



# MEETING MADNESS

Maximizing Meeting Experience to Promote  
Higher Productivity and Effectiveness



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*The personal, religious, philosophical, or political positions found this project are solely that of the student, and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the committee or Liberty University.*



# ABSTRACT

Meetings are commonplace in organizations worldwide. In fact, meetings are important for collaboration, creative innovation, sharing information, coordinating activities, and more. Meetings in and of themselves are not bad; in fact, they are needed. The problem plaguing organizations and employees is the massive amount of time spent in poorly ran and unproductive meetings. This research aims to establish that these unproductive and poorly ran meetings are affecting employee morale, productivity and costing organizations millions each year. Research shows that improving meetings can positively affect strategic organizational outcomes and company culture and save time and money. This

body of research shows that employees at all levels of the organization spend an excessive amount of time in meetings. These meetings either result in significant job satisfaction and productivity or create tired, stressed, and unfulfilled employees, all of which affect productivity. This research also identifies some critical components to meeting a success, including graphic facilitation and proper planning. Providing facilitators and attendees with the resources they need to put together or participate in meetings is key to having meetings that produce results, engage employees, and motivate action. This paper aims to identify the core problems and build a solution that will produce better meeting results.

# MEETING MADNESS

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### THE PROBLEM

In teams large and small, collaboration is an essential component to a company's success. However, team meetings have become synonymous with wasted time, distraction, and stress. These meetings have led to an unfortunate decline in productivity, creative innovation, and employee morale. Not only are these meetings costing companies in human capital, but they are costing millions of dollars a year against the bottom line. Are the by-products of meetings worth the amount of time and money invested?

### THE PURPOSE

We know that meetings, whether productive or unproductive, cost time and money. Meetings are a common practice in almost every workplace and industry. Having successful meetings is paramount to developing a positive employee culture, disseminating important knowledge and information, innovating, and driving results. In essence, effective meetings equal effective employees, which equals effective organizations. The objective is to have more productive meetings, and stop wasting time and money on meetings

that are poorly structured, poorly run, and poorly timed. The solution is to increase engagement at every level, from facilitator to attendees, by designing a meeting format that promotes creativity, discussion, and desired outcomes.

### PERSONAL MOTIVATIONS FOR THE RESEARCH

After reflecting on my meeting calendar from January 2020 to date I have spent approximately 1,376 hours in work meetings. Those hours represent over 34 solid business weeks of meetings in just over 19 months. Looking back, it's hard to measure the success of each of those meetings for a few reasons; how is success actually measured, how much reflection was done after the meeting, what problems were solved, and what feedback was given from attendees after the meeting. These are just some of the questions that meeting facilitators should be asking themselves after they lead a meeting. There are 3 issues that stick out to me. Firstly, out of those 1,376 hours of meetings I have personally facilitated approximately 500 hours of them. It is sobering to think about the

number of hours invested compared to the outcomes, solutions, and objectives I have accomplished over these past 19 months. It's not to say all this time was wasted. I'm sure things were accomplished, ideas were had, and presentations were made, but what is there to show for it? Can I look back and directly correlate the number of hours spent facilitating meetings to the amount of success I've had in my current job? The bottom line is, what is the return on the investment? I don't have an answer to that question. Secondly, if I've facilitated 500 hours of meetings then that means other people have had to endure those meetings with me. How many hours have I wasted of other people's time? Not only can I not measure my own return on investment but I'm likely guilty of diminishing the return on other's investments as well. Thirdly, I've been an attendee of close to 700 hours of meetings and it's not hard to recall just how many of them felt like major time wasters. As an attendee I am sick and tired of being a part of poorly structured, time, and facilitated meetings. I can probably count on one hand the number of times I've walked away from a meeting feeling like something was accomplished. Meetings have become a drudgery for me. Too often I attend meetings where the leader is unprepared and unorganized and nothing is accomplished. Too often I've walked away unsure of the objective or the next steps. Too often I've spent 45 minutes engaged in meaningless conversation and 15 meetings

talking objectives. Too often my time and the time of my coworkers and employees are wasted. I personally have experienced stress, anxiety, and even anger when it comes to work meetings. Upon reflection, the meetings that I find valuable are the ones where people are engaged, feel safe to share ideas, understand the objectives and know the role they play. When I walk away from a meeting feeling accomplished, then I feel like my time was valued and I have a sense of purpose. Purpose creates drive and motivation to do my job well. Purpose gives me value, inspires ideas, and incites a positive attitude. If these feelings, whether good or bad, are generated from meetings and meetings are where I spend at least half my time, I would say there is an incredible amount of value in addressing the problem of meeting madness. For managers, directors and executives just changing the landscape of meetings could transform not only the work they do but it could transform the entire face of their organizations. I know that I'm ready for a change. I'm ready to change the meetings I facilitate and I'm ready to provide a solution that will help others change their approach to workplace meetings.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH**

The following research explains (1) how unproductive meetings affect employees and organizations, (2) how introducing some foundational elements into meetings can increase effectiveness, and (3) how

visuals incorporated into meetings can equate to highly productive meetings. Meeting madness can be described as an excessive number of meetings that are poorly run and unproductive. These meetings can result in a decline in productivity, creative innovation, and employee morale. The science of meeting research obtained around this topic provides information about how these poorly structured and timed meetings affect employees and organizations as a whole. Imagine participating in meetings that inspire thought and creativity, produce results and make the best use of employees' time. Maximizing employee time to deliver the best possible outcomes for the organization gives employees a great sense of fulfillment and purpose and helps achieve the organization's goals. In addition, meetings should be a source of effective communication and a means for engaging in real work. The stakeholders involved in research are employees and organizations as a whole. The primary target for the solution is the facilitators of meetings, and the secondary target is the attendees. This audience includes all employee levels, industries, and intersectionality of employees. If employees can have successful meetings, the organization's outcomes can be affected. Possible outcomes include saving money in employee time, higher productivity resulting in innovative ideas and solutions, and a strengthening of human capital.

Organizations are responsible for training their employees on running effective meetings and holding them accountable. Running and participating in successful meetings should be a part of the culture of any organization.

# MEETING MADNESS

## CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH REPORT



# CHAPTER 2

## RESEARCH REPORT

### INTRODUCTION

Meeting madness can be described as an excessive number of meetings that are poorly run and unproductive (Perlow, Leslie et al). These meetings can result in a decline in productivity, creative innovation, and employee morale. The science of meeting research obtained around this topic provides information about how these poorly structured and timed meetings affect employees and organizations as a whole. The problem is not that time is spent in meetings. The process of sharing information, collaborating, coordinating, and negotiation are all vital parts of a successful organization. Meetings are necessary and are not, in and of themselves, the problem. The problem lies with quantity and productivity of these meetings; this is the problem that needs to be solved. The questions that frame the proposed solution are simple: (1) does the situation warrant a meeting and (2) how can meetings be more productive. First, research around the madness of meetings is needed to help uncover the necessity of a solution for poorly ran and unproductive meetings. It is estimated that 11 million meetings take place every single day (Kim & Rudin 1). That's over 2 billion meetings per year! The objectives of this research are to identify the following:

- Why are meetings deemed unproductive and a waste of time?
- How do unproductive meetings affect the organization?
- From the employee's perspective, what do successful meetings look like?
- How can meetings be maximized to incorporate more than just foundational best practices?
- How can foundational meeting factors and visual art coincide to produce effective meetings?

### RATIONALE

The following research aims to uncover the answers to the research questions and lays a foundation for better meeting practices. Maximizing employee time to deliver the best outcomes for the organization gives employees a great sense of fulfillment and purpose and helps achieve the organization's goals. In addition, meetings should be a source of effective communication and a means for engaging in real work. The research presented establishes (1) how employees and organizations are affected by unproductive meetings, (2) crucial organizational meeting factors that are foundational to all meetings, and (3) how visuals can

contribute to highly productive meetings.

### **HOW EMPLOYEES AND ORGANIZATIONS ARE AFFECTED BY UNPRODUCTIVE MEETINGS**

A study led by Steven Rogelberg explored whether employee satisfaction with meetings was related to overall job satisfaction. His research suggests that organizations that want to maintain and promote employee morale and job satisfaction should take meeting experiences seriously (Rogelberg et al. 167). There are many aspects to job satisfaction: pay, promotion, opportunities, co-workers, and the work itself (Judge et al. 152). The research intends to identify meeting satisfaction (MS) as a viable facet to overall job satisfaction (JS). After correlating meeting satisfaction to job satisfaction, Rogelberg connects the degree to which one affects the other by measuring the extent of those meeting demands. He discovers that when meeting demands are higher, the relationship between MS and JS is more substantial, and when the demands are lower, the relationship is weaker (149). Affective events theory, developed by Howard M. Weiss and Russell Cropanzano, explains how emotions and moods influence job performance and job satisfaction and helps us understand the connection between the two (151). Events that produce affect-generating responses include achieving goals, planning, recognition, and acts of management, all of which typically occur within the boundaries of meetings, whether before, during, or after. If the effects of these events produce a particular emotion, whether good or bad,

it can be tied back to meetings and thus tied back to overall job satisfaction. Meetings are not only an organizational activity, but they are also an avenue for relationship-building, where responsibilities are developed and sustained. Rogelberg also states that meetings are a place where members make sense of their roles and how their roles interact with the functions of others; a productive meeting reinforces positive emotions related to job roles (166). Lastly, this study found that the more meetings attended, the greater the workload and daily fatigue. The research concludes that the quality and quantity of meeting experiences are essential to the well-being of any employee and contribute to overall job satisfaction.

Another study done by faculty from Creighton University and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte identifies how employees feel about having more meetings and how they can be improved. They gathered data from three samples of working adults that found they enjoyed meetings when objectives were clear and relevant information was shared, and workers were unhappy when they put a constraint upon their work-related resources: time, structure, productivity (Allen et al. 405). Qualitative methods determined the reasons people feel better or worse about having more meetings in their workday. The research questions answered are as follows:

- How do employees feel about having more meetings?
- What makes employees look forward to their work meetings?

