Upshots Cheat Sheet

MAKING MEETINGS MATTER   MICAH VONO

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"If you're just white-knuckling your meetings, that comes at a big personal cost of your own energy, identity, and perception." - Micah Vono

The Upshot

WHO IS THIS FOR?

- Anyone who's looking to level up how they show up in meetings, to be more efficient, and give the gift of time and energy back to others.
- There are some tell-tale signs of bad meeting management:
  - Going over time or starting late
  - Meeting deja vu - didn't we talk about this before?
  - The exhaustion as soon as the meeting is over
  - Projects that seem to be stuck

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- Meetings are one of the most expensive company investments: expensive to pay for, and they also come with the opportunity cost of taking time away from others to actually do the work.

- White knuckling it also comes at a personal cost: your own reputation.

HOW TO DO IT?

1. Before the meeting

The process does not start with hitting the "new meeting" button. Think through the purpose:

a. What outcome is being called for here? Rarely is it actually "just discuss." Is it a decision that needs to be made? Is it generating possibilities, like a brainstorming meeting? Is it a meeting where you intend to correct behavior or set a new standard?

b. Not all meetings are the same, and if you run them all the same way you are not only being inefficient but you're being lazy. So start with that goal and work backwards.

c. If we need to accomplish X, then what kinds of conversations or activities we need to have in the meeting, and how much time will they take? Let's say the goal is coming away with a decision on what will be said in an important communication, maybe it's a 5 minute icebreaker, 5 minutes of quiet time for anyone who didn't read the draft comms to do it now. Then 15 minutes of discussion will give equal time for the 3 people who need to weigh in. Now you'll have to pivot into the problem-solving space, and so we give that 10 minutes. If my math is right, that's 35 minutes, so if we'd scheduled a 30 minute, we'd have gone over. Bump it to 45, give it room to breathe, time to recap action items at the end and get commitment, and maybe get out early.

d. Could we speed the meeting along or make it richer by sending a pre-read?

2. During the meeting

a. Time management

- Simple visual countdown, such as a [Google Timer](#) on screen will help people police themselves.
- Assign a timekeeper to assist the host.

b. Be inclusive and hear from everyone

- This starts well before the meeting especially for neurodiverse folks, introverts or anyone who needs time to marinate. Pre-reads, agendas, etc.

c. End it on time!

- If I keep you late, I've affected your reputation in the next meeting as someone who shows up late and possibly unprepared. Protect each others' reputations and energy.

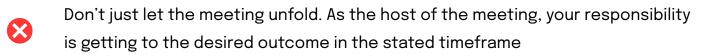## 3. After the meeting

a. Meeting recap if applicable.

b. Restate commitments: not action items. If you've assigned an action item to someone who wasn't there, you have to go get the commitment. Who, what, and by when?

PITFALLS AND PRO-TIPS

✅ Make time for everyone to "check in" at the beginning of the meeting ("Are you able to be present today? Is there something you need to attend? If you have something burning, just leave, come back in a few minutes when you're ready.") and "check out" at the end of the meeting ("How satisfied are you with the meeting? Was this a good use of time? Is there something we could do better for next time in the spirit of continuous improvement?").

✅ Use 1:1 meetings with your manager as a training ground for good meeting management. It will up your game and bolster your manager's trust.

❌ Don't just let the meeting unfold. As the host of the meeting, your responsibility is getting to the desired outcome in the stated timeframe

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