

A GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE & ENJOYABLE MEETINGS



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MANAGING
WITH MIND & HEART

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INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

If you had to identify, in one word, the reason the human race has not achieved, and never will achieve, its full potential, that word would be ‘meetings.’”

~ Dave Barry



This meeting started 10 minutes late, which is an improvement from the norm. Jerry has his head down on the conference room table. Glenn, our “note taker,” is writing a long political piece on Facebook while my manager tries to rein in people who are having side conversations about the drama in this year’s Oscars. Can we just get this meeting started already? What are we talking about anyways? I literally have no clue what we’re meeting about. The only agenda item said, “Discuss important matters around policies.” At least we got something that resembles an agenda this time. Boy, do I have a lot of work to get done that I’m not doing as I sit here in my fifth meeting of the week (it’s Tuesday). As typical, I’m sure this meeting won’t help me get any of my real, far more important work accomplished. This meeting is a time-suck and has officially sucked my soul right out of me.

We get it – discussing meetings isn’t the sexiest of topics. However, in most organizations, meetings are necessary. In fact, in some ways, they’re where the real stuff happens. Meetings, at their best, are the places where we collaborate, share, dialogue about important information, culture-build, process change, build trust and respect, make decisions, problem-solve, create clarity, and more. But the reality is this: Nearly half the people asked by Salary.com said “too many meetings” was the top timewaster at work, and nearly that amount said that poorly organized meetings result in them not having enough time to get their work done. What’s more, the scheduling platform Doodle estimated the cost of poorly organized meetings in 2019 to be \$399 billion in the U.S alone. Ouch. This is a shame because when meetings are done well, they should actually save people time and money, as they’ll spend less time struggling for clarity, chasing down information and people, and responding to and writing emails (including reading through those beloved “email meetings” that drag on for days at a time).

One of Nash Consulting’s principles is that meetings are a microcosm of the broader organizational culture. We can see key cultural dynamics of an organization or team playing out right in front of us during meetings: How decisions are (or aren’t) made, follow through (or the lack thereof), issues of trust, respect and equity, levels of confusion or clarity, and so

much more. This leads to some really good news: In many ways, you can actually reverse engineer an organization’s culture by improving their meetings.

When organizations learn to hold effective meetings, we see teams begin to make more and better decisions, increase the quality of their collaboration, build morale, save everyone time, and actually solve problems (rather than create them).

The bottom line is meetings matter. We need them. They’re important, especially when the work requires high levels of collaboration and interdependency. However, simply having meetings (because after all, that’s what teams do) is not the answer. The answer is to hold highly intentional, effective, and dare we say even enjoyable meetings.

This guide is meant to act as a practical and actionable resource on the components of successful group meetings and as a tool to help you take action to improve your own meetings. We’ve organized it into five sections:

- Section 1: Ways & Reasons to Meet
- Section 2: Who Should Attend Your Meetings?
- Section 3: Ingredients of Highly Effective (and Enjoyable) Meetings
- Section 4: Too Many Meetings? Let’s Fix That!
- Section 5: Making Remote Meetings Work

WAYS & REASONS TO MEET

“As a leader, you must constantly drive effective communication. Meetings must be deliberate and intentional - your organizational rhythm should value purpose over habit and effectiveness over efficiency.”
~Chris Fussell

As an agency, we’ve interviewed thousands of leaders and employees, and a common complaint we hear is I’m in too many meetings. This may be true. However, as the effectiveness of meetings improves, you may find that the answer is not to have fewer meetings (and in some cases, believe it or not, the answer may be more meetings). If meetings are accomplishing their goal and helping people to better manage their work and work relationships, people stop seeing meetings as an assault on their precious and finite time and begin to view them as an opportunity for better performance, increased productivity, and most importantly, greater workplace satisfaction.

The right quantity and duration of your meetings will always be situational: it depends on the makeup of your team, the nature of the work, and the reality of your workflow. We’ve seen teams successfully manage with just a single one-hour group meeting a month. Other groups will need to meet at least once a week for several hours. (And some may even need to meet for daily check-ins.) You’ll have to find the right balance for you. Experiment with this and get feedback from your team members.