The three samples consisted of 120 working adults, 126 working adults in a metropolitan area, and an internet sample of 402 working adults across the USA. The study consisted of two, two-part questions. The first set of questions consisted of one closed-ended question asking, the more meetings I have, the better/worse I feel, and two, an open-ended question asking them to explain why they felt about having more meetings. The results concluded that ten percent of respondents said that meetings help them feel better about their job, while 30 percent indicated that they feel worse (Allen et al. 410). Of the group who felt good about their meetings, the majority stated that information sharing was the most significant benefit while reaching goals, achieving objectives, solving problems, and collaboration was also deemed important (Allen et al. 410). For the group who felt unhappy about their meetings, time was the most frequent complaint, citing that meetings were a constraint or waste of time (Allen et al. 410). The second question group consisted of one closed-ended question: "I dread/look forward to meetings when. . ." This particular question gives insight into how organizations can improve meetings. Most of the respondents in this study indicated that meetings were dreaded when people were late or when meetings were unstructured and unorganized (Allen et al. 412). On the other hand, the respondents looked forward to meetings when relevant information was shared and objectives were accomplished (Allen et al. 414). Thus, this research supports the need for proper planning and timeliness. In some additional research done by Rogelberg and

Luong, they discover that meeting workload can affect employee well-being. The article "Meetings and More Meetings: The Relationship Between Meeting Load and the Daily Well-Being of Employees" studied 37 full-time employees who attended at least three meetings in one week. These individuals took a brief questionnaire after each meeting for one week. The questionnaire measured fatigue, subjective workload, and feelings of productivity. The results indicated that the frequency of meetings was negatively correlated with the employee's well-being related to interruptions or hassles (Rogelberg and Luong 66). Meeting disruptions drain the resources for the task being interrupted, resulting in fatigue; the more of those meetings, the greater the fatigue (Rogelberg and Luong 64).

When it came to subjective workload, the study indicated that people who had to leave one task and process new information in a meeting resulted in a more significant workload (Rogelberg and Luong 65). More meetings created more interruptions, resulting in more tasks that went unfinished (Rogelberg and Luong 65). Productivity was not related to meeting frequency. Rogelberg suggests that meeting frequency can have two effects: the employee feels unproductive because they cannot complete their daily tasks due to meeting frequency, or an employee feels productive because they experience an increase in activity, information, and feeling busy (65). The study concludes that meeting fatigue and subjective workload are affected negatively the greater the

meeting frequency. In the article, “Stop the Meeting Madness” by Leslie Perlow et al., the authors argue that meetings are supposed to “improve creativity and productivity—but they do the opposite when they’re excessive, badly scheduled, poorly run, or all three.” This type of meeting structure is a problem that affects employees and creates a problem for the entire organization. In a survey the authors did with 200 executives, they discovered that only seventeen percent reported that their meetings were a productive use of individual and group time (Perlow et al. 65). The rest of the respondents indicated that their meetings were a waste of group and individual time and fall into the category of poorly timed, badly run, and too frequent (Perlow et al. 66). This article presents a five-step process for changing the approach of meetings. In one study done with a financial and regulatory consultancy, they recorded a forty-two percent increase in team collaboration, a thirty-two percent increase in the ability to express opinions, a twenty-eight percent increase in team performance, and a thirty percent increase in work/life balance (Perlow et al. 65). Perlow and team purpose collecting data from each employee on their level of satisfaction for meetings, interpret the data as a team, agree on a collective goal, set milestones to monitor progress, and regularly debrief as a group (66-69).

An organization might not know the extent of its problem unless it asks. Step one involves taking the pulse of the employees. Questions to consider:

- Take an emotional pulse: How do

meetings make you feel?

- Tally the hours: How much time is spent in meetings?
- The balance between group and individual work time: Do you feel the time you have left is sufficient to complete your tasks?
- Work quality: How would you describe the meetings you attended: productive, somewhat productive, or a waste of time?
- Best practices: What differentiates a productive meeting from an unproductive meeting?

Step two involves coming together as a team and talking through all the feedback, and then use neutral facilitators to help keep the conversation constructive (Perlow et al. 66). Step three involves developing a plan within the team that collectively benefits everyone. This plan might involve a strategic approach to meetings and work time—for example, giving people time each week to focus on individual and group work, declaring meeting-free time, and not scheduling meetings on certain days or during certain times of the day. Step four is monitoring progress, measuring the success so that people can celebrate wins, and providing feedback on what’s working and what is not working (Perlow et al. 69). Finally, step five is openly and continually taking stock of how people feel about the meetings they attend: weekly check-ins and asking specific questions otherwise not asked in step four (Perlow et al. 69). Perlow concludes the article by reiterating how meetings can be an avenue for change: “A process like this one can improve

productivity, communication, and integration of the team's work, not to mention job satisfaction and work/life balance. In the end, better meetings—and better work lives—result” (Perlow et al. 69). In another of Rogelberg's studies, “Wasted Time and Money in Meetings: Increasing Return on Investment”, he addresses how the bottom is affected. This article examines the costs associated with poorly structured meetings. It also proposes a solution that organizations can use to ensure that meetings' time has a greater return on investment (Rogelberg et al. 236). A study done with 24,000 employees at Xerox found that direct meeting costs were over \$100 million a year (Rogelberg et al. 237). Rogelberg conducted several informal studies with fortune 500 companies and discovered that little to nothing is done to assess the return on the investment in meetings (237). Respondents in that same survey indicated that over two-thirds of their meetings failed to be productive (Rogelberg et al. 237). This study shows that wasting time in meetings has a financial impact on employee salary and costs associated with time lost that could be used doing more productive things. The same can be true for too few meetings. With too few meetings, organizations risk depriving employees of important information, lowering employee job satisfaction, communication satisfaction, and the dissemination of organizational information, causing employees to feel anxious (Rogelberg et al. 237). Whether too few or too many, poorly structured meetings affect the overall health, well-being, and effectiveness of an organization

and its employees. Rogelberg goes on to propose a systematic approach to measuring the effectiveness of meetings and the cost involved. Stage one assesses the cost accrued by employee time spent in meetings. Determining cost can be done by calculating the average time spent in meetings on a given day and multiplying by the employee's hourly income (including benefits). Stage two assesses the return on investment by collecting data around the effectiveness of meetings, which is measured against meeting objectives, organizational goals, and employee's feelings on the productivity of the meeting. Once an assessment is done on cost and effectiveness, a strategy around change and implementation is formed. Stage three, change strategy, is built around these components: (1) feedback and accountability systems for groups, (2) high-fidelity training and team leader development systems, and (3) establishing productive cultural practices (Rogelberg et al. 241). Rogelberg sums up his research by saying, “Successful organizations do not treat meetings as a necessary evil; rather they view them as an organizational phenomenon that can be actively managed and leveraged” (243).

In a study done by Stephen Garcia titled “The Organizational Cost of Unproductive Meetings”, he surveyed 3,500 employees from a US healthcare company to measure the cost associated with workplace meetings. This study indicated that over half the respondents felt that meetings were unproductive and had resulted in high costs, the financial cost related to

unproductive time, and the human capital cost of reduced employee engagement (Garcia 1). The research also indicated that employees working at the headquarters spend thirty percent of their on salary and number of employees in each location determined that \$22 million was wasted in the headquarters, and \$41 million was wasted in the field (Garcia 2). Employee engagement is another factor to consider concerning wasted time and money. Employee engagement naturally produces both productivity and, in turn, profitability, not to mention improving employee well-being and retention. In an analysis done by Gallup in 2017 that included 1.9 million workers, they found that “work units in the top quartile in employee engagement outperformed bottom-quartile units... by 17% in productivity, 20% in sales, and 21% in profitability” (Reilly, “5 Ways”). In Garcia’s study, he asked the respondents to give three words to describe how they would feel if they reduced the number of unproductive meetings. Responses included productive, empowered, relieved, happy, focused, efficient, energized, balanced, strategic, and creative. The same respondents were asked what they would do with the time given back to them. The theme of those responses included execution, strategy and priorities, and work/life balance. The study went on to determine why these meetings were deemed so unproductive. The lack of productivity was related to the people and not the process (Garcia 4). For example, lack of participation and an unwillingness to disagree were the most common obstacles to productivity in a meeting (Garcia 4). Half

of the respondents also had issues around effective management, clear decisions and next steps, and willingness to understand others (Garcia 4). These issues indicate that processes are not the only issue that needs to be addressed when developing a more time in unproductive meetings (Garcia 1). Employees in the field spend fifteen percent of their time in meetings, with ten percent of that being wasted time (Garcia 2). Calculations based productive meeting. People-related issues also need to be a large part of the solution to meeting effectiveness. Researchers have found that interaction and participation in meetings directly correlate to meeting success, “particularly behaviors related to understanding the problem, participating equally, listening to others versus only advocating your own opinion, and surfacing and managing conflict” (Garcia 5). Garcia argues that most organizations focus too much time on process-related approaches to solving meeting problems when people-related issues are the most powerful way to affect meeting effectiveness and productivity (Garcia 5). Overall, both process and people-related challenges need to be a viable part of the solution to design more productive meetings because organizations spend too much financial and human capital on unproductive and ineffective meetings.

## **IMPORTANT ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING FACTORS**

In the review “Do We Really Need Another Meeting? The Science of Workplace Meetings,” the authors examine the psychological science of meetings and

apply the findings of the activities that occur before, during, and after meetings that facilitate success (Mroz et al. 484). The study of the science of meetings focuses on the specific, dynamic context in which groups operate, especially concerning what occurs before, during, and after meetings (Mroz et al. 485). Based on this science, some critical findings before a meeting centered around frequency, diversity, and preparation (Mroz et al. 485). The article concludes with recommendations for having successful meetings.

**Before Meetings.** Attending too many unproductive meetings can lead to employee stress and fatigue. Meetings that included a range of diversity were perceived to have better outcomes that included better solutions. Meeting quality and discussion improved when the attendee came prepared, having read through the agenda. These conclusions help to build a checklist of items to be considered before a meeting:

- Only call absolutely necessary meetings.
- Meeting length should correspond with objectives and goals and should be kept short.
- Keep meetings small. Only invite people who are directly related to the topic.
- Use the appropriate technology to match meeting objectives.

- Set clear goals and desired outcomes.
- Prepare and distribute the agenda in advance.
- Ensure technology is working properly before the meeting (Mroz et al. 486).

