

So You Want to Run a Meeting...

...

Hanna Landrus

YO DAWG I HEARD YOU LIKE MEETINGS

**SO I AM GOING TO HAVE A MEETING
ABOUT MEETINGS DURING OUR MEETING**

Hanna Landrus

- Data Scientist at Usermind
- Co-Organizer of AToM - Discussion based ML SIG
- @hanna on slack, profile photo →
- Have been in many meetings good and bad



CONFESSSION

I have run meetings without an agenda

80% of people surveyed mentioned
agenda|scope|goals|outline

Agenda:

- Show meme
- Talk about myself
- Give some stats without context
- ~~Fix Everyone's Meetings Forever~~

Agenda:

- Purpose & Goals
- Agendas & Invites
- Starting Meetings
- In Meeting Communication
- Ending Meetings

“I was at a meeting once where we didn't have much to talk about. Someone suggested that we schedule another meeting to set the agenda for that meeting. Pardon me, but I'm not sure if the solution to "not enough to talk about" is more meetings.”

Source: PuPPy Slack #ragepile

“After coming back from a short vacation, my boss came into my office frantically and said, “You just missed three meetings in the last two days.” And I said, “Oh my gosh, I must have missed so much. Tell me all these things that have changed.” And the boss froze and said, “Well, nothing really changed. Just keep up the good work.” I figured that was a pretty good indication those meetings did not need to take place.”

Source: <http://freakonomics.com/podcast/meetings/>



Jim Harmon 6:55 AM

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Have a Purpose

Possible Meeting Purposes:

- Give information
- Get information
- Develop options
- Make decisions
- Warm magical human contact

Source: <https://gettingthingsdone.com/2016/07/david-allen-on-5-reasons-for-a-meeting/>

Do all these things deserve a meeting?

Types of Meetings Slack Suggestions Avoiding:

- Presentations: Share slides in advance and focus on discussing
- Status updates: Post to slack or whiteboard instead

Source: <https://slackhq.com/run-effective-meetings>

Be open to alternative forms of communication that would allow people more control over their time and will allow them to be more productive. This might depend on trust and accountability.

Decide on an Outcome

Measurable Outcomes

- What questions will be answered?
- What will the results be?
- How will you know that the meeting was successful?

“So when you are thinking about your agenda, consider framing it not as topics to be discussed, but consider framing it as questions to be answered. By framing it as questions to be answered it’s easier to determine who needs to be there because they’re relevant to the questions.”

<http://freakonomics.com/podcast/meetings/>



alanv 5:14 PM

I was once pulled into a meeting to "design a database schema". I was told they wanted me to do it live, in that meeting, but they also did not have a spec or set of features, or anything that would tell me what the product was supposed to do. So I spent that meeting telling them repeatedly I could not. They gave up asking me to do it, and instead asked me to estimate how long it would take to implement, to which I repeatedly told them "two years" until they left the meeting in a huff. This wasn't even that bad of a meeting, but it led to a really bad one:

A four hour meeting where we were to plan the entire implementation of the product, which was still pretty loosely defined. The meeting did consume all four hours. It was just us going over a slide deck with the PM, then they had us do some sort of post-it note exercise. I think we were defining stories? I don't really remember because the meeting was useless and I think we scrapped every outcome from that meeting. Several weeks later I was given an actual spec document, after the PM had quit. I gutted the spec document from like 35+ pages to ~10 pages. Then we actually started planning around that.

so I guess, have an agenda?

and not a 4 hour agenda.

Source: #ragepile

Create and Share an Agenda

Agenda: Helping People Read Your Mind

- Purpose & Outcome
- History or pre-work
- Talking points
- Consider a Core and Secondary audience
- Clear agendas help drive the who

But Hanna that sounds like a lot of work....

“If a leader truly recognizes that they are inherently a steward of others’ time, they do meetings differently. They think carefully about what the meetings should cover. They think carefully about how that meeting should be facilitated. And we do this all the time when it comes to meetings we have with customers. When we meet with a customer, we think about that in advance. But when it comes to employee meetings, we just dial it in”

<http://freakonomics.com/podcast/meetings/>

The Who

- Balance between inclusive and exclusive.

“The more specific your purpose is, the more people can actually see themselves and say, “What I do is not actually relevant to that.” So don’t make exclusion personal. Make it purposeful.”

<http://freakonomics.com/podcast/meetings/>

- Who needs to be there to meet purpose/outcome
- Decline meetings you don’t think you need to be there to meet objective
- Consider what can be achieved with different meeting sizes

**Please
use your company's meeting scheduling tool**

**You have setup the meeting to be successful
Now what?**

Starting a Meeting Right

- Make sure technology is working
- Start on time \Leftrightarrow Everyone arrive on time
- Start the meeting with the purpose and objectives
- Consider icebreaker or pre-work that will get people actively engaging
- Assigning roles:
 - Facilitator
 - Note taker

Mid Meeting Tips

- Checking in periodically:
 - Is everyone engaged
 - Are we working towards outcome?
 - Is everyone getting a chance to speak?
- Don't check phones/laptops
- Encourage written notes/questions



Ogi 21 hours ago

not 2 sentences into my first slide, my manager starts interrupting.... asking me to skip ahead to different parts of my presentation, asking me to skip back, explain stuff, explain my analysis, ...I couldn't get two sentences out without some interruption from him.

While this presentation should have been a case of me highlighting some of my best work ever, I was just constantly jumping between slides, explaining stuff out of order, and just being *constantly* interrupted. Nobody else in the audience could get a word in, technicians were lost, non-mechE engineers were just zoned out ... it was just a mess.

Source: #ragepile

Communication and Conflict

- Good meeting are grounded in respect
- Diverse teams require diverse communication styles

Treating Everyone Equal
!=
Equity

Communication and Conflict

- Good meeting are grounded in respect
- Diverse teams require diverse communication styles
- Encourage healthy conflict

“Unhealthy peace can be as threatening to human connection as unhealthy conflict. And most of our gatherings suffer from unhealthy peace, not unhealthy conflict.”

- Anticipate opinions of others and ask questions bring out opinions

Ending Meetings Well

- Stop general discussion 5-10 minutes before end of meeting
- Revisit purpose and outcome
 - Write down decisions or progress made on outcome
 - Create and assign next steps
 - Determine if later check in is needed and communicate what/when
- If outcome is met end the meeting early!

Post Meeting

- Send out meeting notes and outcomes
- Do/check in on action items
- Send a survey for how well meeting went

What Can You Do?

	Individual Contributor	IC Manager	Everyone Higher
Add in one best practice each meeting	✓	✓	✓
Encourage and hold other accountable	?	✓	✓
Spearhead a culture of better meetings	?	?	✓
Be cognisant of when meeting begin slipping and aim to improve	✓	✓	✓

Resources

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Thank You!