

# ASK YOURSELF THESE 3 QUESTIONS BEFORE CALLING A MEETING

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How often do you find yourself in meetings each week? My guess is, you scoffed at this question, mentally tallying up the staggering number of times “Meeting” has ended up on your calendar.

So, when did companies *decide to ignore* the inevitable inefficiency of meetings?

Obviously, team meetings can help collect ideas, and they have potential for powerful results. But far too often collaboration problems come together to derail your productivity. Remember, a 20-minute meeting with 3 team members is the cost of 1 labor-hour. If you have a 20-minute meeting every day, you are losing 20 labor-hours of productivity each month! You can reclaim countless hours, save money, and improve your company culture by taking steps to reduce the number of meetings and to streamline them.

Ask yourself these three questions below before scheduling each and every meeting. These simple reality checks will help you and your employees reclaim valuable hours of company time every day, week, and year.

How to implement a meeting strategy that keeps your team awake, engaged, and contributing?

## **Question 1... Is an in-person meeting truly necessary?**

This is the ultimate question, right? You have the potential to bypass so many meetings just by setting firm criteria for what warrants an in-person meeting. And yet, so many business owners’ default to calling a meeting before even exploring other options.

Take a look at these tips to help you decide.

- Simply trying to give instructions for a task. If this is a one-off task, consider writing up a task in your task manager. If this is a task that your company often repeats, write this up as an SOP.
- Can this be addressed with a text message, chat, phone call? Does it really need to be faced to face?
- Requiring staff to travel when they could have called in or attended a video conference is NOT an example in efficiency.

## **But isn’t it easier to just have a meeting?**

Meetings became a part of our office culture for a reason. They can appear to be a quick and easy way to relay critical information between the team and management. They give everyone the chance to give input. And they help employees in different departments to coordinate their schedules to accomplish larger goals.

So how is it possible to cut out meetings without also crippling your business's ability to communicate internally?

## Question 2... What is your goal with this meeting?

Any productive meeting must have a goal. If you do not have a *clear objective* like “solve the abandoned cart trend,” your meeting is already pointless. The meeting's leader (whoever set the meeting) is responsible for determining a main objective and strategies to get there.

Here are a couple examples:

- Are you looking for updates on assignments from the last meeting? If your team is properly tracking their activities with software, you should already have access to this information. Review it ahead of time so that YOU are more prepared for the meeting.
- Looking for input about a specific project? Write down open-ended, thought provoking questions that encourage each member of your team to form a suggestion. Maybe think of some short activities the team can work on in the meeting to get their creative juices flowing. When you feel the excitement rising, this is the best time to end the meeting (or at least pause it) to let your team get back to their desks and continue the project. Congratulations! You are just amped up the excitement of your team, resist the urge to keep the meeting going and risk squashing the excitement.
- Force yourself to prepare an outline BEFORE you call the meeting. The process of outlining may remind you to do a bit more research on your own and will keep the meeting succinct.

The point is, do not try to wing it. Doing so will undoubtedly lead to an unproductive meeting and a less productive day. *Have topics you want to address - or don't have the meeting.*

## But what if the meeting needs to cover...everything?

When your whole business feels like a whirlwind on your shoulders, how can you possibly narrow down a weekly meeting into just a few clear objectives? How can you set clear objectives without knowing what each team member has worked on since the last meeting?

This mindset is dangerous because it creates a constant cycle of meetings in which you're trying to receive updates about projects while simultaneously hindering employees from working on getting the results you need!

I recommend that you start by getting better visibility on your business. You can have a high level of visibility on your entire team, customers, and business - without micro-managing - by use of appropriate business management software.

### Question 3... Who needs to be at your meeting?

How often do you include the whole office in a meeting? You may have 1 or 2 general announcements that everyone needs to hear, but does everyone need to stay for the entire meeting? Planning ahead for your meeting will allow you to group the general announcements at the beginning of the meeting, after which you can excuse some and the rest can stay for the additional topics.

Often times, the entire team has had a role in the project at one time or will in the future. Additionally, other tasks will directly impact or be impacted by this project, so why not keep everyone up to date on the information discussed? Workflow management software may provide a better visibility for your entire team and will be more efficient than meetings.

### How to Replace Meetings with a Digital Workplace

Investing in the proper tools can do more than just reduce the number of meetings necessary in your office. They can improve communication across your business before, during, and after meetings, so you get the most return on that time you spend in conversation with your team.

Back in 2009, I searched for a software that would allow me to see all that was happening in my business. I wanted to see a timeline complete with the status of products, customers, leads, and projects through automatic updates and notes written by and for my team. Most importantly, I wanted to get details on how everyone was spending their time at work. I knew that my constant interrupting of them to ask for productivity or status updates on how projects were coming along was just slowing them down.

Unable to FIND a solution, I went home and started to BUILD the solution. This was the beginning of my company AllProWebTools.

I have been using this software for the past 10 years to manage my business and it has allowed me to:

- Avoid unnecessary status update meetings. Having a digital record in the Workflow Timeline is much easier than trying to wrangle the team together to cover these updates each morning.
- Address a clear purpose in meetings without having to waste time asking tons of questions. I can focus my meetings on the specific projects most pertinent to the team. Much easier than the juggling act of covering *everything* in the meeting room!
- Bring in people most pertinent to the project meeting based off their Task list and schedule the meetings around their priorities. I can still keep those who weren't in the meeting informed by putting detailed notes about the meeting in the Workflow Timeline.

See how fast and easy it is? More so than your average office meeting, that's for sure!