**During Meetings.** Meeting quality diminished when attendees arrived late. Humor and laughter had a positive effect on group performance. Groups with complainers performed poorly. Meetings that are relevant, short, and participatory produced a higher level of employee engagement. Fairness related to interaction increased overall participation. These conclusions help to build a checklist of items that should be considered before a meeting:

- Arrive early.
- Start on time and follow the agenda.
- Avoid complaining, dominating conversations, and other inappropriate communication.
- Avoid doing activities unrelated to the meeting (checking email, multitasking).
- Allow and encourage attendees to participate.
- Intervene when dialogue becomes off-topic or dysfunctional (Mroz et al. 487).

**After Meetings.** Debriefing meetings help

establish and reinforce an organization's environment for well-being. The objectives accomplished after a meeting help to meet organizational goals. Employee satisfaction at the end of a meeting is directly related to overall job satisfaction. These conclusions help to build a checklist of items to be considered before a meeting:

- Send a recap or meeting minutes out after the meeting and include any action actions.
- Assess meeting satisfaction and quality with the attendees to inform future meeting design.
- Incorporate meeting satisfaction into future meetings.
- Invite leaders to examine routine meetings to determine necessity and value (Mroz et al. 487).

A study done by Geimer et al. entitled "Meetings at work: Perceived Effectiveness and Recommended Improvements" investigates why meetings continued to be deemed a poor use of time given the number of resources that exists to improve them (2015). This research surveyed 1,223 people from over 41 countries. The survey was broken down into four sub-themes: meeting organization, meeting activities, and meeting outcomes. The overarching study reveals that over half the participant's comments regarding meeting effectiveness were negative (Geimer et al. 2022). The negative comments were related to poor planning, lack of agenda, content being of

low relevance, unproductive conversations, and lack of consideration for input (Geimer et al. 2022-2023). These findings indicate areas that meetings need to be improved. The sub theme of people focused on six areas: conscientiousness of attendees, communication, meaningful conversation, interpersonal behavior, respect/motivation of co-workers, and assuming accountability for employee's actions and duties (Geimer et al. 2018). Seventy-one percent of the comments related to people were negative and revolved around a lack of acceptance of ideas, opinions, and unidirectional communication, while the most frequent positive comments related to people being respectful and motivated (Geimer et al. 2019). The sub theme of meeting organization focused on three areas: meeting structure, meeting composition and size, and temporal issues. Sixty-four percent of comments related to meeting organization were negative and centered around lack of structure and inappropriate people in attendance (Geimer et al. 2019). Positive comments were related to the meeting being chaired effectively, clear goals, agenda use (Geimer et al. 2020). The sub theme of meeting activity focused on six areas: unproductive discussion, meeting activities are monotonous/boring, role ambiguity, a mechanism to exchange ideas and get feedback, a mechanism to disseminate information, and good face time and social contact/networking (Geimer et al. people, 2018). Just under 19 percent

of responses in this area were negative, with the majority related to core topics discussed. The most common positive comments were centered around meetings being an excellent mechanism to exchange ideas and get feedback (Geimer et al. 2020). The sub theme of meeting outcomes focused on five areas: impact on workload demands, personal agendas, post-meeting inaction, effectiveness, and necessity. 11 percent of responses related to meeting outcomes were negative. Most negative comments were related to personal agendas and post-meeting inaction, while the majority of the positive comments were related to meeting relevance and enhancing commitment to goals (Geimer et al. 2020). The findings in this study indicate that the negative and positive responses both point to similar themes showing that some themes are more valuable than others. The difference between negative and positive comments is mainly related to function and structure. The positive comments reinforce the idea that meetings are an essential part of an organization (function). In contrast, the negative comments indicate problems related to the structure, poor organization and planning, lack of an agenda, and irrelevant content (Geimer et al. 2023). The second part of this study gathered recommendations from this same group on which areas within each theme needed the most improvement. Of the recommendations pertaining to people, coming prepared and staying engaged

were the most recommended (Geimer et al. 2021). The recommendations related to meeting organization were improving structure, the use of a facilitator, meeting duration, and punctuality (Geimer et al. 2021). In the recommendations pertaining to meeting activities, participation, input, and managing discussion came out at the top (Geimer et al. 2021). The last recommendation areas broke down meeting outcomes into two categories: communication and purpose, and barriers and constraints. The most common recommendations related to communication and purpose were improving information dissemination (Geimer et al. 2022). Concerning barriers and constraints, the most common recommendations were more training on conducting meetings (Geimer et al. 2022). Overall, the recommendations were around the need for changes before and during a meeting, focusing on the structure and organization (Geimer et al. 2023).

In the article “Best Practices for Virtual Participation in Meetings” by Hampton et al., the authors discuss the value of technology and how it has “transformed the conduct and social organization of collaboration.” While face-to-face collaboration is the most effective means for communication and transmitting knowledge, virtual technologies are becoming more sophisticated and provide a viable option for more productive and

inclusive teamwork (Hampton et al. 62). This article offers practical tools for facilitating a successful virtual meeting that promotes better experiences with communication and a more inclusive means of collaboration. Participants in virtual meetings can struggle to engage due to inattention on both sides and audio-visual issues. Hampton et al. believe that changes in behaviors, communication techniques, and the use of technology can have a significant improvement in participation and create a more positive experience (Hampton et al. 59). The article is broken into two parts: steps for organizers and steps for participants. It is important to note that meeting success, whether virtual or in-person, depends on the facilitator. Attendees also should be trained on how to participate in meetings as well. Steps for meeting facilitators include (Hampton et al. 59-60):

- Sharing meeting materials in advance.
- Assigning duties ahead of time (who will troubleshoot technology, take notes, etc.).
- Considering bandwidth issues and testing technology out in advance.
- Having a backup plan for the meeting in case it doesn't go as planned.
- Using external cameras, microphones, and speakers.
- Providing participants with a clear view of the room, especially if there

are in-person attendees.

- Allowing for screen sharing.
- Having a virtual space for collaborative note taking.
- Providing clear cues for input and feedback.
- Being sensitive to time zones.
- Planning accordingly for breakout sessions.
- Being sensitive to interdisciplinary participants and how they interact and experience virtual technologies.

Steps for attendees include (Hampton et al. 61-62):

- Treating the meeting like a face-to-face meeting.
- Using available technology to maximize the experience on your side.
- Testing your connections and equipment in advance.
- Choosing an appropriate location (consider wifi, lighting, etc.).
- Being familiar with the platform used for the meeting (how to mute, go off-camera, share your screen, etc.).

For everyone (Hampton et al. 62):

- Be aware of nonverbal cues and what they communicate.
- Enhance mutual understanding by restating or rephrasing key points.
- Look into the camera when someone is speaking.

- Be comfortable with technology before the virtual meeting.

## **VISUALS AND HIGHLY PRODUCTIVE MEETINGS**

When considering visuals and highly productive meetings, virtual meetings have to be a part of this conversation. With over fifty-five percent of companies allowing remote work, virtual meetings are becoming more commonplace (Owl Labs, “Global State of Remote Work 2018”). Seventy-eight percent of corporate companies use video calling software for team meetings (BasuMallick, “5 Great Video Conferencing Tools”). In the article “Collaborative Bandwidth: Creating Better Virtual Meetings,” Rachel Smith discusses the importance of collaboration at a distance but raises the concern that virtual meetings are mostly ineffective. Smith introduces the idea of collaborative bandwidth, “the number and capacity of channels available to support group work” (11). She believes collaborative bandwidth, combined with graphic facilitation, is the key to successful online collaboration (Smith 15). Graphic facilitation is an “interactive style of leading groups using large-scale imagery and displays” – helping people “see what you mean” (Sibbet, “A Graphic Facilitation Retrospective” 12). Smith argues that people are “less efficient, productive, and creative, and retention is adversely affected in virtual compared to face-to-face meetings” due to multitasking,

less interaction, lack of visuals, problems with technology, and the overall challenge of maintaining momentum (17). This use of graphic facilitation has been proven successful in face-to-face meetings as people are more engaged, get more done, are more creative, and retain more information (Sibbet, “A Graphic Facilitation Retrospective” 8). Smith introduces a model of virtual graphic facilitation and examines how it affects collaborative bandwidth and contributes to more productive virtual meetings. Graphic facilitation operates because the facilitator, participants, and the graphic visual all interact together. The graphic visual represents the main points or discussion taking place in the form of words, phrases, illustrations, symbols, etc. Throughout the meeting, the graphic facilitator takes visual notes for everyone to see, speak to, reflect upon and engage with. Graphic facilitation increases engagement. Visually recording what is being said by the speaker provides validation, inspires more contributions from attendees, and creates a safe space for quieter people (Smith 20). Graphic facilitation increases efficiency. Participants can quickly see a visual of the conversation and tend to speak up more quickly in areas of disagreement because they can visually see the gaps in knowledge (Smith 20). Graphic facilitation inspires creative thinking, “The visual display inspires participants to use visual language to explore new ideas at the moment when they otherwise might not,

tapping into their creativity” (Mullen and Thompson). Graphic facilitation promotes retention. Any time pictures are added to words, retention increases. As participants watch how the conversation turns into a visual, they draw a visual connection. They are more likely to accurately remember and repeat what was discussed in the meeting (Smith 20). Graphic facilitation increases understanding. When ideas are drawn out both literally and figuratively, understanding increases as participants make sense of the information, understand relationships, and grasp complex systems (Smith 20). Graphic facilitation creates alignment. As participants walk away with a shared understanding, they have a great sense of the commitment they have made to each other (Smith 20). While graphic communication is more commonplace in face-to-face meetings, Smith believes it can have a valuable place in virtual meetings, just executed in a different way using the tools of technology versus markers and paper:

By restoring channels of communication that are otherwise lost in remote meetings, virtual graphic facilitation increases collaborative bandwidth, the elusive quality of face-to-face meetings that is often lacking in virtual gatherings. Even in its simplest applications, virtual graphic recording can make remote meetings more efficient, more effective,

and not least of all, more enjoyable.  
(33)

The book entitled Visual Meetings by David Sibbet introduces the idea of applying visuals to meetings to improve outcome and in case engagement; he believes that there is power in visualizations to “transform thinking and group process”. The importance of perspective and point of view applies to groups and meetings. If participants share a common purpose, they work more effectively. If groups are able to see different patterns in their thinking, they get smarter. If they can remember the ideas they come up with, they get more productive. (4)

Organizations are putting pressure on employees to be more innovative and productive while having fun, which laid the groundwork for Sibbet to write this book on running more visually creative meetings. The level of disconnection and polarization and the pressure centered around the changing economic and sociological landscape also contributed to the reason behind the book. Inspiring thoughts, creativity, innovation, and productivity in meetings are becoming more of a challenge in the rich media world in which we live. First, the book challenges new thoughts around ways to incorporate visuals into meetings. Sibbet takes a simplistic approach, starting from drawing dots and lines and building on that foundation as the book progresses.

