Want to Get Out of Meeting Hell?

Get Leverage

According to Attentiv, 11 million meetings are held in the United States each day and that adds up to a staggering 55 million per week and over 1 billion each year. But what are we doing in those meetings? A recent study by Atlassian reports that 91% of people admit to daydreaming in meetings (notably, that's just the number who admit to this on the survey and not necessarily the total number) and that 73% of people admit to doing other work during meetings. So what's the damage? The Atlassian study suggests that we waste $37 billion dollars annually on meetings. So, how do you get out of meeting hell and start using your time and resources more effectively?

Pick and choose: Only accept meeting invitations that have outcomes and objectives. Require an agenda 24 hours before the meeting and don't attend if your meeting convener can't deliver.

Prepare: If you're hosting a meeting, create an agenda (only 37% of meeting held in the United States have an agenda). When you have an agenda and commit to it, you can reduce your meeting time by up to 80%.

Do pre-work: Don't waste meeting time asking people to read or review documents. Make sure everyone has the necessary information to engage prior to the meeting.

Be selective: Only have the key players at the table. This will cut down on meeting time and increase your team's overall productivity. Circulate meeting minutes to interested parties who were not included.

Struggle purposefully: At their best, meetings are a time to explore new ideas, have disagreements, and brainstorm creative solutions. Create a trusting and productive context that fosters this type of engagement.

Document the proceedings: Don't miss anything—ensure you have a note taker or audio or video record the proceedings (get everyone's permission first if you elect to the record the meeting).

More Tips for Better Meetings

The following tips are commonsense, but when it comes to meetings, commonsense is rarely followed. In an attempt to put commonsense back into meetings, consider the following essential tips:

· **Schedule shorter meetings:** Meetings are best when they are focused and crisp. Ideally 25 or 50 minutes as this allows for transition time between meetings.

· **Set clear expectations:** When scheduling a meeting, make it clear why you're meeting!

· **Send materials in advance:** Meetings are for discussion. Provide resources prior to the meeting so time is spent talking not reading or viewing.

· **Start and end on time:** Respect people's time and avoid wasting your own time. Reach out to late arrivals after the meeting to communicate impact and problem solve if necessary. Accountability is the first step.

· **Avoid monologues:** Engage participants but don't tell a long story about your grandmother, son, or latest triumph on the golf course.

· **Stay focused:** Avoid tangents. Notice when the meeting takes a tangent, acknowledge it, and have a strategy to capture and "circle back."

· **Screen Free Meetings:** Too often when meetings are too big, too long or too unfocused (e.g., lacking a clear agenda), people tune out and try to reclaim time by checking email. This is contagious and quickly derails the overall meeting.

· **What you Permit, You Promote:** Revisiting meeting protocols can be a powerful gateway to increasing employee engagement and impact.

Explore AIM Leadership's free resources. Discover how to embrace a growth mindset, hack procrastination, create more time, optimize your meetings, and much more:

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