



Death By Meeting

Meetings Quiz

How effective are meetings in your organization?

Take the following quiz and find out.

1. Yes/No Are your meetings dull and uninspiring?
2. Yes/No Do team members question the usefulness of meetings?
3. Yes/No Are critical issues avoided or overlooked during meetings?
4. Yes/No Do you wonder if team members are holding back during meetings?
5. Yes/No Do team members complain about having to attend meetings?
6. Yes/No Do you find that meetings end without resolution of critical issues?
7. Yes/No Do you discuss administrative, tactical and strategic topics during the same meetings?
8. Yes/No Are important discussions cut short because of time constraints?
9. Yes/No Is your team reluctant to go off-site more than once a year to review the state of the organization and business?
10. Yes/No Do team members seem disengaged during meetings?

If you answered **NO** to all of these questions, congratulations! You have one of those rare teams that has mastered the art of meetings.

If you answered **YES** to 1-4 of these questions, you could probably improve your organization's decision-making and overall effectiveness by making a few adjustments to the structure and content of your meetings.

If you answered **YES** to 5 or more of these questions, your meetings are probably causing you to waste considerable resources, both human and financial, and creating confusion within your organization. You should consider making significant changes in the content and structure of your meetings.

Provided below are brief explanations to the questions and answers from the quiz. For more information about how to improve meetings, please refer to the book *Death by Meeting*.

Are your meetings dull and uninspiring?

Contrary to popular belief, meetings are not inherently boring. With the right topics and the right context, they can be engaging and compelling. Dull and uninspiring meetings are an indication of poor meeting management, which inevitably leads to sub-optimal decisions.

Do team members question the usefulness of meetings?

When meetings are properly organized and executed, team members don't complain about them because they understand the critical role meetings play in the organization. They see meetings as a vital and integral part of doing their jobs, not as an ancillary activity outside of real work.

Do you find that critical issues are avoided or overlooked during meetings?

In many organizations, too much time during meetings is spent discussing issues that are not critical to the short or long term success of the business. For as much time that is spent in meetings, all too often, the most important issues never get put on the table. This frustrates team members who want to focus their energy on topics that will have the greatest impact on the success of the organization.

Do you wonder if team members are holding back during meetings?

One of the keys to a great meeting is team members having confidence that all important opinions are being surfaced and considered. When team members suspect that others are holding back, whether or not it's true, it becomes next to impossible to achieve real buy-in and commitment.

Do team members complain about having to attend meetings?

Complaining about meetings seems to have become an inevitable part of organizational life, which is a shame. Meetings are the most fundamental activity in an organization. Once a team finds a way to make them work properly, they won't complain about them any more than they'd complain about sales, marketing or any other essential corporate activity. What is more, they'll actually look forward to them as tools that help save time and gain clarity.

Do you find that meetings end without resolution of critical issues?

Though a team cannot guarantee that every decision it makes is correct, it can ensure that meetings end with clarity about what has been decided. If critical issues remain unresolved when a meeting is set to end, that meeting should be continued, either immediately or some time shortly thereafter, until resolution can be achieved.

Do you discuss administrative, tactical and strategic topics during the same meetings?

Combining too many types of issues during one meeting creates confusion and frustration among team members who find it difficult to shift back and forth among administrative, tactical and strategic topics.

Are important discussions cut short because of time constraints?

Contrary to popular opinion, ending a meeting on time is not necessarily a sign of success. In fact, when time constraints prevent important discussions from running their course, there is a good chance that not enough time is being set aside for critical issues. When it comes to making key decisions, there are few activities that can justify ending a meeting prematurely.

Meetings Quiz

Is your team reluctant to go off-site more than once a year to review the state of the organization and business?

Though busy schedules make it difficult for teams to leave the office for a day or two every quarter, there is no activity more important to keeping an organization on track than stepping back on a regular basis and reviewing the state of the organization, the culture and the team. Failing to do so may seem to save time in the short term, but over the long haul, it sets the team back because problems are not identified and addressed until they become costly and difficult to resolve.

Do team members seem disengaged during meetings?

Inattentive and lethargic behavior during meetings is a sure sign that meetings are not being properly organized and managed. In addition, there may not be enough healthy conflict taking place.

Organizations that master the art and science of good meetings find team members are generally more engaged, passionate and focused.