



# Run efficient meetings that don't suck



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RUN MEETINGS THAT  
**[DON'T SUCK]**

# Run efficient meetings that don't suck

*By Regina Gerbeaux (@\_rpgbx)*

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## Part 1: What creates shitty meetings?

Before discussing how to run efficient meetings that don't suck, we should start by identifying what makes a meeting shitty in the first place.

There are many ways to create inefficiency in meetings. From my observations, here are the main culprits.

**1. No one knows who “owns” the meeting.**

That is, no one knows who is responsible for leading the meeting and giving context to attendees on what pre-work is expected from them before the meeting begins.

**2. The meeting is a standing recurring event in everyone's calendar, but it no longer serves a purpose.**

Many blue moons ago, there was a reason this recurring meeting was scheduled. It is no longer necessary. Yet, no one has bothered to speak up to question whether the meeting is really necessary or not.

**3. There is no meeting agenda.**

Everyone shows up and it becomes a brainstorming session or “jam” session that has no specific outcome. It's performative, “pretty” work to feel productive without producing results.

**4. There's little to no moderation.**

Therefore, the loudest voices in the room are able to hijack the conversation and talk about things that may not be relevant, while the quietest sit there wondering why they're wasting their time sitting in that meeting, rather than, say, getting a sandwich at the local deli. (Surely, that would be far better use of time.)

**5. There's no time-boxing of discussion topics (see moderation.)**

Meetings that should take no more than thirty minutes end up dragging on for an hour — or more. All because no one sets a timer on how long to spend on each topic before moving on and taking the conversation async.

**6. No one is held accountable to action items agreed upon in the previous meeting.**

As a result, barely anything ever gets done. Or, even worse yet, no action items are agreed upon at all. Everyone walks out of the meeting thinking, “That was such a productive discussion! ...so, what now?” Sure, it might have been productive discussion. But are there “next steps”?

## 7. **No one solicits feedback for the meeting or the meeting owner.**

As a result, the same mistakes get made, over and over again.

Luckily, all of these problems have simple solutions. (Simple in concept — implementing can be difficult, but the payout is incredibly rewarding if done successfully.)

## Part 2: The anatomy of a good meeting

All good meetings have the following pieces. In fact, I think no meeting should ever occur without these components.

- **A clear meeting owner** who commits to being a good moderator, and is the DRI of the meeting and its outcome.
- **Explicit pre-work that everyone has opted into**, if any (such as reading or writing ahead of time.)

If even one person does not commit to doing pre-work, then the meeting owner cannot force everyone to do it because this will create resentment towards the one person who shows up unprepared.

- **A clear desired outcome of the meeting** that is reemphasized at the beginning of the meeting by the meeting owner.
- **An agenda with time boxes** that all attendees can easily follow, and that the meeting owner agrees to enforce.

The meeting owner might opt to outsource timekeeping to someone else. This is fine, but the other person has to agree to taking on the role.

- **Action items** that have been pulled out from the meeting and displayed in a very visible place for accountability.
- **Feedback at the end** for specifically the meeting owner (what they can do to improve as a meeting owner) and for the meeting itself (was it worth the time).

These components solve each of the problems listed in Part 1. See below.

✗ **Problem:** There is no meeting owner.

✓ **Solution:** Pick a meeting owner to pick a desired outcome for the meeting, send out pre-work, and moderate the discussion.

✗ **Problem:** The meeting no longer serves a purpose.

✓ **Solution:** Empower your team to give feedback to both the meeting owner and the meeting itself to cut out unnecessary meetings and to make necessary ones exquisite.

✗ **Problem:** There is no meeting agenda.

✓ **Solution:** Cause the meeting owner to create a meeting agenda that sticks to the desired outcome.

✗ **Problem:** There is no moderator.

✓ **Solution:** Have the meeting owner act as a moderator to guide the conversation. Encourage other participants to help by giving them explicit permission to speak up when a conversation is getting derailed from the desired outcome or meeting agenda.

✗ **Problem:** There is no time-boxing.

✓ **Solution:** Cause the meeting owner to time-box, or have them delegate that responsibility to someone who explicitly agrees to be timekeeper.

❌ **Problem:** There are no next actions, or next actions never get done.



**Solution:** Create actions during the meeting that participants can accomplish by the next meeting.

Make all actions visible to all participants at all times through an Actions Tracker.

At the beginning of every meeting, give participants time to check off whether they've actually done those action items or not.

❌ **Problem:** No one solicits feedback for the meeting or the meeting owner.



**Solution:** Create a dedicated time at the end for specifically the meeting owner (what they can do to improve as a meeting owner) and for the meeting itself (was it worth the time.)

## Part 3: Roles: Meeting owner, participants, and observers

When you run a meeting using the Mochary Method, there are three different kinds of meeting attendees.

👉 The first is the **meeting owner**.

This person is responsible for running the meeting. Their responsibilities include...

- Ensuring everyone present knows whether there is any preparation needed ahead of time, such as filling in updates before the meeting (known as “pre-writing”), or reading other attendees’ updates (known as “pre-reading”)
- Declaring at the beginning of the meeting what the **intended outcome of the meeting is**
- Driving the meeting agenda: what is being discussed during the meeting and in what order
- Starting meetings on time
- **Timekeeping**: staying on track to get all pertinent agenda items discussed
- **Focusing the conversation** and eliminating anyone detracting from the intended outcome



*Examples of meeting owners: Department heads, managers of teams, etc.*



The second are **participants**.

These folks actively participate in the meeting, meaning they are encouraged and expected to speak and write during the call. Their responsibilities include...

- **Completing any pre-writing or pre-reading required**, per the meeting owner’s instructions
- **Suggesting topics and issues** relevant to the discussion for the meeting
- During the meeting, **keeping the meeting’s intended outcome in mind** and minimizing deviations from it
- Create action items that they have to get done, and **adding those action items to their own agreements tracker**.



*Examples of participants: active members of a department during a department meeting*



👉 The third are **observers**.

These are folks who attend the meeting, but they do not engage in the meeting. This means...

- They have no pre-writing or pre-reading to do
- They cannot participate by speaking live during the meeting unless explicitly called on
- They're allowed to read and write as much as they'd like, but the meeting owner reserves the right to skip their comments in the interest of time
- Their "intended outcome" of being present is to be informed / in the loop



*Examples of observers: teammates from other departments, EAs and CoSes who are there to take notes and hold execs accountable for their actions*

In any given meeting, **there should be no more than six active attendees**.

This means at maximum, there should be five active participants and one meeting owner. Otherwise, there are too many voices.

The beauty of having observers is that **there can be as many as fifty observers**. This is because the meeting owner does not have to go through the steps of "Heard" by repeating back to observers their comments, nor do they necessarily have to weigh observers' voices while making Decisions. In other words, observers cost meeting owners no additional time or prep, and it promotes a spirit of transparency and knowledge-transfer in an organization.

## Part 4: Example of Team Meeting