The four-step learning cycle is the basis on which he builds his principles. Step one involves sparking purpose, which happens in the imagination (Sibbet 11). Before a meeting, people will naturally imagine what the purpose of the meeting is about. The communication that takes place around the meeting invitation supports this process. Attendees will develop their ideas and visuals based on their imagination. This step guides the imagination around the purpose of the meeting through visual elements so that their imagining coincides with the meeting purpose (Sibbet 12). Step two is engagement, which involves play and exploring new ideas. Being engaged involves more than just listening or note taking. Sibbet's concept of engagement involves feelings and physical movement; paying attention, feeling excited, and participating in sharing ideas and observations is engagement (13). This type of engagement increases when people are allowed to talk, and someone else visually captures the conversation taking place in the meeting. Visually capturing the conversation creates validation and lets the employees know that they are being listened to. Step three is "finding connections that explain things, solving problems, revealing a design, or setting the criteria for decisions" by thinking (Sibbet 14). Without a visual display, it is hard to capture the entire scope of a problem, idea, plan, etc. Thinking is the means to understanding. Creating visuals to support

the topic helps people see the connections and patterns in the information, making a more efficient way to run a meeting and find solutions (Sibbet 15). Step four is about enacting; the objective of most meetings to walk away with something that contributes to a successful resolution to a problem. Visuals that reflect action over a period of time stimulate creativity and inspire motivation, ownership, and follow-through by including road maps, game plans, dashboards, and progress maps (Sibbet 15). The second half is about getting people involved and essentially supporting the four-step learning cycle through various types of visuals that can be implemented into any meeting. Sibbet provides ideas, examples, and suggestions for different resources and tools for creating these visuals. For example, sticky notes are used to organize information, color dots are used for voting, and collages and pictures cards are used to add more substance to the visuals. Hand-sketching notes is also an excellent way to keep people actively engaged and focused on the progression of information throughout the meeting (Sibbet 8). Sibbet provides a toolkit of resources that dive deeper into the different types of visuals and how they are used in different meetings. Finally, the book ends with how to support action in various kinds of meetings through visual representation. It's about getting results and being productive. The ideas generated from this book can provide a great deal of support

when developing a solution for more effective meetings. Not all meetings fit into the same box, but elements from Visual Meetings can undoubtedly help to support creativity, innovation, productivity, and results.

This research shows the impact that poorly run and unproductive meetings have on employees and organizations. Employee satisfaction with meetings is directly tied to job satisfaction based on a series of meeting demands. If meeting demands can be structured in a way that produces affect-generating responses like achieving goals, planning, recognition, and acts of management, then meeting satisfaction is more significant. When implementing and enforcing some practical guidelines around meeting promptness, developing and following agendas, and creating space for ideas and feedback, employee morale not only goes up, but meetings are deemed more productive. The research establishes the importance of some foundational practices that should be considered when having a meeting. The research also shows that an even greater level of investment that includes more visually engaging elements can also produce better meeting results. When meetings are more productive, the organization wastes less money and, in turn, invests more into creativity, innovation, collaboration, and culture. The research gaps lie with the understanding that every human being

operates differently. Not everyone retains information the same way, understands ideas the same way, learns the same way, or collaborates well in groups. Given this acknowledgment, it's understood that not any one solution will produce results that meet the needs of every person and organization. The hope is to find a solution that works for most.

### **ADDITIONAL RESEARCH METHODS**

In “The Surprising Science of Meetings: How You Can Lead Your Team to Peak Performance” by Steven Rogelberg, he recognizes that meetings are a large part of the process for organizations. His research has identified meetings as a pain point for employees. He also has identified that time spent in unproductive meeting is costing organizations millions of dollars a year. The purpose of this book is to bring awareness to the topic and offer solutions for having more productive meetings. Meetings in and of themselves are a good thing. It's when they are unproductive, inconvenient, and poorly ran does it start affecting employee's wellbeing and the bottom line of an organizations budget. The questions that are answered in this case study are as follows:

- What do successful meetings look like?
- How can meetings be more productive and effective?
- How can meetings be maximized to incorporate more than

foundational practices?

- How do unproductive meetings affect employees and organization?

In “Shocking Meeting Statistics In 2020 That Will Take You By Surprise”, Chang Chen gives a comprehensive list of statistics related to meetings. These statistics cover the cost, time spent, time lost, and employee satisfaction in relation to meetings. This helps the significance of the problem to be fully known. The data in this article shine a spotlight on where the biggest problems lie and indicate where things can be improved. The questions that are answered in this case study are as follows:

- How are employees affected by poor meetings?
- How much time do people spend in meetings?
- What are unproductive meetings costing organizations?
- What do employees want out of a meeting?

The foundation for the book, “Visual Meetings” by David Sibbet the idea that “people who work visually have better ideas, make better decisions, and are more committed to producing results” (xi). The purpose of this book is to provide the tools needed to conduct meetings that get results. The books lays the framework for infusing energy and creativity to otherwise ordinary meetings. It walks meeting

facilitators through methods of visual communication like graphic recording, visual planning, story-boarding, graphic templates, idea-mapping and much more. Sibbet goes beyond practical tools and dives into various forms of visual communication. The questions that are answered in this case study are as follows:

- How graphics, sticky notes and idea meeting can contribute to successful and productive meetings?
- How to create space where people are inspired to imagine and engage with the agenda of the meeting?
- How can visual graphics contribute to solving problems?
- How does the concept of visual meetings work for different types of meetings?
- Does this concept actually work and resonate with everyone?

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

### **CASE STUDY:**

*“The Surprising Science of Meetings: How You Can Lead Your Team to Peak Performance” by Steven Rogelberg*

Rogelberg acknowledges that meetings are essential to the overarching function of any organization. This book aims to solve the problems related to bad meetings, wasted time in meetings, and unnecessary meetings. The problem associated with bad

meetings includes the massive amount of time and money wasted. Rogelberg's sole purpose is to "translate the sciences of meetings to bring direction, guidance, and relief to those leading and participating in meetings" (Rogelberg x). The concept of meetings is not the problem; it's the massive amount of time wasted, level of unproductively, and frequency of these types of meetings that plague companies worldwide. It is estimated that these types of meetings in the United States cost \$1.4 trillion a year (Rogelberg x). Drawing on his 15 years of experience and extensive research, Rogelberg attempts to solve this meeting crisis by providing guidance and evidence-based solutions to more productive meetings and less bad meetings. This book starts by laying the foundation for the need for a solution. Rogelberg provides research indicating a consistent theme amongst organizations around the United States- too much time is wasted, and most of these meetings are unproductive. He goes on to explain how these meetings have adverse effects on employees. He talks about the science of meetings and how the research is conducted by studying activities before, during, and after meetings. Rogelberg finishes up the book by providing evidence-based strategies for leaders to implement into their meetings. The most challenging issue Rogelberg faces in his study on the Science of Meetings is just understanding each organization's unique needs. Organizations are unique in their

culture, structure, processes, demands, and the list can go on. This structure can make it somewhat difficult to provide solutions that work for every organization. He addresses the challenge by offering self-assessments to understand whether leadership in maximizing their return on investment. However, the assessment only covers whether an organization is experiencing a problem with the productivity of their meetings, not a means of developing a solution and strategy that works for them. The other challenge that Rogelberg faces is the study is only confined to the United States. Companies like Apple, Amazon, Walmart, and many others, employ people from all over the world. This diversity brings many cultural challenges that could show up in work meetings. Understanding the dynamic of meetings from a global perspective could inform the solution on a grander scale. There are likely some common denominators to highly productive meetings in companies all around the world. Knowing what those are and understanding the psychology of human beings, in general, could aid in developing a solution that works for all, which brings me to my next challenge, understanding the psychology of human beings. The study lacks a dive into psychology. While Rogelberg addresses practical insights of human psychology, this study lacks deeper dive that would help companies understand how people think, act, respond, receive and create.

Again, there are likely some common denominators amongst all human beings that can be pulled out and used to develop a more well-rounded solution that works for all. This book's outcome established an understood need to reclaim time and cost in terms of financial and human capital due to poor meetings. Rogelberg sums it up with five key points that will aid in more productive meetings: visualization and anticipation, preparation, mindset, active facilitation, and reflection (Rogelberg 130). Each of these critical points feeds into each other. Thinking through meetings ahead of time allows for the facilitator to anticipate failures, needs, and challenges and then work backward to identify a solution ahead of time (Rogelberg 130). Once solutions have been identified, the facilitator should begin to prepare. Taking time to consciously make decisions regarding time, agenda, goals, attendees will ensure that time isn't wasted (Rogelberg 131).

Going into a meeting with a servant-and-giver mindset creates space for good collaboration, engages all attendees, asks the right questions, models active listening, draws out input, and managing conflict; this promotes a good meeting experience for all (Rogelberg 134). Active facilitation promotes positivity through various forms of activities or means of engagement. Active facilitation is essential to setting the tone of the meeting, making attendees feel comfortable and safe to share ideas,

and keeping attendees engaged. Lastly, facilitators should periodically evaluate their meetings to ensure ongoing success. Evaluating meetings involves surveying attendees, soliciting feedback and reflection (Rogelberg 137). In the end, the book strives to encourage leadership to try new techniques and experiment with ways to improve meetings. Better meetings enable organizations to build a better culture, stay innovative, and succeed (Rogelberg 138).

