

PUTTING MEAT IN MEETINGS





WHERE IS YOUR TIME GOING?

How much attention do you place on your productivity as it relates to meetings? How many meetings are you in during an average day? How many days in a week are consumed meetings? What are the strategic items you own, and when do you have “thinking time”? As the demands on managers have grown (we called that the “new normal” back in 2010 - remember?), a substantial loss of thinking time happened as the increase in number of meetings and tactical demands arrived.



BREAKING THE FLOW



The average time it takes for an individual to dig into a project with some depth is **25 minutes**. This is the same whether it is writing this white paper or strategically planning the direction of your team. Match that with a schedule that has hour-long meetings every other hour of the day and the sense of never accomplishing anything becomes the daily vibe. The work week gets longer... and longer.

A recent [Harvard Business Review Article](#) reported executives now spend an average of 23 hours a week in meetings; in 1960 it was less than 10.



"Frankly, I don't know why I called this meeting."

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI



PRODUCTIVE VS UNPRODUCTIVE

How many times have you complained about the “waste of time” a meeting was? Now compare that to the number of meetings you set and run. (Doubtful we call our own meeting time-wasters, right?) Have you considered what contributed to the lack of benefit this meeting had? Was it because you learned nothing new? Did it become a complaint session? Or a general catch-up rather than focused on outcomes? Think about the last meeting you ran, how long was it? Now measure out the length (estimate) of these components:

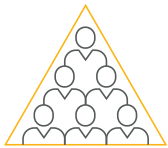
	Productive	Unproductive
Start on time? If not, how late?		
Chit-chat/connection time:		
Decision making/agreement time:		
Criticism/complaining time:		
Off-topic time:		
Wrap up time:		
Total		

If your meeting were to solely fall in the “productive” bucket:

- ❓ How long would it need to be?
- ❓ What would your challenge be (not other people's - your) in managing and leading a meeting in this way?



SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER



INVITE THE RIGHT FOLKS

Often times we invite people to attend meetings because the information pertains to them. This is lazy communication. If you want to report out information, consider a brief gathering that is announced as such - a reporting of information. Otherwise some show up to contribute uninvited comments. When you choose attendees to a meeting, bring together those who will contribute in sharing data creativity, and direction. These same people also leave with the collective task of passing on information, which is best identified and agreed upon in both quality and quantity as well as audiences.



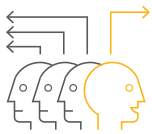
PREPARATION

How much time and energy is invested in creating an agenda and distributing it? In most conversations I have, not much! There is one person in charge of the agenda who spends a great deal of time running around to gather buy-in, or data to provide to attendees. If you are truly running a meeting to have creative collaboration, one person having all the information is problematic. This is where side conversations emerge, computer screens turn to email management, and the damage is done. Truly collaborative meetings have assigned responsibilities. The more involved the room is, the more likelihood you have collaborators in projects beyond the meeting, the higher likelihood people will speak up when something is off course (trust and safety has been established), and the higher overall job satisfaction will be.



WHAT GETS MEASURED GETS ATTENTION

When is the last time you surveyed your meeting attendees about their views in your meetings? Creating an anonymous survey that every person completes is a beneficial way to measure the productivity gained (or lost) in your meeting. Evaluating the data in the group moves the measurement from “attention” to “action”.

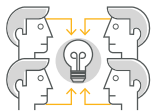


BRING THE TEAM TOGETHER TO REVIEW THE RESULT OF YOUR MEETINGS

Start by creating agreements about the discussion, and the objective analysis. Be sure to add in non-judgmental interpretations, constructive recommendations, and ideas for improvement to have a complete debrief. If this is too much for your group, a simpler measure can be to pull up calendars and check on the reaction in the room to the week ahead. How many hours are booked for meetings? Now create three buckets for discussion:

- 🗑️ “Have to be there, not useful”
- 🗑️ “Willing participant, somewhat productive”
- 🗑️ “Looking forward to it, very productive”

These three buckets give you a quick read of how people see their time - invested or wasted. Now dig more deeply into the most productive meetings to understand the differentiator in those meetings. What can you learn, both from your own analysis and that of your team? How might this learning apply throughout your organization to change the meeting culture?



