How to convince your boss to hold fewer meetings [a step-by-step guide]

By [Blake Thorne](#)

Try stealing money from your company's bank account and you're behind bars for a very long time. Steal thousands of dollars from the company in another way, and you're a forward thinking go-getter.

We're talking about time, and the countless hours wasted in frivolous meetings every day. Because time is what people exchange for money at work. And time is more precious than money. You can't grow time. You can't set some aside now and have more of it to spend later. You can't use it foolishly and get a refund the next day. Time comes and goes, regardless of what you do with it.

That's what makes frivolous meetings even more wasteful. Say you pull 10 people into a meeting that runs 90 minutes. Say the average hourly cost of each employee (after benefits, overhead, etc.) is $50 per hour. That's a $750 meeting. Run that meeting once a week, and that's a nearly $40,000 cost.

Maybe the meeting was justified. Many of them are. But ask yourself this: before deciding to hold that ongoing meeting, did anyone use the same rigor and approval processes that would have been applied to writing a $40K check?

Probably not.

Or as Andy Grove, the former CEO of Intel, once put it: "Just as you would not permit a fellow employee to steal a piece of office equipment, you shouldn't let anyone walk away with the time of his fellow managers."

Unfortunately, people are walking away with more and more of this time.

According to research from Bain & Company, 15 percent of an organization's collective time is spent in meetings. That percentage has increased every year since 2008.

So if fewer meetings is your goal, convincing the right people is your mission. Here's a step-by-step guide:

1. Get the evidence

It's likely that your higher-ups were raised on meetings, conditioned to consider them the best place for doing business. Here are links to several resources that outline the danger of frivolous meetings in cold hard facts.

- [Your Scarcest Resource](#)
- [And So We Meet, Again: Why The Workday Is So Filled With Meetings](#)
- [Why Meetings Kill Productivity](#)
- [Stop Wasting Valuable Time](#)

2. Do your research

You aren't looking to wage an all-out assault on the office's entire culture here. It's best to have a specific, manageable target in mind. Identify one recurring meeting that can be handled asynchronously. Do your homework. Learn:

– How often is the meeting held
– How many participants are in the meeting
– What's the average hourly cost for the company for each participant (don't get too intrusive here, just come up with your best estimate)
– What are the common agenda items and topics of conversation
– What, if any, are the typical decisions made in the meeting
– What conversations and information needs to be shared in order to come to these decisions

The idea here is to use all this data to come to some conclusions about the cost of the meetings, the outcome, and whether you can achieve the same results sans face time.

3. Offer alternatives

Here at [iDoneThis](), we're building a tool that can help you replace your daily standup (or other meetings). There are plenty of ways to get to the point of a meeting without actually meeting in person. You could collaborate on a shared document, start an internal message board, or use a tool like [Trello]() to organize a project in the cloud, with everyone contributing at their own convenience.

4. Measure success

This isn't a "set it and forget it" plan. Left unchecked, your organization will sink back into its old habits of holding unnecessary meetings.

Avoid this by setting tangible benchmarks for your experiment. Find ways to show your bosses and colleagues, in hard numbers, how much has been accomplished under the new system. Measure how much time has been freed up and note any upticks in progress for your team.

Follow these steps and you'll be surprised how many meetings you thought were necessary were anything but. You just might find yourself having a lot fewer meetings, and getting a lot more done.

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