### **VISUAL ANALYSIS:**

In the resources section of Rogelberg's website ([stevenrogelberg.com](http://stevenrogelberg.com)), he displays an image that depicts a collection of tips for having successful meetings using typography, illustration, and graphics (fig.1). The audience for this graphic is meeting facilitators. It's meant to be a quick visual resource for conducting successful meetings.

### **INTERRELATION BETWEEN THE IMAGE, THE FORM, OR OBJECT, AND THE ACCOMPANYING TEXT:**

The primary graphic depicts a small, diverse group of people having a meeting, indicating that content revolves around meetings. Four lightning bolts pointed at this grouping put a greater emphasis on what's taking place around this table. Many of the tips are accompanied by a graphical element that represents what's being said. For example, a tip about having an agenda is accompanied by a paper with a checklist.



▲ Fig. 1 | [stevenrogelberg.com](http://stevenrogelberg.com) | USED WITH PERMISSION

A clock accompanies a tip about setting a start and end time with legs in motion. Every tip on this graphic coexists with its graphic to represent it.

### COMPOSITIONAL INTERPRETATION:

The image consists of content stating how to make a meeting more successful, accompanied by graphics that depict the text. The colors used in this graphic are red, blue, black, brown, white, and yellow. The use of the colors is very random. There doesn't seem to be a consistent theme with the use of colors. The image is flat with no indication of lighting. The arrangement of the elements is both horizontal and vertical; there is no clear hierarchy of information other than the title and the subtitle. The designed image is covered in graphics and text, which gives the sense of chaos and disruption. The use of

illustration-type graphics gives the feeling of playfulness. While the content might be serious and important, the graphics elude a less serious side.

### CONTENT ANALYSIS:

The content is brief, concise, and easy to understand and digest. While each tip is elaborated upon in Rogelberg's book, viewers can consume the content and get the gist of what they need to do to run a better meeting.

### SEMIOTICS AND ICONOGRAPHY:

The designer uses graphical elements like lightning rods, icons, and graphics to represent the text visually. The components help to communicate and reinforce the message. The yellow lightning bolts pointing to the centerpiece of the image, a diverse group of meeting having a

meeting, clearly depicting the theme of the graphic. A wavy blue graphic is used to house the subtitle, A Deep Dive into the Science of Effective Meetings. This blue graphic extends the entire width of the graphic, indicating that everything under it represents the “deep dive.” A lot is going on underneath the ocean, and a lot is going on underneath this wavy blue graphic. Other graphical symbols are used to reinforce the message. For example, a red arrow moving upward depicts progression toward better meetings. A light bulb with wings and another one in the shape of a net represents collecting insights. A clock and hourglass are used to depict time. Regardless of the execution, illustrations, icons, and graphics are used to reinforce the overarching message.

### **AESTHETIC CHOICES:**

There isn't any natural defined balance to this piece other than the placement of all the content underneath the blue wavy graphic. Some of the content is housed in frames which might lead the audience to believe the content is more important, but there is no indication that it is true.

There is no theme or consistency regarding shape. Some icons are organic and others geometric. The colors used don't seem to have any real rhyme or reason. The use of color doesn't indicate the hierarchy of information; however, color depicts diversity. Movement is achieved using the wavy blue graphic and the lightning

bolts; however, neither indicates anything important. The only pattern is that the content is placed around or in this meeting, suggesting an important factor to the meeting. There doesn't seem to be any intentionality around scale or the ratio of graphics to text and vice versa. The visual weight of the objects and the text also doesn't seem to have any variance. Everything is visually heavy, which doesn't allow the viewer to consume the image in any organized fashion. Aesthetically the image is overwhelming, hard on the eyes, and doesn't effectively convey the message. The solution should not evoke feelings of chaos, wasted time, unproductivity, frustration, and disruption. This image is an example of what not to do. It's overloaded with text and visuals. The visual should also speak to the intelligence of your audience. This particular design looks like it was designed for a third-grade class. The design doesn't ask to be taken seriously. The design does speak to the fact that meetings are a problem. If the intent was to design this image around the problem and not the solution, it was successfully done.

### **CASE STUDY:**

*“Shocking Meeting Statistics of 2020” by Chang Chen*

Chang Chen is the Head of Growth and Marketing at Otter.ai is an online company that creates technologies and products that make information accessible and

actionable. Essentially their goal is to help build individual and team performance within any industry. The motivation for the project was to produce a content marketing piece to generate interest and potential leads for their company. On a less granular level, the research aims to bring awareness to these shocking statistics and inspire change in organizational meeting practices worldwide. Time and money. This article shows the amount of time and money wasted in unproductive meetings. Employees have to take time away from their work productivity to attend and prepare for meetings. Considering all the salaries represented in these meetings, how much do these meetings cost an organization. This article walks through meeting statistics that help support making sure meetings run more productively. The statistic topics range from cost related to time, money, and productivity to the cost of human capital. The statistics help establish a basis for the proposed solution; however, they are scattered and have some gaping holes. For example, statistics around facilitators versus attendees' reactions to meetings would help hone in on the real issues. Some employees spend their entire career attending meetings and never once facilitate one. Their active participation is just as meaningful as the preparation done by the facilitator. These surveys were performed within the confines of the United States, which presents another challenge. Getting a global perspective is a big

challenge but an important one to solving a global problem among organizations. The outcome of Chang's project is a comprehensive and reliable list of meeting statistics that establish a need for a solution that works for most organizations. Her research focuses on the most significant issues. It addresses what is working, what employees value, and what helps them stay productive. 11 million meetings a day, 55 million a week, and 220 million meetings per month reinforce a need to ensure these meetings are productive (Attentiv). Those numbers represent hundreds of thousands of hours and even more money against the organization's bottom line. 15% of an organization's time is spent in meetings, and that number has increased substantially since 2008 (The Muse). It is estimated that \$37 billion a year in salary is spent in meetings (The Muse). Most employees spend 62 meetings per month, averaging an estimated 31 wasted hours (ReadyTalk). 91% of employees multitask during meetings (The Muse). The statistic continues to be astonishing. They are again reinforcing the need for change, the need for a practical and applicable solution. Some of the statistics point to particular reasons for unproductivity which will aid in informing the proposed solution. For example, 63% percent of meetings are conducted without an agenda, indicating a need for one (Attentiv). Some of the most common complaints are meetings are inconclusive, have poor preparation, are

disorganized, individuals dominate, and produce no published results (Attentiv).

### **VISUAL ANALYSIS:**

Two visuals associated with Chen’s research will be the foundation for this analysis; “Time Spent in Meeting Statistics,” (fig.2) designed and published by Otter. ai, and “The Ugly Truth About Meetings,” published by The Muse and design by Fuze “The Time Spent in Meeting Statistics” image displays a series of statistics around meetings using shapes and icons. The



▲ Fig. 2 | <https://blog.otter.ai/meeting-statistics/>

content is laid out in linear infographic format. The audience is meeting facilitators and attendees. The image is used on a website (<https://blog.otter.ai/meeting-statistics/>) to support and visually communicate the content.

### **INTERRELATION BETWEEN THE IMAGE, THE FORM, OR OBJECT, AND THE ACCOMPANYING TEXT:**

This image use icons, vector graphics, and shapes to highlight the most pertinent information. The imagery used is meant to be a visual representation of the content or to highlight parts of the content. For example, a vector graphic of a briefcase is used to represent middle managers. Blue circles are used to highlight the number of meetings in a day, week, and month. A pie chart is used to emphasize a percentage. Each section of content has a corresponding graphic to either help highlight or support it.

### **COMPOSITIONAL INTERPRETATION:**

This image consists of surprising stats and information around meetings. The colors used are monotone, utilizing a shade of blue. The overarching content is asymmetrical and arranged vertically, with the sub-content arranged horizontally. There is a purposeful arrangement of the elements creating a very clean design. The scale of the images is a little disproportionate as some graphics are larger than others with no understood

purpose. The design displays a good use of negative space, allowing the content and graphics to be viewed and understood easily. Contrasting colors highlight some aspects of the content but don't have many purposes beyond that.

### **CONTENT ANALYSIS:**

There seems to be a systemic flow of information, starting with the foundational and most crucial information- the number of meetings per day, week, and month. After that, it moves into stats about the organization and upper management and then moves into employee stats. The article starts with the most impactful statistics and moves to the least impactful.

### **SEMIOTICS & ICONOGRAPHY:**

The designer uses both semiotics and iconography to represent the content and enhance or support the content visually. The use of semiotics and iconography aids in communicating and reinforcing the message. The design is simple and uses a minimal amount of graphics. Colored circles are used to encompass and draw attention to the three most compelling stats. The design utilizes vector graphics like a briefcase, people around a meeting table, calendar, and office space to support the content but not as much to interact with the content. There is a bit of a disconnection between images and content in this particular graphic. At first,

the graphics interact with the content, and towards the end, the graphics are separate from the content.

### **AESTHETIC CHOICES:**

The balance in this design feels stable as all the content and graphics are arranged asymmetrically. The content is arranged top to bottom and left to right, creating a stable and natural movement. It's easy to work your way down through the information in a systematic way. The emphasis in this design is the color. There isn't any graphic or section that draws the eye, but rather the color draws the eye. Aside from the color, the use of shapes and graphics creates emphasis on the content it houses. The only main pattern that stands out is the use of darker blue to emphasize key points. However, there doesn't seem to be consistent with that. Proportionally the design feels a little off. The images in the center of the design (pie chart & briefcase) are larger than the rest. The icons along the left are small yet busy, so a tad hard to understand at first glance. Due to the use of a one-color hue, there isn't much variety in this image. While it's clean with a good amount of white space, it's not very interesting. There almost seems to be too much content and too many icons. They don't balance each other well. Overall, the piece is unified and feels like one cohesive image. The aesthetics for this solution work well for what it's trying to achieve. It's clean, easy to read, not overwhelming,

digestible, and understandable. However, the text is a little small in some places, and it's kind of plain and uninteresting. It doesn't generate excitement.

### **VISUAL ANALYSIS:**

“The Ugly Truth About Meetings” (fig.3) image displays a series of statistics around meetings using shapes and icons. The content is laid out in linear infographic format. The audience for this graphic is also meeting facilitators and attendees. This image is used on a website (themuse.com/advice/how-much-time-do-wespend-in-meetings) as a means of supporting and visually communicating the written content.

