There are so many ways to share status updates outside of meeting time. Make sure that you are not using all your meeting time on status updates.

Instead when you focus your meetings on things like information sharing, which is different than status updates, information sharing might be sharing a new direction of the company or a change that's coming or something that's going on that really is helpful to talk about in person to make sure everybody understands and to answer any questions that might arise.

You can also use your meeting time for valuable time with things like problem-solving, brainstorming, team-building, and professional growth. These are really impactful ways to spend your meeting time.

Some best practices to keep in mind- you always want to make sure that your meeting has a purpose, and if your purpose is for your staff to get to know each other better and build relationships, that is a purpose. Don't dismiss those kinds of meetings. Those are really valuable, too.

Don't feel like you have to do everything yourself as the team leader. In fact, your meetings will be much more effective. If you are able to collaborate with whoever else will be a part of that meeting where you can divide up some of the sections of the meeting and let people kind of do it their way or be creative and present how they want to present.



It really helps to get different voices involved.

I'm going to jump a little bit to rotate leadership because with some consistent meetings, like for example, your team meetings, which I very much encourage you to have on a consistent basis- monthly is the bare minimum.

Every other week is generally best so that you have that consistent connection with members of your team.

But consider rotating leadership and not just divvying up different sections of the meeting but also rotating who organizes the meeting. That might give it a very different feel each month or every other week, which helps keep things fresh.

That's the balance between consistency and keeping things fresh.

You want to be consistent in terms of how frequently you're meeting and have a set day and time so people know not to schedule over it.

There are certain things in those meetings you want to make sure you're keeping consistent- opportunities to recognize good work, to answer questions, to provide feedback. All these things should be consistent but how you go about them- don't get too stuck and stale.

I used to be part of this organization where they did the Thorns and Roses thing but we had a fairly big team, and almost half the meeting was taken up with Thorns and Roses. It got a little stale after a while. Be creative and keep things fresh and exciting and again, don't put all that pressure on yourself.

Reach out to other members of the meeting so that they can contribute and lead those things as well.

Varying times doesn't mean to vary the time of day.

Again, if it's a consistent team meeting or project updates or whatever, you want to keep those consistent, so people know not to schedule over them.

Varying times means the length of the meetings. We very regularly schedule an even amount of time for meetings.

We'll schedule a meeting for an hour or for 30 minutes or whatever the case may be but not every meeting is an hour and sometimes we can get a lot out of a 10 or 15 minute meeting and this includes phone calls as well. Don't feel stuck with that hour or even 30 minutes.

If you want to meet and it's a 10 to 15 minute meeting then then that can be great and really value packed as well.



Some organizations have moved to certain days where there are no meetings at the very least internally. It's something interesting to think about.

What might that look like for your team or your organization if you designated one day a week where there were no meetings allowed?

Finally, as with all things, seek input and feedback from members of the team, especially if it's a consistent meeting that meets regularly about what's working and what's not working for them.

When it comes to your direct staff that you supervise, those one-on-one meetings are really, really important.

When I first am supervising someone I make sure to meet weekly, if not more often. If we get to a place where we start meeting every other week then that's okay. I don't really like to push it more than that.

You want to keep the communication open with each of the staff you're supervising.

Again not every meeting needs to be an hour. Some meetings might be two hours and some meetings might be 15 minutes, but make sure that space is really closely guarded. You want to send the message that these meetings are valuable and important to you. If you're constantly canceling them or rescheduling them you're sending a message to your staff that these meetings are not important.

In your one-on-one meetings, just like your group meetings use this in a valuable way. Use it to problem solve and coach and recognize and praise and to have lots of feedback. Reciprocal feedback to your staff and from your staff to you.

Just like your team meetings, don't spend all of your one-on-one time on status updates. Think about the meanings that you do every day, every week, every month, every quarter, and then the meetings that pop up throughout your days.

You can audit what your meeting schedule looks like now and really consider which meetings are necessary, which ones are not.

For the ones that are necessary, how can you make them as valuable and as impactful as possible?

So, the most important question for you is, how will you make your meetings more effective?