

END BORING MEETINGS

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Taken from “**Death By Meeting**” by Patrick Lencioni – an absolute **MUST READ!!!**

Meetings are a puzzling paradox. On one hand, they are critical. Meetings are the activity at the center of every organization. On the other hand, they are painful, frustratingly long, and seemingly pointless. We must abandon our search for technological solutions that will somehow free us from having to sit down face to face. And we have to stop focusing on agendas, minutes, and rules, and accept the fact that bad meetings start with the attitudes and approaches of the people who lead and take part in them. The best news of all: for those organizations that can make the leap from painful meetings to productive ones, the rewards are enormous. Higher morale, faster and better decisions, and inevitably, greater results.

Meetings are boring because they lack drama or conflict. To make a meeting less boring, leaders must look for legitimate reasons to provoke and uncover relevant, constructive, ideological conflict. By doing so, they will keep people engaged, which leads to more passionate discussions, and ultimately, to better decisions. The biggest problem in meetings is structure, and tension/drama/conflict. The key to injecting drama into a meeting lies in setting up the plot from the outset. Participants need to be jolted a little during the first ten minutes of a meeting, so that they understand and appreciate what is at stake. When a group of intelligent people come together to talk about issues that matter, it is both natural and productive for disagreement to occur. Resolving those issues is what makes a meeting productive, engaging, and even fun. Avoiding the issues that merit debate and disagreement not only makes the meeting boring, it guarantees that the issues won't be resolved. And this is a recipe for frustration. Ironically, that frustration often manifests itself later in the form of unproductive personal conflict, or politics.

After a leader announces to a team that more conflict will be expected from them- **and it is critical that this is made clear**- there will be a key moment when team members take their first risks in engaging one another in active debate. No matter how much we prepare them for this, it is going to feel uncomfortable.

Give people a reason to care at a meeting. Look for places where people have different opinions but aren't necessarily putting them out there. Force them to communicate what they are thinking until they have said all there is to be said. Keep mining for buried conflict. Have a passionate, unfiltered, messy, provocative discussion that ends when the leader of the team decides all the information has been aired. At that point, if no one has made a compelling enough argument for making a decision, the leader breaks the tie. But once a decision has been made, everyone supports it.

Meetings are ineffective because they lack contextual structure – too much is tried to cover in one marathon meeting. So have different meetings for different objectives and stick to those objectives ruthlessly.

Types of Meetings:

Daily Check In: 5 minutes. Don't sit down – this will help keep it short and to the point. Stick exclusively to that day's administrative schedules and activities. Basically do a “team huddle”. **DO NOT CANCEL** even if some people can't be there.

Weekly Tactical staff meeting should be focused exclusively on tactical issues, run about 60 minutes or less, and the agenda made after everyone lightening rods at the beginning of the meetings. Limit conversation topics that have an immediate impact on tactical issues and goals. Keep tactical discussions for the weekly Tactical meeting and do not allow big strategic issues to take the bench during these weekly meetings. When you don't have enough time to completely dive into a big issue the conversation ends up being incomplete, anecdotal,