



Tip #3: Continually Improve Your Meetings Matrix & Annual Calendar to learn as you go, seek feedback from participants on what’s working well and not working well, making design adjustments and seeing how they work. Version 1 of your meetings matrix and annual calendar may not run as a well-oiled machine, but later versions can.

- **“I have realized that a core part of my role as a CEO is meetings.** Establishing, running and improving the right portfolio of meetings to make sure that we are proactively driving the right conversations, decisions and actions on the array of things we have to get right. With some regret, I wish I had realized this earlier in my career”

Tip #4: Consider a Morning Meeting (or daily huddle at some other time of day if shift patterns or time zones dictate). Yes, that’s right, every single day of your top executive team! Why? Consider the words of some practitioners:

- **“Game-changer!** Initially I was very skeptical about morning meetings – too expensive I thought - we can’t afford the overhead of taking 30 minutes of the senior management’s time every day. But now, only a few weeks later, I don’t want to start my day without it! The opportunity to check in with everything going on helps me immerse myself in what my focus needs to be for the rest of the day, confident that everyone else is doing the same, that no news is good news and that we can re-synchronize again tomorrow morning. I also don’t stress if I have to miss a meeting as I know I will be right back up to speed in the next one. Morning meetings have been a game-changer for us: in my opinion, we can’t afford not to have them”.
- **“Amazing!** Adopting morning meetings has had an enormous impact on our agility as an organization. We have revved up our communication, coordination and collaboration as a team and, as a result, I get half the e-mails I used to get and have half the ad-hoc meetings I used to have. We are getting much more done in much less time with much less chaos”.
- **“Awesome!** We are completing critical initiatives in 6 weeks which in the past would have taken 6 months, by sustaining a sense of urgency, focus and momentum”.
- **“The fires have gone!** We aren’t firefighting all the time like we used to. With our morning meeting we have installed a sprinkler system which kicks in and puts them out before they spread”
- **“Epiphany!** I realize I spend my day walking around the business having the morning meeting that I didn’t have!”

Start a Chaos Journal. Not sure if you would benefit from a Morning Meeting (and other meetings in your Meetings Matrix)? Start a Chaos Journal. Keep a journal of chaos and crises which happen in your business. Use a physical journal, a ring binder, your day planner or a folder in your notes structure on your tablet. Soon after chaos or crises happen, write down some notes about it (what, where, when, how, who, why) and what you have learned reactively in hindsight which you might have handled proactively in foresight. Any patterns you see become candidates for inclusion in your Meetings Matrix and/or Morning Meeting as part of your organizing system for organized chaos.





Agile Flow of Individual Meetings

Each individual meeting needs to be agile and traction creating.

Tip #5: Meetings Should be Easy for You (or whoever is Chairing the Meeting). You should be able to sit down and ask, “who’s up first?” which is crystal clear as there is a standing agenda, a master spreadsheet with tabs in order of agenda and the expected inputs/throughputs/outputs are crystal clear. Go electronic and capture everything in-process (action items are captured real-time electronically, projecting for all to see, in the master spreadsheet which is hosted on server for ease of access for all) so there is no work for you to do before or after the meeting. There are many online team coordination and project management software tools available these days.

Tip #6: Time-Box Everything. Time-box the meeting overall (for example, by default meetings last 45 minutes, from 5 after the hour to 10 minutes to the hour), individual agenda items and especially presentations. Get people used to the fact that you will guillotine anything which runs over and they have to figure out how to get it down in the time available.

Tip #7: Leverage the Wall-Space. The wall space is one of the most underutilized assets in your business. Have the standing agenda on the wall, creative problem solving frameworks, your core values, key elements of your strategic plan, inspirational quotations etc, all in large enough format that you can standup and point. Plus have other ideation resources in the room, such as a white-boards, flip-charts, blank paper, templates, mind-mapping software etc. Create a container people walk into when they come into the room.

