Not another Meeting!

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Abstract

A meeting should help an organization better accomplish its mission. Many times our meetings do not achieve this goal. This does not have to be the case. Individuals and organizations invest significant time and resources in meetings, but they can fall short of the desired results.

When meeting participants are not engaged, there is a real but frequently hidden cost on both the entire organization and individuals. These costs can include hard dollars due to wasted or misdirected efforts and soft dollar costs associated with individual's stress and morale.

Once an organization has an understanding of the cost and benefits associated with meetings, there are many best practices which can be used to help achieve the results needed. These practices are designed to "make it easy to do the right thing and hard to do the wrong thing".

This research provides a prioritized list of best practices that can improve the meeting experience, outcomes, and build organizational capabilities. Prioritization is based on empirical data from literature as well as limited survey results and personal experiences.

Objectives

It is the author's belief that one of the most productive tools that organizations have to accomplish their mission are "meetings". Unfortunately "meetings" can also be one of the largest causes of waste. How can this be? The reason is that we may not be getting the value or 'Return on Investment' for the resources that meetings require. A meeting requires the most precious resources that organizations possess. These include the time of the participants and the organization focus. DeSantis, P. (2012) suggest that in many organizations, up to 40% of people's time is spent in either physical or virtual meetings. This same reference reported that these individuals spent 31 hours per month in unproductive meetings. Not surprisingly, 49% of meeting participants considered unfocused meetings as the biggest workplace time waster.

No organization can afford to use these limited resources without seeing a real "Return on Investment". This return should include better engagement, alignment on goals and well understood and supported action items to reach the organization's mission.

This research effort attempted to link use of Meeting best practices with observed results as measured by participant survey results. Participants were a cross mix of MTSU faculty, graduate students, and industry representatives.

Meetings Best Practices

Tips for Running Effective Meetings

Email an agenda 24 hours in advance.
Arrive 5 minutes early
Start and end on time.
Come prepared.
No smartphones.
Bring paper and a pen.
Share all relevant data.
Stay on topic.
Be brief and concise.
No interrupting.
Silence = agreement
Disagree without being disagreeable
Challenge ideas rather than people.
No side conversations or comments
Everyone participates.
Follow-up by email within 24 hours.

Best Practices for meetings

- Have a clear purpose for the meeting ✔
- Start every meeting with a customer story
- Publish an agenda in advance ✔
- Ensure the right people are in the room and take time for introductions
- Start on time and end on time
- Record decisions and actions
- Focus a part of the agenda on WINNING
- Ensure everyone has a voice
- Take time at the end to evaluate the process:
  - What did you learn?
  - What could we have done better?
  - What was done well?
- What actions or next steps are needed to follow-up on this meeting? ✔
- Own the results.

Results

Survey results are presented. Long text questions are presented in Wordle format. Scaled Likert responses are presented in chart format.

What do you find most effective about your organization's meetings?