### **INTERRELATION BETWEEN THE IMAGE, THE FORM, OR OBJECT, AND THE ACCOMPANYING TEXT:**

Vector graphics, different sizes, and font colors are primarily used to support and emphasize the content visually. The vector graphics are a depiction or symbol of the content. For example, an image of a shredder is used to depict wasting money. A graphic of a hand with several watches on it is used to represent a lot of time. The bold and colored font stands on its own and is not presented in the graphics. The graphics represent the overarching idea or theme of that particular section. For example, one of the sections entitled, Multitasking, is a graphic of a man with multiple arms doing several different things. The designer



▲ Fig. 3 | <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/ugly-truth-about-meetings-infographic>

uses graphics to represent the main idea and uses color and bold text to emphasize numbers or other important information.

### **COMPOSITIONAL INTERPRETATION:**

The content and visuals support and depict the overarching topic. The design is asymmetric with a vertical flow of information. The content is broken up into subsections, with each subsection's content laid out horizontally. The blue gradient

guiding the eye in the direction of the background color assists with content. The designer uses deep, rich, and vivid colors that thoroughly saturate the design. The images used are playful, fun, and expressive, which eases any sense of anxiety about the topic in general.

### **CONTENT ANALYSIS:**

The content of this image also flows systematically and is broken up into sections. It starts with the most surprising information around time and money wasted in meetings beginning with the organization and then moving to management and employees. Next, the article talks about productivity wasted in meetings, which leads to the sections discussing what causes unproductively. After the infographic addresses the problem, the content then proceeds to provide some solutions. Essentially the content moves from problem to solution.

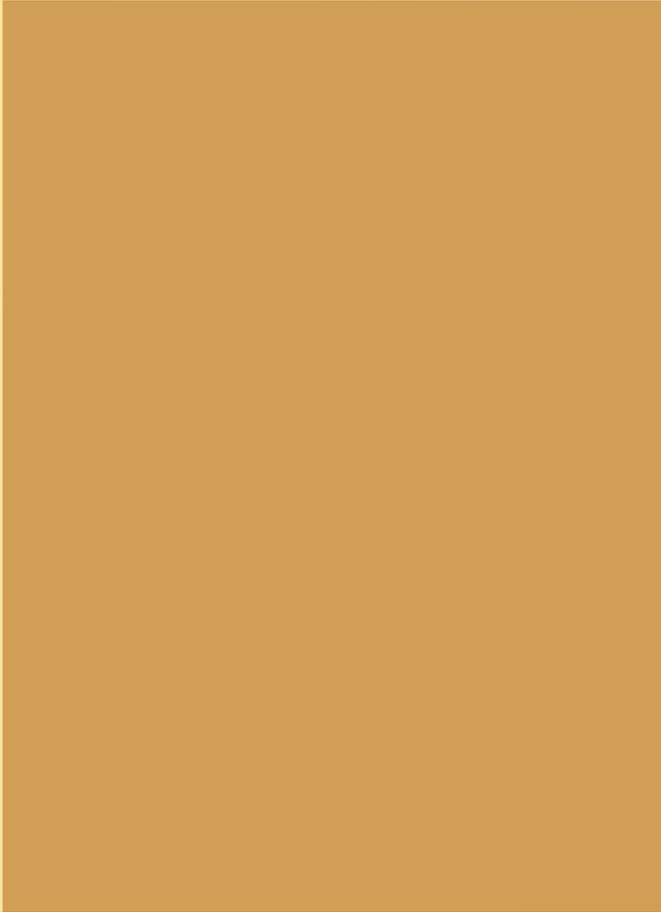
### **SEMIOTICS & ICONOGRAPHY:**

The designer uses both semiotics and iconography to represent the content and enhance or support the content visually— this aids in communicating and reinforcing the message. The vector graphic at the top of the image is the focal point of the design. The graphic of the individuals around a meeting table, seemingly distracted, lays the foundation for the rest of the design. The designer continues to use full-color



▲ Fig. 3 | <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/ugly-truth-about-meetings-infographic>

vector images to emphasize the content. They also use color and text size to bring attention to important content. The vector graphics are fun and somewhat amusing. For example, a man with several arms doing several different things represents busyness and multitasking. A spotlight shining on a stat depicts a bit of information that needs a light shined on it. A clipboard is use to display a



▲ Fig. 3 | <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/ugly-truth-about-meetings-infographic>

checklist of items that are important to have better meetings. A graphic of the United States indicates the boundaries of the statistics.

### **AESTHETIC CHOICES:**

The balance of this design is similar to the last; it feels stable and organized. The eye naturally moves from one section to the next. The content is arranged top to bottom and left to right. This design utilizes full colors, which makes it interesting to look at it. While the design moves vertically, the focal point of the design is the top image of the people sitting around the meeting table. It immediately lets the

viewer know the topic of the design. This design emphasizes the content with the use of color at the beginning, but that fades further down in the design when the designer predominantly uses navy blue. The background color makes the text harder to read, although the color is visually appealing. The orange text emphasizes those particular statements, drawing your eye directly to those stats or numbers. Margins are good, but the layout differs per section, making the design feel a little chaotic. The designer repeatedly uses a banner header for each section throughout the design to indicate the start of new content. The design feels cohesive until the designer introduces the dark blue and yellow at the end. The aesthetics for this solution is a little more interesting. It's not as clean, but it doesn't provoke interest and a desire to read. The font is small in places and not as legible due to the color of the background. This particular design also houses a lot of content, almost too much. As you work down through the design, the viewer might lose interest along the way. The use of graphics at the beginning is clever and fun, but there isn't consistency throughout. Overall, it's a fun design and helps address meeting challenges in a more lighthearted way. The design just lacks fluidity and consistency throughout.

## **CASE STUDY:**

*“Visual Meetings How Graphics, Sticky Notes, & Idea Mapping Can Transform Group Productivity” by David Sibbet*

The purpose of this book is to show how visual language and visual listening can be a hopeful response to our ability to work together and be open to our differences. Sharing tools that not only make effective meetings possible but deliver extraordinary results is the author’s primary goal. The premise of this book is that people who work visually have better ideas are committed to producing results and make better decisions. The book is about how to create memorable meetings that produce these results. The book introduces people to various communication methods that include graphic recording, visual planning, story-boarding, graphic templates, idea mapping, and much more. It catalyzes collaboration and breakthrough thinking in groups large and small. Sibbet’s theory of how graphics, sticky notes, and idea mapping can transform meetings is that it doesn’t necessarily come naturally. This type of interaction, meeting design, and means of collaboration might come naturally to some but must be learned and embraced by others. It can also be a challenge for meeting facilitators who don’t typically operate in a visual climate. This type of facilitation would be a big learning curve

for a business executive. Sibbet’s solution is inspiring and valuable but isn’t exactly practical. The proposed solution for this thesis will include some of Sibbet’s more practical and useful ideas that anyone can implement. Sibbet spent 38 years running successful meetings all over the world. His book is an accumulation of his experience and research into what makes meetings great. Not only does he provide resources for creating better meetings, but he’s responding to the mounting changes happening in society today. Changes include more pressure at work and in the classroom, the complexity of change in the economy, running an organization leaner with less time for real dialogue and engagement, and people seeming to be more polarized and disconnected (Sibbet xi). Sibbet’s solutions are a direct response to some of the changes taking place within organizations and society. The outcome of this book is powerful tools for effective meetings. Alan Briskin, the author of Fetzer Institutes Collective Wisdom Initiative, believes that our ability to work together is undermined by the simple fact that the problems we are facing are too complex. Hence, people retreat and stop listening and engaging (Sibbet xii). Meetings are often called to find a solution to a problem or challenge within the workplace. If people are unequipped or uninspired to solve a problem, then the facilitator is left with a group of disengaged people.

The complexity of the problem might never change, but how groups address the problem, dialogue the problem, and confront the problem will make all the difference. Sibbet proposes that visual language and visual listening can be a viable response to resolve confusion around complex problems that arise at work and in meetings. His outcome and the proposed solution are essentially the same, with a more simplistic and practical approach. Meetings are typically drudgery. Sibbet introduces the idea of having fun. Having fun will be a key foundational piece to the proposed solution. Employees who look forward to meetings are more likely to listen and engage. Employees will look forward to attending meetings if they know they will enjoy it. Sibbet provides resources like doodling, mind mapping, spontaneous writing, utilizing graphic metaphors, and charts are all fascinating ideas and will aid in developing the solution.

#### **VISUAL ANALYSIS:**

The book “Visuals Meetings” has multiple illustrations scattered throughout the book to depict the topics being discussed (fig.4). The author can’t very well support the value of visuals being used in a meeting without including them in his book. The audience for this book is meeting facilitators and attendees. The supporting illustrations are used within the confines of this book. They do not stand on their own. The illustrations are just meant to reinforce