The following is a recommendation for four types of meetings and their frequency. Again, there is no one-size-fits-all, so consider this a menu of meeting options. Use your wisdom and intuition (and the feedback from your team!) to figure out how to tweak this to make it work for you.



The Daily “Stand Up” Meeting (5 to 15 minutes)

Many teams have benefited from implementing a meeting that occurs once a day (or a couple of times a week) where all team members get one or two minutes

maximum to report on their focus for the day, any roadblocks to accomplishing tasks, and to ask quick clarification questions. It’s called a “stand up” because the discomfort of standing reminds people that this is a speedy meeting. (You can encourage people to stand up even if you work remotely. Just remember to actually wear pants that day.) There is no need for a written agenda for these meetings. This is not a time to debate, make lots of decisions, or deep dive into any one topic. It’s simply a mechanism for ensuring people have clarity and direction for the day, there is no duplicate tasks wasting people’s time, and for helping to inform any follow-up conversations, ad hoc meetings, and agenda items for the more structured meetings. This isn’t about micromanaging – it’s primarily about giving everyone insight into what their teammates are working on, which can enhance collaboration and learning. For example, if I know Tara is working on X project that is similar to my project, I now know I can go directly to her for ideas and questions rather than filling up everyone’s inbox with questions that are irrelevant to 90% of the group. This actually saves everyone time in the long run. (Slow down to speed up!)

In cases where the team is super large, this may be impractical. Consider splitting the team up into relevant groups for the stand-up meetings or just do it at the start of every week and take a little more time.

The Weekly Structured Meeting (60 to 90 minutes)

It’s called a “structured” meeting for good reason – everything about this meeting needs to be intentional and well-designed or they risk sucking our souls and becoming time-wasters. When these are done well, people get the information and have the discussions that often happen over a series of drawn-out emails and individual conversations, which, once again, saves people time and energy in the aggregate. (In Section 3, we explore the ingredients of a highly effective structured meeting.)



Again, depending on the workflow and makeup of the team, this may happen weekly, every other week, or maybe (at least!) monthly. This is the meeting where you need an agenda. Here, your team should have clear topics of discussion and do everything you can not to go off-topic. This is where teams can give more in-depth work updates (if they are relevant to the whole group), discuss and make decisions, debate on important matters, provide training, and team-build. These meetings are only effective if participants clearly understand the topics of discussion in advance so they can process their thoughts and ideas. If you spend half the meeting explaining what we are discussing, people’s eyes start to roll to the back of their heads, and the things that need to get covered rarely do.

Keep in mind that research suggests that 90 minutes is the optimal human limit for focusing intensely on a task, which is why we suggest keeping these under an hour and a half if possible.

The Monthly (Or Quarterly) Deep-Dive Meetings (3 hours to all day)

When finessed, these meetings can be invaluable. This is often where you cover the “important but not urgent” stuff, to use Stephen Covey’s language – the types of things that will add the most enduring value to your team or organization. Often, this includes discussing critical strategic decisions, working on team commitments, planning and prioritizing for the upcoming quarter or year, getting to know and understand each other at a deeper level, working on group projects, goal setting, or engaging in important learning activities. We often advise teams to just take one to a few topics to cover – the kind of topics that require robust discussion and debate that can’t be accomplished in the shorter weekly meetings.

In the spirit of saving everyone time, teams often rely on shorter meetings to cover huge topics, which results in

those topics dragging on throughout multiple meetings (or never getting covered at all) and critical decisions being made without the appropriate level of dialogue.

Psychologists and neuroscientists now understand that the human brain does a poor job at “context shifting.” Our brains have a warm-up period when focusing on a task. If we quickly shift from topic to topic, we waste cognitive energy as our brains work to transition from one subject to another. By spending an hour or more in a meeting on one important topic, you maximize the brain power of each individual in the room. (And consider taking a break after 90 minutes of work to restore your brains to the optimal focus level.)

The Pop-Up Meeting (As long as needed)

This one is simple: there will be people with whom you need to meet with and topics that must be discussed that can’t wait until the weekly or monthly or quarterly meeting. In order to maintain the structure and integrity of the regularly scheduled meetings, don’t shy away from these pop-up meetings.