Agile Facilitation Skills

Facilitating agile meetings is an important skill to be working on.

Tip #8: Set the Tone/Bar for the Energy Level by playing a video or some music, having something physical on the table to interact with, telling a story, reading a quotation or a short passage from a book. Mix it up from meeting to meeting to be unpredictable, create a surprise factor and a sense of anticipation. Frame the purpose of the meeting as a Question (how do we best ...?) as the human brain starts thinking in response to a question to everyone starts to get intellectually and emotionally engaged.

Tip #9: Generate, Extend and Expand Input. Generate input by asking everyone to “take a quiet minute to write something down and then we will go around the table”, or break them into pairs/triads, “to discuss and be ready to report out”. These approaches set the expectation that we will hear from everyone. Extend the input by saying “tell us more” or asking, “what-else?”, “how-so?”, “how does that fit with ...?”. Expand input by asking “what are our other options?”, “what are we not thinking about?” and “what are we missing?”

“The myth of too many meetings:

Our problem is not that we are having too many meetings. Our problem is that we’re having too few of them. I’m not saying we need to be spending more time in meetings, necessarily. But we definitely need to be having more than one type of meeting.

By taking a contrarian, nontraditional view of meetings ... we can transform what is now painful and tedious into something productive, compelling and even energizing. In the process, we can also **differentiate ourselves from our competitors** who continue to waste time, energy, and enthusiasm lamenting the drudgery of meetings”.
(Patrick Lecioni, “Death by Meeting”)

“For those of us who lead and manage organizations, meetings are pretty much what we do:

Whether we like it or not, meetings are the closest thing to an operating room, a playing field, or a stage that we have. How pathetic is it that we have come to accept that the activity most central to the running of our organizations is inherently painful and unproductive. There is simply no substitute for a good meeting – a dynamic, passionate, and focused engagement – when it comes to extracting the collective wisdom of a team. When properly utilized, meetings are time savers”.

(Patrick Lecioni, “Death by Meeting”)



Tip #10: Get Fast Consensus to Fast/Good Decisions. We don't have the luxury of slow/perfect decisions these days. In any case, they typically turn into slow/bureaucratic decisions (we have meeting after meeting after meeting on the same issue!) and then slow/bad decisions (made by committee!). We shouldn't be making fast/reckless decisions either, with insufficient dialog. The right answer is somewhere in between, fast/good decisions through fast consensus. After facilitating a focused dialog with an appropriate sense of urgency and time criticality, it's a leader's job to make a judgment call about when to move for fast-consensus on a fast/good decision. Say something like, "it seems like we have all the options on the table and, having listened to the dialog, on balance I am leaning towards option", "does anyone have any violent objection towards that", and, "can everyone get behind that?". If so, then move the dialog into one of implementation, "so, how would we best do that?".

These top 10 tips will help you make your meetings traction creating and a crucial part of your agility as an organization. Well-facilitated individual meetings and a well-designed portfolio of recurring meetings are essential. Their absence means every hot-potato issue which comes up has to be handled through ad-hoc meetings, which is what typically tips most organizations into meetings overload. Regular meetings are time-savers, chaos savers and crises savers. They will help you get much more done, in much less time, with much less chaos! They are crucial to you becoming an Agile Leader:

Overcome "Meet-iocrity"!

In most businesses I experience, meetings are a mess and a source of mediocrity! Either because we are mired in too many meetings or too few, either way around, resulting in disorganized chaos, crises and wheel\$pin which is costing us a fortune – look at the data (see sidebar to right). Wrong answer!

"Meet-iocrity" Did you know?
There are over 25 million meetings per day in America, and yet:

- 52% have no agenda
- 63% have no minutes
- 68% have no clear results
- Managers stated that
 - 90% of the meetings they attended were inefficient and 28% were utterly unnecessary!
 - Poorly run business meetings were the number one killer of productivity.

(Forrester Market Research, 2010, Survey of 5000 Managers)