DISTRACTIONS

How much technology is allowed (or invited) in your meetings? Recently I facilitated both a weekend retreat and an afternoon training where I asked for agreement to leave technology out of reach. One was a partner retreat of lawyers, another was a departmental training in a government agency. Both offered pushback, some individuals more than others. I built in breaks so they could retrieve devices and check in. The outcomes? Lawyers reported their most productive retreat in a decade. Some that spoke up hadn't done so in a really long time and overall the 30 or so attendees reported feeling much more connected as a group. The afternoon training was part of a three-year long leadership development program, and the group was more active in the exercises, set more goals for the coming month, and overall reported a difficult time in the first hour, and a lot of gratitude for being relieved from their phones for the training time.

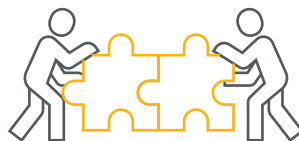


RESEARCH TELLS US THAT TECHNOLOGY DISRUPTS TRUST

Collaboration and creativity thrive in cultures of trust. Consider how you can impact your meeting by removing technology. What do you do with your technology in meetings? What would happen if you didn't bring it in the room? Or turned it off (not vibrate) during the meeting? Once you've experienced how it feels to remove it, you can share that with others, especially how it feels for you when they engage their technology in a meeting you are both in. What agreement can you make for standing meetings with respect to technology?

CONCLUSION

When you begin to reform meetings, consider agreements instead of mandates. Bringing our work weeks back to productive, collaborative and strategic requires a reframe on the culture of meetings. This may require new training for those who plan and run meetings. It will require small steps that are measured with the feed forward for continual improvement. Those organizations that are courageous enough to transform their meetings will benefit in people (management), process (productivity and flow), and profit.





MEET JUDY

JUDY HISSONG, CLM

President, Nesso Strategies
Speaker | Coach | Consultant

Judy earned her Bachelor's Degree in Accounting from Huntingdon College, and her Master's Degree in Sports Management from the University of Richmond. In addition to her Professional Coaching Certification, she is a licensed provider for the suite of emotional intelligence tools provided by Personal Strengths Publishing, and also for the Living Your Vision process. She is a Certified Legal Manager. She resides in San Diego, CA.

HEALTH Judy Hissong was a professional athlete and has been an ACE Certified Personal Trainer since 1993. She has designed personal training programs for professional athletes and for business professionals. She writes articles on the importance of health and exercise to maintain productive workload and provide work/life balance. She has been a presenter at many international conferences on the topic of work/life balance and stress management in the workplace. She is an Accredited Life Coach working with individuals who know they can achieve more (personally, professionally, or both) and want to overcome their obstacles to success. She works with teams (athletic and corporate) who want to break through their current performance ceiling to achieve the next level.

BUSINESS With over 15 years in leadership roles inside professional service organizations, Judy provides a wealth of knowledge and expertise in leadership, emotional intelligence, and successful business planning. She is a sought after speaker and facilitator on topics of emotional intelligence, strategic and long range planning, leadership development and accountability, and job coaching. She writes articles on the importance of leadership and strategic planning in the success of business, and has been an instructor for the University of California San Diego in their Certificated Program for Paralegals.

LIFE This unique combination of business and wellness led Judy to create Nesso Strategies. Her energy is contagious, and her message is powerful and simple. She partners with organizations to develop profit-oriented strategies based on her business acumen and her team-oriented approach. She is here to guide individuals toward balance in their workdays, and their personal lives. Now that makes sense and cents.

If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader. —John Quincy Adams

Bachelors Degree in Accounting | Masters Degree in Sports Management | Certified Professional Coach | Former Professional Athlete | Licensed Provider of Emotional Intelligence Tools | Certified Living Your Vision Coach | Certified Legal Manager | ACE Certified Personal Trainer | ICF Professional Certified Coach

CONNECT WITH JUDY

Name

Company/Organization

Phone

Email

Program or Topic of Interest

Message



JUDY HISSONG, CLM
President | Nesso Strategies

619.546.7885

judy@nessostrategies.com
nessostrategies.com



Join the conversation in
her LinkedIn Group:
[Engaging Legal Leaders](#)