What annoys people more than an itch in the center of their back is spending time on topics in group meetings that are only relevant to a handful of folks. The full-group meetings should be reserved for topics that directly or indirectly affect everyone’s job. Grab the people you need to talk with and have a meeting outside of the regular meeting. And of course, respect people’s time. Do we really need to schedule a 30-minute meeting to discuss something that can more efficiently be handled asynchronously?





WHO SHOULD ATTEND YOUR MEETINGS?

“ Meetings should have as few people as possible, but all the right people. ~Charles W. Scharf

You're wondering who should be in each meeting, are you? Tough question! Again, the answer to this question is circumstantial. But here's the thing - big meetings make people sad. In one study at Microsoft, they found that what distinguished teams with lower satisfaction scores from the rest were that their meetings tended to include a lot of people.

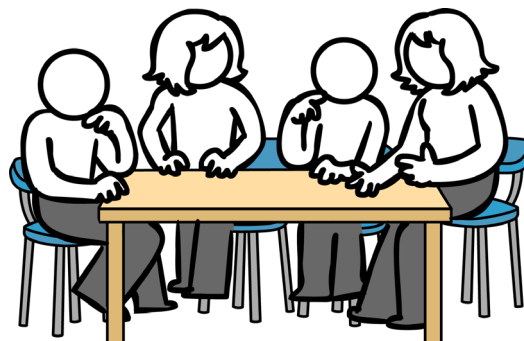
Most of us know how frustrating it is to sit through a meeting where you belong about as much as a vegan belongs in Texas. Having people in a meeting that don't need to be there is distracting, wastes time, dilutes each person's potential contribution, and makes the real work of meetings (like decision-making) more difficult. Invite the essential people. You can even give an optional invite to those folks who don't need to be there but who might be helpful. (In fact, you should send an invite to everyone who needs to be there as well as those that have the option and request that they respond to the invite.)

All that said, there should probably be a regular meeting that involves the entire workgroup. And the reality is that some teams are super large, and there may be nothing that can immediately be done about that. If this is the case for you, it's important to ensure that the content of those meetings

is as relevant for the entire group as possible. If this proves to be difficult, consider having less frequent all-team meetings and instead see if you can form sub-teams around similar work that can meet more regularly.

It's important for senior leaders to understand that the clarity you create at the top helps the leaders of individual teams better manage their meetings (and just manage people in general), making it less likely that you need to hold frequent all-department or all-company meetings. Clarity cascades down and allows subgroups to function more autonomously.

For more on this, check out our video on [developing great listening skills](#).



When leaders know how to lead great meetings, there's less time wasted and less frustration. We have more energy to do the work that matters, realize our full potential, and do great things.

~Justin Rosenstein

When organizations learn to hold effective meetings, teams begin to make more and better decisions, increase the quality of their collaboration, build stronger trust among group members, become more productive, not less, and solve problems and remove roadblocks.

There are many ingredients that go into creating the ideal meeting experience, but here are a few ideas that have worked for us and our clients:



Have a skilled meeting facilitator. This is literally the most important strategy, by far. And the toughest to accomplish. Remember the Peter Principle (“People tend to get promoted until they reach their level of incompetence”)? It’s the whole “Welcome to management, good luck” thing that can really sabotage the health of an organization. Well, the same principle applies to meeting

facilitation. “Welcome to leading meetings, good luck!” You all know how horrible it feels to sit through a meeting that’s run like a kindergartener’s birthday party. The absolute biggest factor in whether a meeting is effective (and enjoyable) is whether or not the person leading that meeting has decent facilitation skills. This person is usually a manager but doesn’t have to be. Having someone with authority in the group lead meetings is less important than having someone skilled in the art of fostering group collaboration. Will Felps, who studies organizational behavior at the University of New South Wales in Australia, conducted an experiment where he placed a “stooge” (someone who’s working with the research team) in group meetings. Each meeting group experienced one of three different types of stooges: The Jerk, The Slacker, and The Downer. Each one played a different role, but all were tasked with behaving in unsavory ways. These jerks were pretty damn successful at their jobs. In most cases, they reduced the quality of the group’s performance by 30% to 40%. Typically, no one got upset with the stooge – they simply conformed...except for one group. Nothing seemed to bring down this group, and it was mostly because of one person. When someone acted like a jerk, they responded with warmth and deflected the negativity, making the situation feel

INGREDIENTS OF EFFECTIVE & ENJOYABLE MEETINGS

safer. They would get people involved to bring the positive energy back into the group by saying things like, “This is all very engaging, and I’m curious about what everyone else has to say.” This one person was able to increase energy levels, get people to share ideas, and help people cooperate, despite someone misbehaving. He made the group feel safe. Safety is the foundation on which strong meeting culture is built, and the facilitator plays a significant role in this.

