

# We Have To Stop Meeting Like This!

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**Some meetings really are a waste of time.** A recent [survey](#) reports American workers spend up to 9 hours a week preparing for and attending general status meetings. Status meetings are defined as a meeting in which team members update one another on completed and active work tasks.

**I'd rather have a root canal!** More than half the respondents (60%) said they spend more time planning for status meetings than they spend in the meetings themselves. Such meetings undermine productivity. Nearly half (46%) say they would prefer doing any number of unpleasant activities, such as watching paint dry, getting a mullet hairstyle or commuting 4 hours to and from work, than sit in a status meeting.

**Consider setting time limits for meetings.** The economic principle, [Parkinson's Law](#), says work will take as long as the time made available. So if you plan two-hour meeting, your meeting will take two hours. Plan a shorter meeting and the meeting will be shorter.

**Effective meetings don't just happen.** They are planned and purposeful. If you are in charge of a meeting, here are some [tips](#) for making your meetings more productive.

## **In advance of the meeting:**

- State clearly the purpose of the meeting.
- Develop an agenda in advance and circulate it to attendees ahead of time along with any relevant articles or reports.
- Select a space that fits the group. People should be able to sit so that everyone can see

each other. A U-Shaped, circular or semi-circular arrangement is best.

- Have a white board or flip chart where you can record decisions, tasks and questions. Consider having a place for people to write down questions that are unrelated to the topic at hand but important. A “parking lot” for tangential issues can help keep the meeting on track.

### **During the meeting:**

- Start and end on time
- Prepare a quick icebreaker to start. Ask a question, such as “What is the funniest movie you’ve ever seen? What is the most unusual food you have eaten? Or where was your favorite vacation spot?” to relax the group.
- Follow the agenda.
- Encourage discussion using open-ended questions but keep the conversation focused (use a “parking lot” for topics that are off track.) Don’t allow a few people to do all the talking.
- Keep minutes of the meeting. Minutes should reflect decisions reached, actions to be taken, and who agreed to be responsible for what.
- Ask people to share one idea or take-away at the end of the meeting.
- Summarize and check to make sure people agree on what has been accomplished.
- Set the time and place for the next meeting.
- Be a role model of good meeting behavior. Express appreciation for participants and acknowledge people who helped make the meeting a success.

### **After the meeting:**

- Use an end-of-meeting evaluation with just a few questions—What worked? What would improve the next meeting?
- Distribute minutes and ask for corrections.

Well-run meetings can be part of successful organizations. Make sure your meetings are adding value. Your colleagues will thank you!

