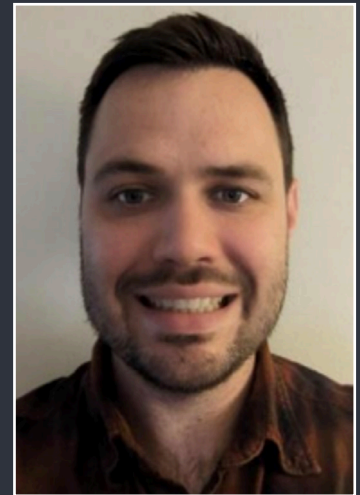


Building Better Meeting

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Meetings are essential for teams and organisations to function effectively, especially in knowledge-intensive sectors like construction, where they facilitate critical information sharing, creative discussions, and project management. However, persistent issues such as unclear objectives, poor structure, and counterproductive behaviours frequently undermine their effectiveness and satisfaction, leading to wasted resources and disengaged participants.

This research investigates meeting practices within a single contracting organisation, focusing specifically on project delivery meetings including design team, project management, contract, and programme meetings. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study first used a structured survey of 163 construction professionals to identify the prevalence and impact of both effective and ineffective meeting practices on meeting satisfaction and effectiveness. Subsequent qualitative exploration through two focus groups provided rich context and deeper insights into survey responses.

The research found that construction professionals spent an average of 16.5 hours per week in meetings, exceeding averages reported in existing literature. Good practices were found to be inconsistently applied, with counterproductive behaviours prevalent across various meeting types. Survey results indicated moderate effectiveness and satisfaction, with clear areas for improvement. Specifically, statistical analysis demonstrated that meeting agendas and facilitator effectiveness significantly influenced meeting outcomes whilst certain counterproductive behaviours were found not to have the expected impact on meeting outcomes.

Focus group discussions further revealed that although participants were generally aware of good practices, inconsistent application was common due to heavy workloads, back-to-back scheduling, and poorly structured and defined agendas. These pressures lead to less productive meetings, leading participants to normalise counterproductive behaviours such as late attendance, poor time management and participants becoming distracted during meetings. The research highlights that these items are interconnected and compounding.

To overcome these challenges, the research recommends systemic interventions such as clearly defined organisational guidelines and targeted training in facilitation, agenda management, and meeting etiquette, promising meaningful improvements in meeting effectiveness, satisfaction, and overall project delivery.