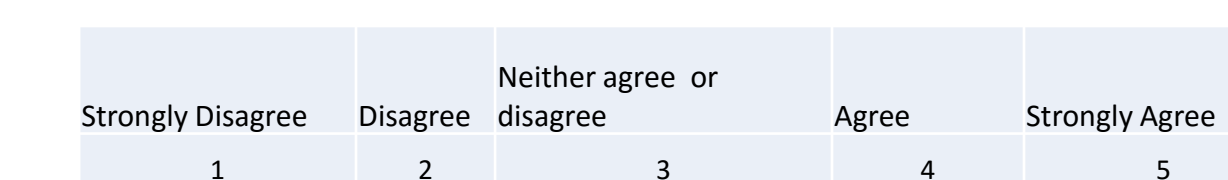What benefits do you experience both personally and as an organization as result of effective meeting?
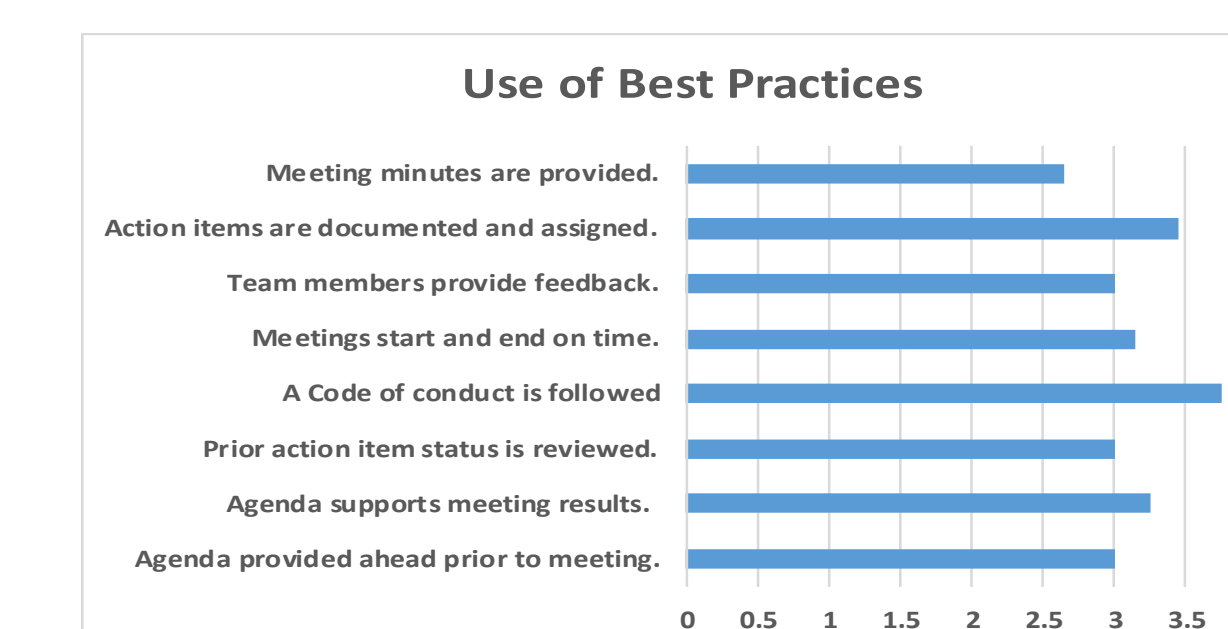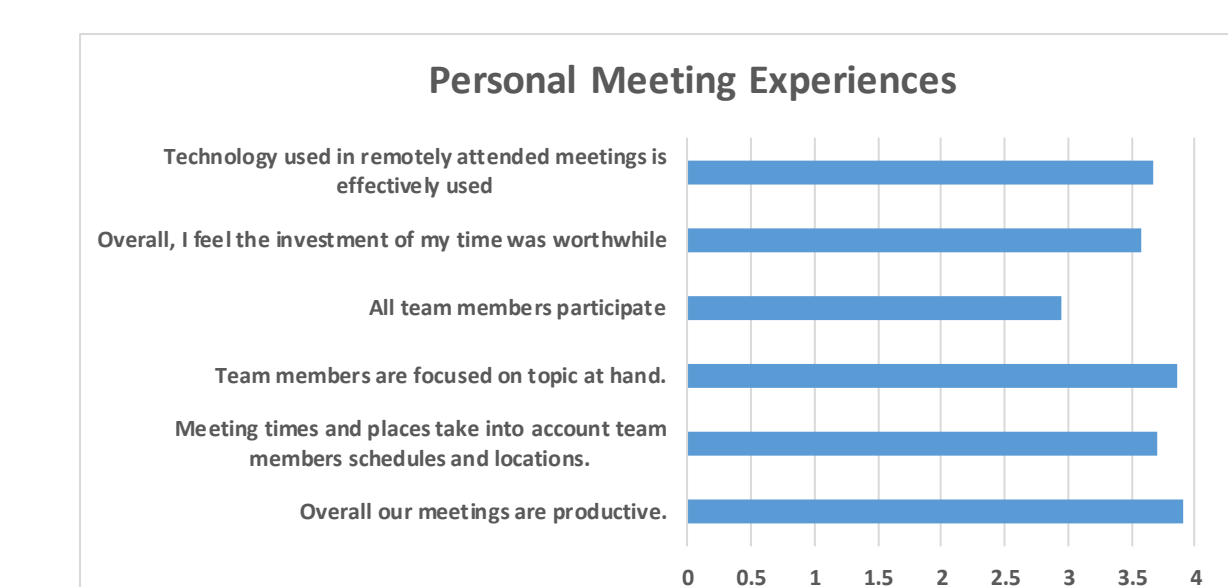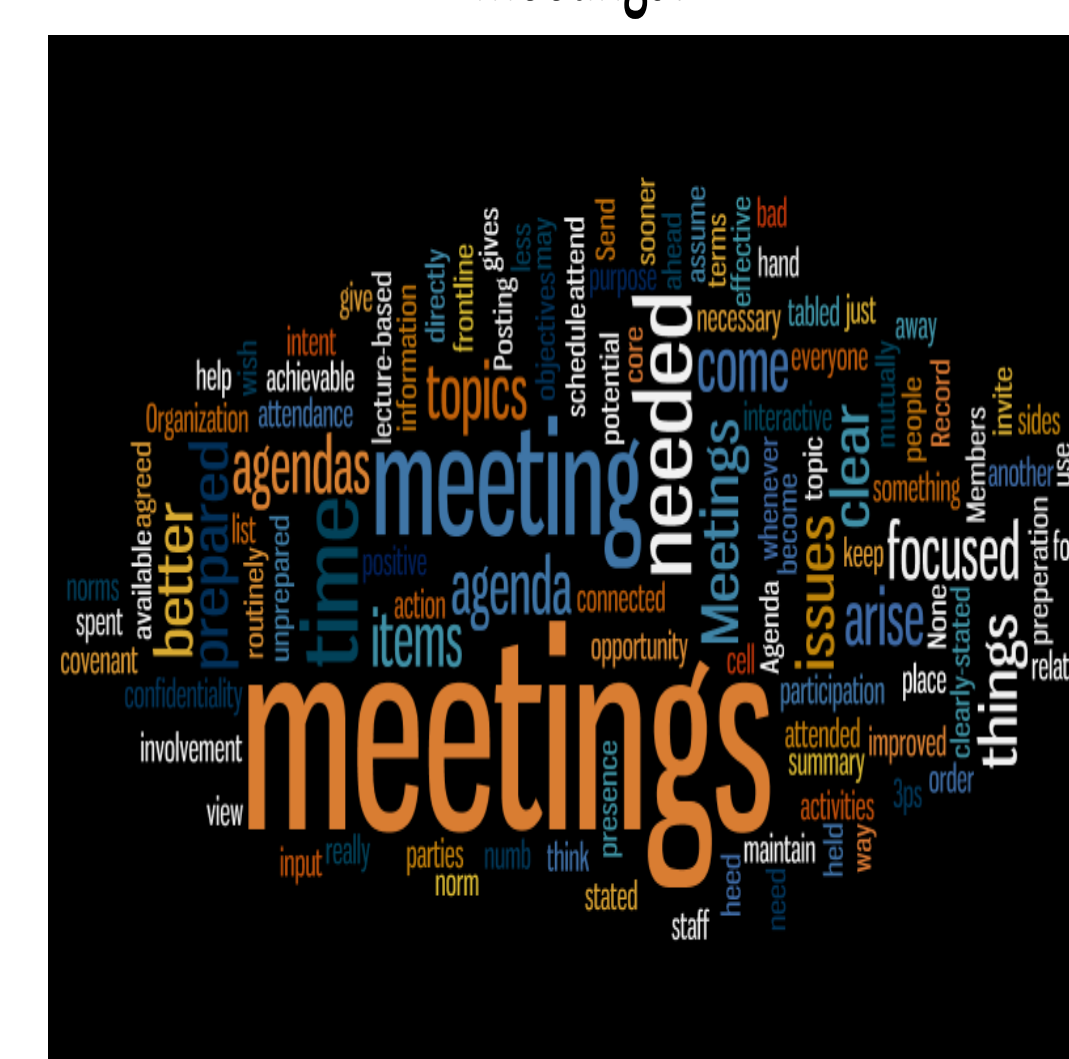