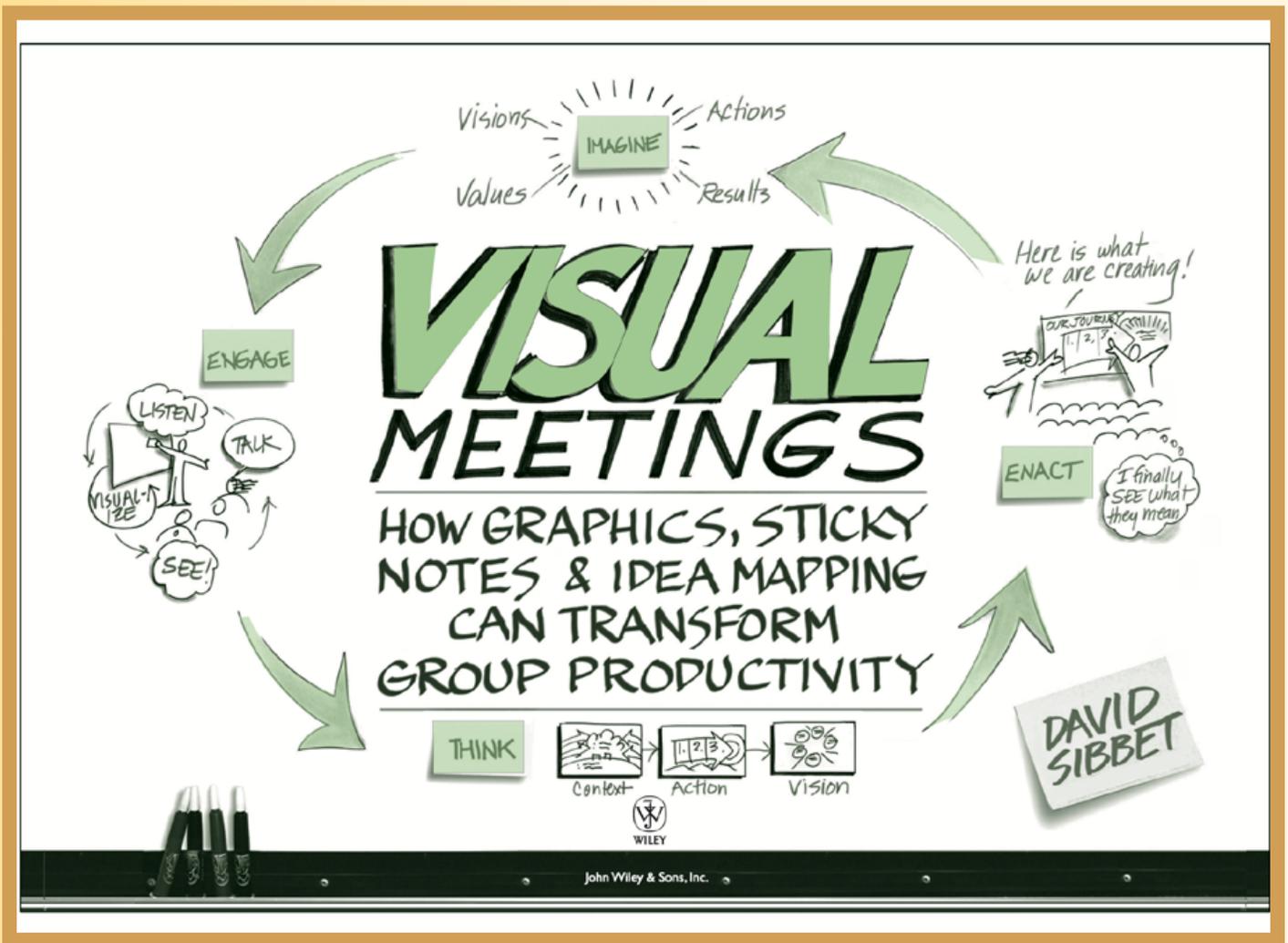
and support the message that using visuals can transform productivity.

#### **INTERRELATION BETWEEN THE IMAGE, THE FORM, OR OBJECT, AND THE ACCOMPANYING TEXT:**

The designer uses sticky notes to highlight the central message of each chapter, thus reinforcing the use of sticky notes as a critical element in meetings. The style of the imagery is a hand-drawn illustration, which helps make this complex idea feel attainable or doable. The designer uses symbols like arrows and actions lines when communicating processes, order, and movement in a specific direction. Speech and thought bubbles indicate verbal communication or the need to think or ponder on something. Intentional, sloppy drawings are used to support the idea that the visuals you create in meetings don’t have to be perfect. Charts, graphs, and maps are used to affirm the notion that meetings take people on a mental journey, and visuals help make that process successful.

#### **COMPOSITIONAL INTERPRETATION:**

The images are all very monotone consisting of shades of black and green. Sometimes the green is used to emphasize something, and sometimes it’s not used at all. Again, most of the images are hand-drawn illustrations with the occasional image thrown in. It feels very much like you are traveling through someone’s sketchbook. The designer uses literal design (directional arrows) to position the flow of the design. The viewer doesn’t



▲ Fig. 4 | [davidsibbet.com](http://davidsibbet.com) | USED WITH PERMISSION

need to interpret the design because the designer uses literal illustrations. The simplicity of the designs and the spatial orientation all lend themselves to easy and understandable viewing.

### CONTENT ANALYSIS:

The content of the designs is simple, minimal, and easily digested. Each image grouping consists of a few simple illustrations that portray an easily understood concept or message. Some images are supported by text that supports the overarching illustration in a more significant way. In some cases, the illustrations tell their own story. If

the copy were removed, the viewer would probably still get the general idea of what the author is trying to communicate. In some cases, the designer put real images of people in with the illustrations; this helps the viewer visualize themselves executing the idea.

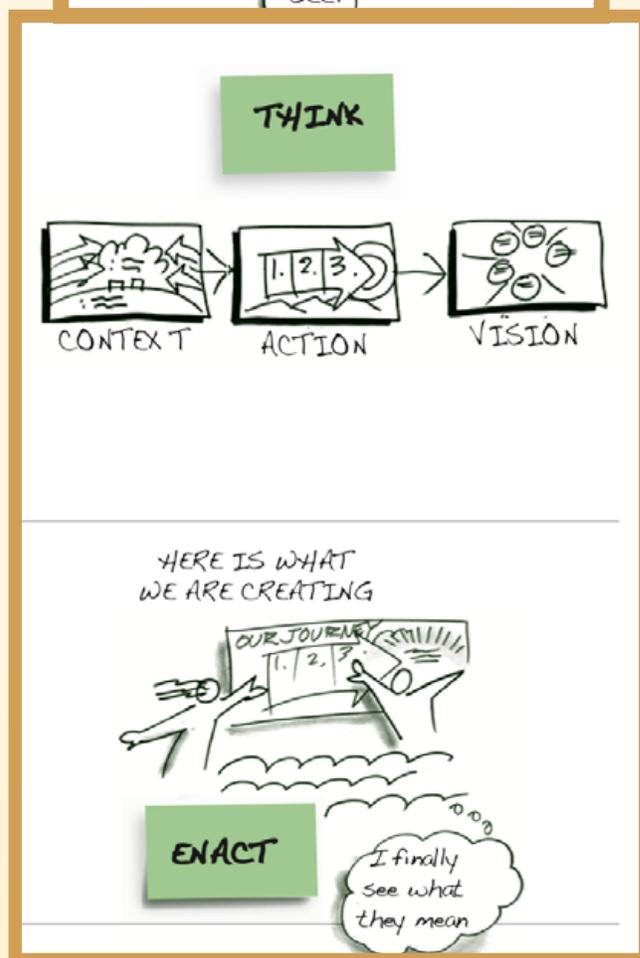
### SEMIOTICS & ICONOGRAPHY:

The designer uses illustrated semiotics and iconography to emphasize a critical point, represent copy, enhance a part of the message, or show movement. For example, action lines are often used to emphasize something and show movement or emotion. Ideographs

are used to support a concept or idea. For example, a light bulb represents a bright idea, a heart is used to express love, and a lightning rod is used to describe the conflict.

### AESTHETIC CHOICES:

Because the designs feel more like a sketchbook implying fun and playfulness, I don't believe the designer considered proper aesthetics. The haphazard, unorganized and unbalance drawings are what makes the design work. Balance is appropriately a little all over the place. The color keeps the design simple and aids in the effort to minimize chaos. Adding color to these sketches would have made the designs overwhelming and overstimulating. The pattern throughout is sketchbook illustrations with the occasional photographic image. There isn't any discernible pattern or consistency in each illustration, which makes them unique and fun. An illustrated person on one page won't look the same on the next page or the following 20 pages. The designer uses just the correct number of illustrations to keep the audience's attention and their interest. The simplicity of the design balances the complexity of the messaging. The content is heavy in places, and using simple illustrations helps the audience believe this is attainable. The visual solution for the content pairs well together. It's just enough to keep the audience interested, aid in understanding the text and telling a story all on its own.



▲ Fig. 4 | [davidsibbet.com](http://davidsibbet.com) | USED WITH PERMISSION

# MEETING MADNESS

## CHAPTER 3: VISUAL PROCESS



# CHAPTER 3

## VISUAL PROCESS

The proposed solution is a visual and interactive guide for organizing and running highly effective and productive meetings. This visual guide will walk meeting facilitators through basic principles to innovative ways to cultivate creativity and produce results. There are various articles and resources scattered across the web for how to run meetings, but no comprehensive guide that combines all the fundamental elements and new, fresh ideas. The objectives of this guide are to engage, excite and equip facilitators with the tools they need to stop the meeting madness. The other part of this solution is a similar attendee guide that walks attendees through being a positive contributor to meeting success. Not many, if any, resources exist for successfully participating in meetings. A facilitator can follow all the proper steps, and if attendees don't come prepared to participate, the meeting will fail. Participation is just as meaningful as preparation. This guide aims to inspire, invoke, and give attendees the tools they need to stop meeting madness.

### DESIGN PROCESS

#### STEP 1: RESEARCH

**Branding.** The purpose of starting with brand development is to make the

product legitimate. The product needs an identity so consumers can recognize, engaged with, and understand what's being offered. The overarching purpose is to make this product more authoritative in the marketplace. If the product has a consistent identity, it develops credibility among its competitors over a period of time. A brand is even more critical concerning this particular solution because the objective is to design a creative solution for better meetings. With that comes the expectation that the package is also well designed and branded. Although brand goes much deeper than just aesthetics, for this step in the process, I will focus on visual identity. Visual identity consists of name, logo, colors, typography, imagery, and creative design. To begin the branding process, I started by researching what other meeting books and guides looked like. See the visual analysis of some of that research in Chapter 2. In addition to that research, I also did a quick visual analysis of two additional sources.