Here are some of the key responsibilities of a facilitator:

- The facilitator must engage participants, develop an environment of psychological safety, effectively utilize an agenda, and ask good questions that prompt candidness and useful information.
- A successful facilitator helps lower the threshold for honesty, so people feel comfortable speaking up, disagreeing, and asking for help.
- Engaging participants includes ensuring everyone gets their airtime and taking action when others are not having an opportunity to express opinions or ideas. It’s the simple but powerful, “I’m curious what YOU think about this.”
- They need to recognize when participants are getting lost and skillfully working to bring them back on track.
- A facilitator uses body language, gestures, and phrases such as “It would be beneficial to hear from someone who has a different point of view on this,” that demonstrate that this is a safe place for inquiry and ideas.
- They should practice the artful dance of information distribution and group collaboration.
- And so much more.

We highly recommend that your agency spend time on meeting facilitation training for anyone who regularly leads meetings.

Don’t let bad meeting behaviors slide (create a meeting “Code of Conduct”). It’s the role of the facilitator to monitor this, but the entire group needs to hold each other accountable.

But first, a group needs to define what meeting behaviors they want to cultivate and reward. These should be explicit. It’s difficult to cut out bad behaviors and hold each other accountable unless everyone clearly understands what’s acceptable and what is not. Divide your team into small groups, and ask them to discuss this: *What are the meeting participant behaviors that we want to cultivate and encourage, and what behaviors do we not want to see in order to help us have effective and enjoyable meetings?*

After they've had 10 minutes or so to process in small groups, reconvene and ask them to take turns, group by group, contributing one item to the DO and DON'T list that you're writing on a whiteboard or document that everyone can see. Continue cycling through until every group's ideas are represented. See if you can get concurrence on each item, and don't shy away from "pulling rank" (gently) if there's disagreement.

Over the years, we've found that teams who have effective meetings generally include the following behaviors in their meeting code of conduct:

- We will work to create psychological safety: we will ask for help and feedback, give feedback on the task or behavior and not the person, and not "punish" people for mistakes or "not knowing."
- We will work to receive feedback non-defensively.
- We will give positive feedback when we notice something good.
- We will listen with care and respect: we won't interrupt, we will paraphrase and ask questions, demonstrate open and attentive body language, etc.
- We will watch our "air-time" – we will ensure people have a chance to speak up and be heard.
- We will disagree with respect and grace. (And we will encourage healthy disagreement!)
- We will not work on other tasks, avoid sidebar conversations, and put our phones away.
- We will come prepared to meetings (have any pre-meeting "homework" complete).

(Tip: A good facilitator will understand how to tactfully intervene in unhelpful behaviors without derailing the whole meeting or embarrassing a team member. Check out [podcast episode #21](#) for the first of two parts on running effective and enjoyable meetings.)

Have a good agenda. The bottom line is that everyone should know why they're gathered. The agenda provides a compass for the conversation so the meeting can get back on course if the discussion wanders off track. Sending out an agenda ahead of time will also allow people to process their ideas and opinions before everyone converges together. Your agenda should include specific topics to be covered with their accompanying duration (so you can create a reasonable agenda that you actually get through); time for discussion/brainstorming/problem-solving (otherwise you could have just emailed the information); a "parking lot" of off-topic items; and an ABCD wrap up (see the section on ABCD further down).

Here's a general idea of what your agenda might look like:












You can't forget that organizational success flows from the hearts and minds of the men and women you lead.