What do you find least effective about meetings?

What cost do you experience both personally and as an organization as a result o meetings that are not effective?

What one improvement opportunity do you feel would have the most positive impact on meetings?

Personal Meeting Experiences

Use of Best Practices

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5

Conclusions

Overall conclusions are that the survey respondents :

1) Feel that their meetings are productive with highest scores for member participation and reliable technology. Lower scores were associated with the degree of engagement of the entire team. This appears to be in conflict with higher scores for overall participation.

2) In Best Practice usage, higher scores were associated with team behavior and documentation of decisions and action items. Lower score were associated with use of an agenda and action item review follow-up.

3) Based on survey responses, it appears that 17 out of 22 respondents (77%) had been the victim of an ineffective meeting in the last 3 months.

4) Several improvement opportunity recommendations were made by respondents. They are prioritized on the Best Practices for meetings slide with a ✔

5) Best practice usage directly address the causes of poor meetings that were identified in the survey. This is in good agreement with literature and the author's personal experiences.

References

1. Feher, Ron (2013). Running Effective Meetings, http://www.slideshare.net/RonFeher/running-effective-meetings-presentation

2. DiSantis, P. (2012). Best practices for effective meetings, http://www.slideshare.net/petedisantis/best-practices-for-effective-meetings

Contact Information

Please register for a free drawing . Grand prize is the winner's choice of a meeting improvement technique. Choices are a free observation and feedback summary of a meeting of your choice or a box of pastries from Donut Country.

Winner will be contacted by :

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