

**Cancel your next virtual
meeting until you do these
6 things...**



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If you dreaded your meetings “In Real Life”, taking them virtually and in your pajamas isn’t going to make them any better – well maybe a little (everything is better in pajamas). And as nice as it may be to connect with our colleagues and hold actual adult conversations (no offense to our kids), no one likes to waste time on seemingly pointless meetings that only rehash what was discussed at last week’s seemingly pointless meeting.

So, what makes these meetings so bad? Do any of the following sound familiar?

- Lack of specific, clear-cut objectives for the meeting
- Aimless meetings without an agenda, or if one exists, it isn’t followed
- Poor time planning and management
- Too many people or not the right people
- Lack of preparation by the presenter and/or attendees
- An inability to present ideas concisely
- Ineffective visual aids
- Too many digressions and interruptions
- Time wasted on trying to problem solve issues in the meeting
- Delaying of final decisions and actions
- Discussing the same issue meeting after meeting without action

If it was difficult to hold efficient and effective meetings with everyone in the same room, what are the odds that improves with the distractions that come with working from home? While cancelling your next virtual meeting might sound like a drastic measure, if your meetings resemble the above – you might as well since the outcomes are the same. That is, nothing gets done.

For a quick meeting upgrade, try the following 6Ps of Meeting Effectiveness:

The Setup Ps:

1. **Purpose – establish the objective(s) of the meeting.** What are you trying to achieve? What decisions need to be made? What actions need to be initiated?

Don't shirk this step, what you decide as an objective drives the rest of the process.



You might find the meeting is not even necessary if the objective is better served through individual conversations, email, etc.

2. **People – determine who should attend.** Once you have established your objective, it should be a relatively straight forward exercise to determine who should attend – and it's the people that can contribute to meeting the objective. Too often, attendee lists grow over time until eventually half the



Assign rotating meeting roles such as facilitator, scribe, timekeeper, etc. – this keeps everyone engaged and develops an appreciation for well-run meetings

room doesn't know why they're there, meanwhile others who should be there, aren't. Try calling

them participants vs attendees and see who makes the cut.

3. **Protocol – define the process and logistics of running the meeting and establish the expected behaviors.** Prepare an agenda that only includes points relevant to the purpose of the meeting and prioritize these in order of importance with time allocated accordingly. Establish the time, duration, location, technology, and required data/reports/materials best suited to support the agenda and attain the objective. Equally important is the definition of meeting ground rules and making sure they are understood by all participants. Address

behaviors such as starting and stopping on time, laptop and cellphone usage, etc., but also cover such things as holding one



To train people to show up on time, never restart a meeting for late arrivers – looking at you bosses

conversation at a time, encouraging positive confrontation by challenging ideas and not the person offering them, and perhaps most importantly – coming prepared to contribute.

The Doing Ps:

4. Prepare – to contribute. This applies whether you are the meeting owner or a participant.

- As the meeting owner, if you have followed the preceding three steps, congratulations you are well on your way there. The beauty of it is, for

 To effectively manage the group, be sure to understand and plan for the differing personalities and group dynamics that can impact the meeting

recurring meetings you only need to do “The Setup Ps” once and you’ll be mostly prepared for all subsequent meetings. Then before each meeting you can focus on

reviewing the relevant meeting content in order to manage the group to the desired objective.

- As a participant, you are not off the hook in terms of preparation. In fact, now’s the time to ensure you have a complete command of your topic. For example, you should be able to concisely communicate key events for your department and/or variances to plan. You should also come prepared with action plans to address issues, and any help you might need from other departments/levels.

5. Present & Participate – in the meeting. With steps 1 through 4 completed, holding the meeting is a matter of managing the execution. Follow the agenda, adhere to the ground rules, steer the conversation to meet the objective, make fact-based decisions, and generate good actions

 Many meetings devolve into issue clarification and problem solving – these are great times to take actions to resolve off-line

6. Pursue – decisions and actions to completion. After the meeting, circulate the captured action and decisions, complete your assigned actions in time, and

 Recurring meetings should always start and end with a review of an action log to make sure everyone is doing what they said they would

hold others accountable to the same. This is a critical step since failure to do so means you just wasted everyone’s time and effort. Don’t be that person.

You will know you have achieved meeting nirvana when you are spending most of your effort **outside** of executing the meeting (step 5), vs. all your time and energy in meetings.

Now is a great time to develop and implement these best practice meeting fundamentals. If you can learn to execute an efficient and effective meeting virtually – imagine what you will be able to do once we get back to real life.

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X/Celerant has supported clients for over 30 years, delivering billions of dollars of economic value to their clients, and is a wholly owned consulting partnership.

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