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Composition

Essay 4 Second Draft

Today’s Business Meeting

As I would walk into work on Saturdays, I would mentally prepare myself for the assured boredom I’d soon be facing at the routine Saturday morning meeting. In high school I worked at a grocery store where we would have meetings often to discuss various topics, such as what we could do better as a store. These meetings were always very dry and seemed obvious in subject matter. It seemed illogical to be having this pointless meeting about grocery carts, when we could be working downstairs. These meetings were often inefficient regarding time and structure. There had to be a better way of doing this. After much research I discovered the specifics on the disadvantages of business meetings and why they’re unnecessary.

Statistics show that professionals these days have about 61.8 meetings per month, and of these 61.8 meetings, 50% of the time spent in the meeting is not fully utilized and therefore wasted (The State of Meetings Today). I believe the business meeting is a dying tool in the modern business setting and needs innovating. They are counter-productive and there are better, alternative methods.

Now like I previously stated, I dreaded these meetings. Not because of what they were trying to accomplish, but how they were trying to conduct this social, business procedure. During these meetings, it often consisted of a manager just blandly reading from a list. There was no engagement with the employees. They also took way longer than they should have. If they’re just going to read from a list, at least make it quick and efficient so we could get back to work. I don’t believe I’m the only one who’s faced this problem before. The old way of business meetings need innovation.

Now before going any further it is important to state the true purpose and definition of a meeting. A meeting can be defined as place where “a group of people come together to discuss issues, to improve communication, to promote coordination or to deal with any matters that are put on the agenda and to help get any jobs done” (Purpose of Meetings). Now these are undoubtedly necessary, it’s just that the old way of business meetings are no longer viable. The standard business meeting can reduce the productivity of a company.

The typical and traditional business meeting has some defining characteristics. First off, people don’t really take them seriously, whether they’re doodling or nodding off, allowing digression. These meetings often go too long, perhaps an hour long when they could’ve been 30 minutes. The employees sit around a long table or in rows in uncomfortable chairs trying to discuss the topic at hand (The Seven Sins of Deadly Meetings).

One con of business meetings is that they prevent a lot of work from getting done. Statistics show that “professionals lose 31 hours per month in unproductive meetings, or approximately four work days” (The State of Meetings Today). If time weren’t being spent in these meetings, they could be using these extra days to be more productive or maybe as additional vacation days. Giving more time for employees to do their work would increase the productivity levels of the company. In a study conducted by *Industry Week,* they found “45 percent of senior executives surveyed said that their employees would be more productive if their firms banned meetings for a least one-day a week” (Why Meetings Kill Productivity). In addition to the time in meetings, employees also have to prepare and conclude for meetings, taking away even more valuable time.

This wasted time has a bigger effect than you would think. According to the article *The State of Meetings Today*, “most professionals who meet on a regular basis admit to daydreaming (91%), missing meetings (96%) or missing parts of meetings (95%). A large percentage (73%) say they have brought other work to meetings and 39% say they have dozed during meetings.” Obviously the current way of business meetings is not being as successful as it could be. These statistics affect the actual workplace in many ways. Ineffective meetings often lead to more ineffective meetings because the information wasn’t delivered properly the first time, taking even more time from actual work. These unproductive meetings also may result in anger and frustration among employees. If employees aren’t practicing the information they learned in the meeting, the manager probably isn’t too happy. The old way of doing things for business meetings is no longer practical.

One might argue that business meetings are still important because of their vital functions to inform and prepare employees. However, there are more productive and alternative ways to conduct business meetings. One example is how Yahoo conducts its meetings. Yahoo has its special meeting called the “Friday Afternoon Club” where “80 employees gather over beer, wine, and snacks. For 20 to 30 minutes they discuss the current status of projects, how to take advantage of business challenges and opportunities, and what the unit should be looking forward to in the future” (Shake It Up: Alternative Meeting Strategies). With this sort meeting, it gives the meeting a more personal and relaxed feel. People can connect easier and don’t have to worry about a strict conference room vibe. In a more comfortable environment, it provides for more open conversation.

Another business, Ritz-Carlton, is successfully innovating the traditional meeting within their luxurious hotel company. At the beginning of every 8-hour shift, they hold a quick 15-minute stand-up meeting. They use these meetings “as a way to reinforce corporate values, to inform employees of new products and services that Ritz-Carlton may be introducing, and to communicate breaking news” (Shake It Up: Alternative Meeting Strategies). By doing these quick, efficient 15-minute meetings, it allows employees to be able to get to their job faster. With an emphasis on proper time use and promptness during these meetings, employees can carry these traits to their workplace. These stand-up meetings also prepare and motivate the employee for the rest of the day as opposed to having them nod off at the desk during a traditional meeting.

Google applies a simple, but often forgotten rule to their business meetings. They keep them very small, limited to 10 people max. This allows for better input to be given. With too many people in a meeting, some employees may get shy or their voice might be lost among the numerous coworkers. This may seem like an obvious solution, however large corporations ignore this (Business Insider).

Correct use of technology can also be essential to the betterment of meetings. “Employing these technologies will allow meeting participants to access computer-based information, share data and automatically save information generated during their meetings – all functionality for enhanced group collaboration” (The State of Meetings Today). Cloud-based technologies can be very beneficial and even eliminate the need of the meeting. With the ever growing business of working from home, Skype and live-video meetings are the most effective way to connect these people. The physical environment also plays a large role. According Jon Petz, author of *Boring Meetings Suck*, “Take down the walls and get rid of the table . . . Seating should be comfortable, flexible and mobile so meeting hosts can arrange the space however they want for optimal interaction based on their goals” (Petz 87). If companies were to lose the giant tables and stiff chairs, employees would be more comfortable to interact and achieve the goals. With the correct environment, employees can be inspired to achieve their best and enhance productivity. Google and Facebook are some companies changing up the workspace environment and with the success of these companies, they must be doing something right.

After much research, I concluded that the business meetings these days are way too ineffective to justify the time wasted on them. If employees and managers often aren’t leaving the conference room with the correct information, it will only hinder the company. There are alternative approaches to these methods that are far more productive and efficient. Some other approaches are Yahoo’s method of informal, relaxed meetings or Ritz-Carlton’s process of quick and efficient meetings. With how fast society is moving today, there’s no time for unproductive meetings. Meetings need to be structured differently towards today’s age. Now hopefully after I graduate and enter the workforce, I won’t have to worry about mentally preparing myself for a business meeting filled with boredom, but for an innovative and effective meeting.

Authors Note: In my final draft, I did more research and found other sources so I didn’t rely on one in particular too much. I tried to use my articles to service my argument instead of summarizing them, though that’s one thing I was still worried about even with the conclusion of my paper. I also rearranged my intro and conclusion so they tied back in with each other.

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