



Don't go wasting my time...

A recent survey conducted by Atlassian showed employees consider half of the 62 meetings they attend per month a waste of time. The same employees claimed they were losing **31 hours a month** stuck in unproductive meetings.

In business, **time is money**, so it is vital your meetings are productive. Everyone attending should feel their time has been respected and their contribution valued. Poorly run meetings have the opposite effect.

Here are five ways meetings can waste our time and how to avoid this happening:

1. Poorly structured meetings

Even before scheduling a meeting, think about whether the issue needs a group discussion or if you are just convening a meeting out of habit or obligation.

If you conclude a meeting is warranted then it needs a goal to keep the meeting on track so it can come to a natural conclusion when the goal has been achieved.

There **should be a leader** to keep the meeting focused and give attendees a clear picture of what has to be accomplished. A good way to do this is to post a meeting checklist with clear milestones. Ensure you give visual and audible acknowledgement throughout the meeting when a milestone has been met.

Meetings should **finish on time** with the leader summarising what has been agreed. **Ensure everyone is clear about their individual 'action steps'**. If a follow-up meeting is required, this can now be scheduled.

2. The wrong people in the room

There is nothing more frustrating for employees than being stuck in a meeting irrelevant to them and their role. Not only does this suck valuable time from their workday, it sucks energy from the other attendees. Before automatically issuing invitations you should consider **how relevant each attendee will be to the discussion**.

3. Meetings weighed down by experts

Subject matter experts can provide valuable specialist knowledge your team may lack. However, there is a danger an audience will tune out when experts provide too much detailed information. Team members may not be enamoured with the topic - they just want the information they need to do their job.

All too often presentations provide experts with an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge base. This is often at the expense of focusing on what the audience wants and needs to know to do their job.

To avoid information overload, **give your expert a tight brief** aimed at delivering what the audience needs. Provide some presentation skills coaching if needed and bring the expert back on track if he or she starts to drone on and lose the audience during the presentation.

4. Covering old ground

One of the biggest time wasters and easiest ways to lose people's attention is to present information already common knowledge.

To ensure attendees remain engaged, the meeting must focus on the following:

- › Ways to solve problems they are encountering
- › Working towards important milestones and deadlines
- › Tools to help them become more productive
- › Meaningful interactions and connections with other people

5. No review of key concepts

To remain focused, it is important participants are given the chance to revisit and review content during the course of the meeting.

Recent brain research proves important points must be repeated within two hours of the first exposure to be remembered. Periodic reviews throughout the meeting ensure people won't forget key points.

Avoiding these five time wasting practices will allow your meetings to become what they can and should be - an opportunity for productive collaboration and communication.

People like being part of a team: the game just has to be played by the rules.

Interesting meeting statistics:

- › **63% of meetings are conducted without a prepared agenda**
- › **9 out of 10 people daydream during a meeting**
- › **73% bring other work to a meeting**
- › **1 in 10 meetings are held without primary decision makers present**
- › **Executives average 23 hours per week in meetings with 7.8 hours identified as wasted time**
- › **49% say unfocused or unproductive meetings are the biggest workplace timewaster**
- › **Only 1 in 5 meetings have any type of follow-up**
- › **33%-47% of meeting time is deemed productive. The rest is wasted time**