~Marilyn Hewson



Seriously consider having a "floating agenda." Often, the leader of a group just makes their best guess on what should show up on the agenda. Sure, they certainly should have items they need to discuss, but remember, this is everyone's meeting, and tapping into the knowledge and needs of the whole group will help to create meetings that are relevant and useful to the participants. The floating agenda is a way to allow others to bring discussion items to the table. This is as simple as sending out a note a week or so in advance for people to send you discussion items they'd like to see on the agenda. But let people know that just because they suggest something doesn't mean it will show up on the agenda – you have to curate what's most urgent, relevant, and impactful. Some items may end up on the agenda, some in the parking lot ("if we have time, we'll get to it"), and some won't make the cut as they are more appropriate for an individual or smaller group meeting. And even if it doesn't make the agenda, you now have more information on what is important, challenging, or urgent for individual employees – a bonus of the floating agenda! Just make sure you let people know what will happen with their agenda item request.

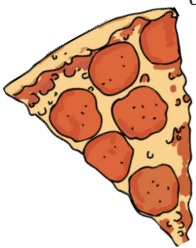
The Meeting Agenda		
	1. Check-in, Ice breaker, etc.	10:00-10:15am
	2. Leader's report (Be an information curator.)	10:15-10:25
	3. Follow up and review	10:25-10:35
	4. Other agenda items (Utilize small groups, white boarding, etc.)	10:35-11:05
	Possible examples:	10:35-?
	• Brainstorm solution to the distribution problem	?-?
	• Discuss pros & cons of the XYZ purchase	?-?
	• Guest report: Debbie from Accounting	?-11:05
	• Decide on theme of next year's retreat	
	5. Anything else? (Quick FYI's, topics for future meetings, etc.)	11:05-11:15
	6. Review this meeting's decisions, action items, etc. (A,B,C,D)	11:15-11:25
	7. (Optional- Quarterly?) Debrief the meeting (Ask for feedback)	
	Parking lot	

Assign a notetaker and timekeeper. The notetaker is there to capture what's important. We are not a fan of sending out transcripts. No one reads them, it's too hard to find what you're looking for, and it's an extremely difficult job for the notetaker. What they should do is capture the main points, who was there, action items, and decisions.

What the timekeeper does is...well, keep track of the time. Each agenda item should have a time limit attached to it. This person keeps the facilitator and the group honest by ensuring they stick to the agenda. They should also give a heads-up when an agenda item is reaching its cut-off time.

Pay attention to the logistics. Start on time. End on time. Or better yet, end a bit early to allow folks to get to their next appointment on time. We call this the "passing period." Oh, and some studies have shown that most people perform at their best around 10:00am. Just something to keep in mind.

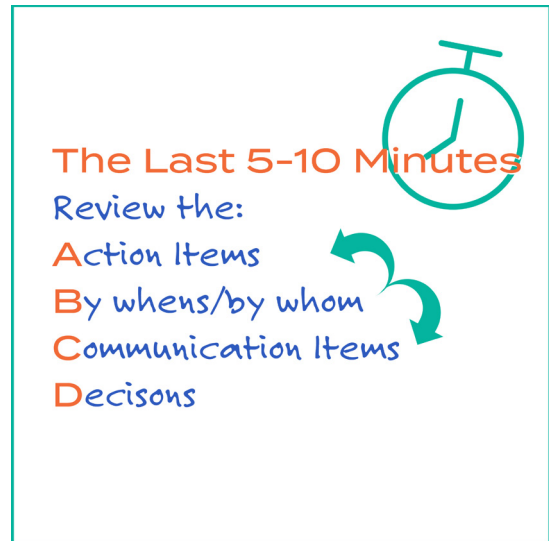
Food. Beautiful food. Need we say more? Okay, maybe a bit more. We get it, this isn't always possible. Don't go breaking your budget over croissants, but if you can provide even just a little snack, it can go a long way. For one, it boosts blood sugar levels. That's good. Furthermore, humans have an evolutionary affinity to bond over food. (Tip: Avoid extremely crunchy foods. You're welcome.)



End every meeting with ABCD. This is a big one. This is all about creating absolute clarity on what needs to happen after everyone walks out of the meeting. The last 5 to 10 minutes of the meeting should be spent reviewing the following: **Action items:** What actions have we decided to take once we walk out of this meeting? What do we need to make happen?

- **By whens/by whom:** Who is taking care of the action items and when will they be completed? (Check out our [blog post on By-Whens](#) – a super simple yet effective tool for increasing trust and reliability.)
- **Communication items:** What was discussed in this meeting that needs to be communicated outside this room? What is the specific message? What should we not be communicating? Who is going to deliver the message? When will the message be delivered? And don't forget to discuss how you will respond to questions about the message.

- **Decisions:** What decisions did we make during this meeting? Or did we almost make a decision, but spun around in circles instead, and maybe we can just make it right now?



These aren't all the ingredients of great meetings, but enough to help ensure that your team meetings are effective and enjoyable.



Fun Meetings Stats from Zippia Research's 2022 Report:

- Organizations spend roughly 15% of their time in meetings, with surveys showing that 71% of those meetings are considered unproductive.
- An estimated \$37 billion is lost per year to unproductive meetings.
- Workers spend an average of 31 hours per month in unproductive meetings.
- 35% of employees agree that the two to five hours wasted on meetings each week leaves them with no benefits.
- Employees multitask in 41% of meetings.
- At least 30% of workers believe that their ideas are shut down far too quickly in meetings.
- Only 37% of workplace meetings actively make use of meeting agendas.

TOO MANY MEETINGS? LET'S FIX THAT!

“ Meetings should be like salt - a spice sprinkled carefully to enhance a dish, not poured recklessly over every forkful. Too much salt destroys a dish. Too many meetings destroy morale and motivation. ~Jason Fried

So, what if after doing all of this, you still find yourself in too many meetings with not enough time to get your work done?

Good luck with that! (Just kidding...mostly.)

It sucks to consistently have critical job duties get pushed into the evenings and weekends because you're spending a lot of the regular work hours in meetings. Constantly talking about the work without the time to actually do the necessary independent work demolishes morale and induces burnout. If this is the case for you or your employees, we have a few pieces of advice:

1. **Do an audit of your meetings over the last quarter or so.** Which ones were essential and which ones seemed like you didn't need to be there? Which ones would have been better handled asynchronously, or where just receiving the meeting notes would have sufficed? Bring this audit to your manager (or ask your employees to bring their audit to you if you are the manager) and ask for permission to remove yourself from non-essential meetings. If only small parts of a meeting are relevant to you, work out a plan to get or give the information in a more efficient manner or see if you can show up for only the time you're needed (which would require that the meeting has an agenda). Ask for your manager's sponsorship (or provide sponsorship to your employees) in communicating the change of plan to other team members so it doesn't give others the perception that you're independently choosing to slack off.

2. **Create a "meeting map."** In its simplest terms, this is where a leaders look at all the meetings happening in the department or team and determines which ones can be deleted, combined, and shortened (or lengthened). Basically, it's looking for inefficiencies and duplications. Taking the big-picture view of the meetings in a group or organization can go a long way in terms of saving time.

3. **Block out "independent work time" on your calendar.** Encourage yourself or your employees to schedule time for the kind of independent concentration that is necessary for your job. Accounting for that type of work on your calendar (as opposed to leaving it blank) makes it less likely a colleague will schedule a meeting with you during that time.

4. **Do the daily "stand up" meeting.** We referenced this in Section 1. By taking just 5 to 10 minutes each day to quickly report on updates, roadblocks, and focuses for the day, you may find that there is less need to schedule meetings. Often, just understanding what people are doing each day provides enough information to proceed with our work without having to schedule more meetings to get the needed updates. It allows people to better prioritize with whom they actually need to have a meeting with, and helps others understand and respect your availability for any given day. Give it a try and see if it works for you.





MAKING REMOTE MEETINGS WORK

You can never over-communicate enough as a leader at a company, but at a remote company, nothing could be truer.

~Claire Lew

Meetings can't just stop because work teams are now distributed. Work still needs to get done and managers still need to connect with their teams. Duh, right?

As many of us continue to learn to adjust to the new remote working conditions, it's important that leadership teams upgrade their toolbelts, including the skills needed to run effective and enjoyable remote meetings. When they're done right, these meetings can foster an environment of connection and collaboration where stuff gets done. When they're done poorly, they can really suck.

When it comes to running remote meetings, it's necessary that you really dial into the best-practice meeting behaviors that we wrote about in the previous section and discussed in [this podcast episode](#). But outside of that, there are specific skills and best practices that are unique to running remote meetings. We've run our own team meetings remotely for a while now, coached other leaders on running them, and taught workshops about running effective and enjoyable remote meetings. Here are a few of the tools and tips that we believe can help every organization successfully adapt to a remote meeting culture.

Use the right technology and have a plan B. Your remote meetings can be just as effective as your regular meetings if you get the technology right. Take some time to think about all the elements involved in your regular team meetings. Do you usually share PowerPoints and notes with each other? Do you have whiteboarding time? Find a technology that meets these needs. We prefer the platform Zoom. It has all the necessary features we need to have an effective meeting. (First ones on us, Zoom!) However, even the best platform can't protect against bad internet connections, slow servers, and user error, so have a plan B, such as a call-in line.

Take extra steps to create a meeting experience of connection and collaboration. Great meeting cultures are ones where participants regularly connect and collaborate with each other honestly and authentically. When you're staring at your cohorts through a screen, some of this can be lost if you don't work extra hard to foster it. We love when teams allow time for a "mingle session" before they dive into the meeting. Build it right into your agenda. It's a chance for people to have that "water cooler" time that you don't get with a distributed team. Follow this up by *beginning the meeting with a quick icebreaker*. This can be simply pairing up and discussing a particular prompt, having everyone share a success and/or a challenge, or even just a lighthearted question like, "What are you most looking forward

to doing this summer?” Don’t underestimate the power of short, purposeful invitations to connect with each other. Oh, and have everyone use *video whenever possible*. It’s good for connection to see human faces.

Create a “Virtual Meeting Code of Conduct” with your squad.

We discussed the meeting code of conduct in Section 4. Make sure your team is still committed to those behaviors, but there will be other expectations you’ll want to add. If you’re new to running remote meetings, consider having a meeting about meetings. Wait, hear us out! All we mean is set aside some time with your team to discuss and mutually agree upon the remote meeting behaviors and expectations you all believe will help you have successful and effective meetings. This list will become your team’s Virtual Meeting Code of Conduct. This collaborative process builds buy-in and fosters accountability. Here are a few of the must-haves for your list:

1. **We will come in with a meeting mindset (and location).** This means being engaged, in a quiet place (if possible), not doing other work (or Tweeting), and ready to contribute.
2. **We will work extra hard to participate.** Again, connection and collaboration become harder when you’re not in the same room, therefore people should be especially committed to participating, speaking up, asking questions, responding, etc.
3. **We will use our video whenever possible.** We’re back to technology. Again, video is just better. Being able to actually see your colleagues (their gestures, facial expressions, and so on) is often key to effective communication.
4. **We will say our names before speaking.** With larger groups (and especially with groups that are unable to use video), it’s helpful to say, “Debbie here,” before going on. This way there is no confusion around who is saying what, which is vital for clear communication.

5. **We will mute (or not!) when we aren’t speaking.** To mute or not to mute, that is the question. Our preference is that with smaller groups who can all be in quiet spots, go ahead and keep everyone unmuted. It creates less of a barrier for people to speak. With larger groups or those that have other voices and noises in the background (not uncommon for those of us with families and roommates), we recommend asking everyone to mute when they are not speaking. See what works best for your team. (Pro Tip: Parked cars and broom closets make great spots for having meetings when you have a house full of people.)

This is by no means a comprehensive code of conduct for participating in successful remote meetings. We have a [workshop](#) for that. But this should give you a great starting point to build upon. (You can also check out our [podcast episode](#) on running remote meetings.)

Remember, if you’re new to running remote meetings, facilitation can be a challenge. Don’t beat yourself up if you don’t get it right at first. Give yourself grace. It takes attention and effort and practice to create remote meetings that are effective and enjoyable. But once you get it right, you will be glad you gave it the time it deserves.



Meetings don’t have to suck people’s souls. Despite all the bad press that they get, we know from experience that meetings can be fruitful and, believe it or not, even engaging and fun! Happy Meeting!

Here are some of our podcast episodes that discuss creating effective and enjoyable meetings:

- [#21 – How to Run Meetings That Don’t Suck Your Soul](#)
- [#22 – Tools & Tactics for Meeting Facilitation](#)
- [#23 – Remote Meetings: How to Make Them Worthwhile](#)
- [#28 – The Art of Decision-Making at Work](#)
- [#35 – How to Do Consensus Decision-Making](#)