*(1) Effective Meetings Toolkit | By: University of Cambridge (fig.5)*

#### OVERVIEW:

The University of Cambridge put together a toolkit of resources to help guide people



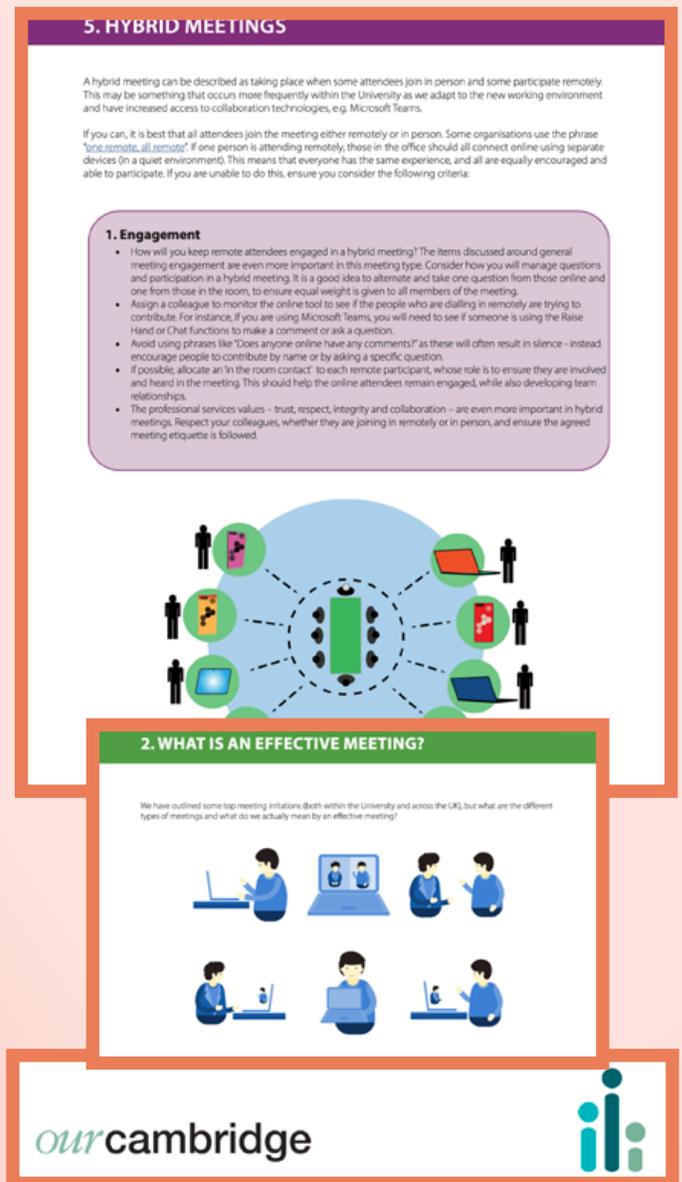
▲ Fig. 5 | ourcambridge.admin.cam.ac.uk | USED WITH PERMISSION

through properly preparing, running, and concluding meetings. The goal of their toolkit is to provide resources that support delivery of more effective and efficient meetings.

**BRIEF VISUAL ANALYSIS:**

The imagery used in this toolkit consists of vector graphics, graphs, icons, and shapes. While the toolkit utilizes full color, the theme is predominantly teal, green, orange, and purple. Graphics are used to support the content, shapes are used to highlight and separate the content, and color is used to highlight important content and guide the user through the toolkit. The type of vectors used is inconsistent throughout the document. In some parts, they use full-color block

illustrations, and in other parts, they use duo-tone shapes and icons. The theme is inconsistent and makes the guide feel disjointed. The idea is good, but the execution is lacking as there is no rhyme or reason as to where and how shapes and colors are used versus where imagery and icons are used. The guide gives the audience a glance into the brand at the beginning of the guide, but then you never see it again (illustrated below). If the user were to see this brand again, they would likely not correlate back to this toolkit.



▲ Fig. 5 | ourcambridge.admin.cam.ac.uk | USED WITH PERMISSION

## *(2) 9 Ways to Make Sure You Have Effective Meetings | By: Wrike (fig.6)*

### **OVERVIEW:**

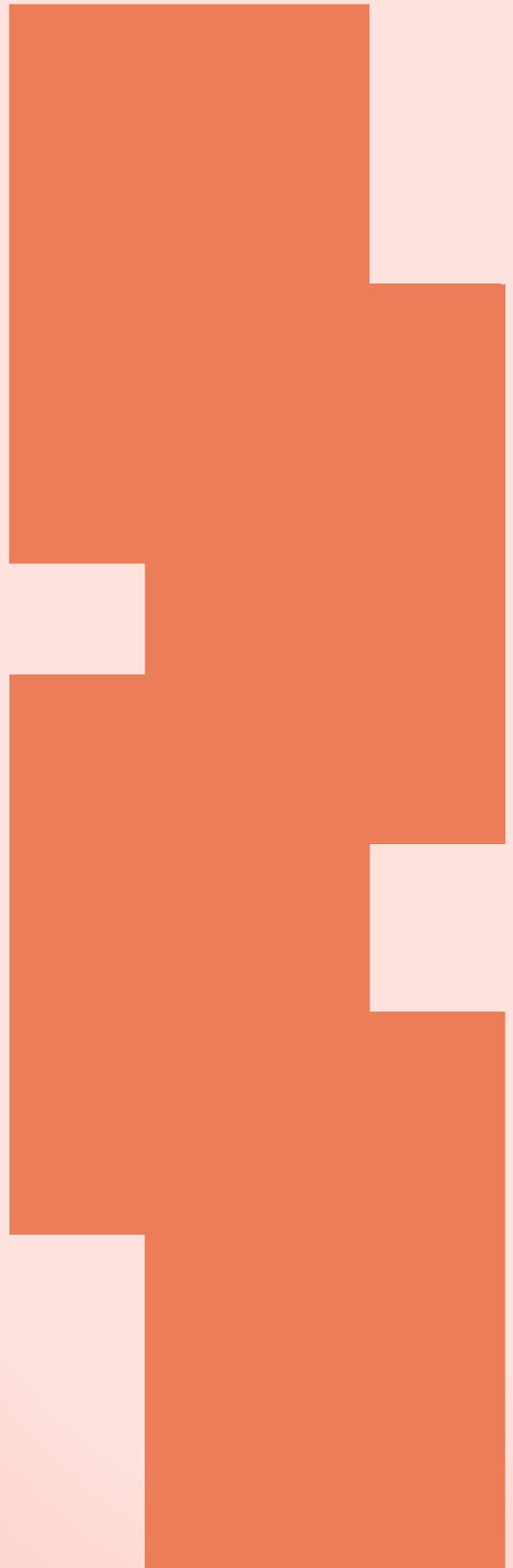
The project management platform, Wrike, put together a quick infographic on running effective meetings. The graphic walks users through 9 tips for running successful meetings. It's meant to be short and easily digestible.

### **BRIEF VISUAL ANALYSIS:**

The imagery used in this graphic consists of live-action imagery, icons, vector art, and shapes. The color scheme is hues of blue, orange, and black. They treated all their images with an overlay effect that gave them all a consistent feel. Color blocks are used to separate the content into sections making it easier to read. The imagery and icons are used to support the content and create visual interest. The simple color scheme makes this infographic attractive and easy on the eyes. The vertical layout and use of color blocks guide the viewer easily through the document. While the design is excellent, it's crowded and full of too many stimuli. There isn't enough white space which makes the graphic feel intense. The Wrike brand is nowhere to be found on this infographic, so on its own, you'd never correlate back to the company that produced it.

### **CONCLUSION:**

- (1) There aren't many designed documents or guides in the marketplace that are visually compelling or interesting.
- (2) There are an abundance of written



▲ Fig. 6 | <https://www.wrike.com/blog/run-effective-meetings-infographic/>

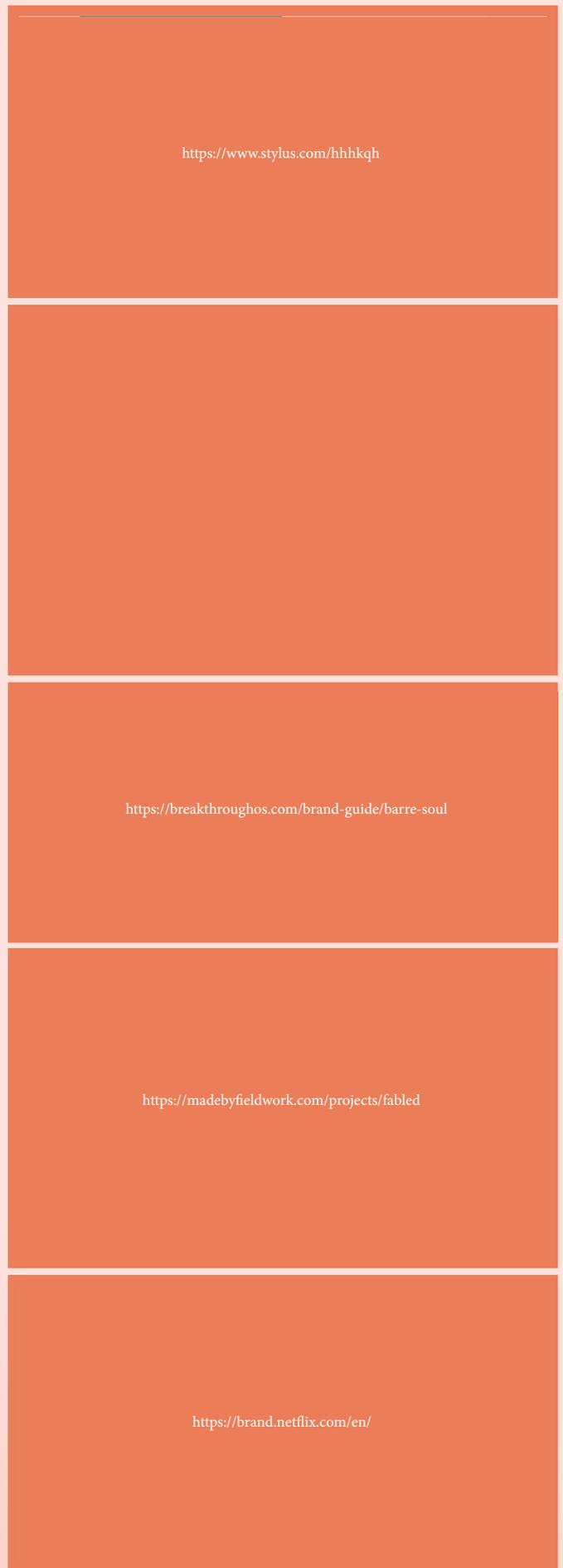
articles with minimal design and visuals that support this topic.

(3) There are several books related to this topic of running productive meetings but again, aren't supported by many, if any, visual elements.

Anyone interested in this topic will essentially have to spend hours reading up on the topic to gain some insight into running productive meetings. While the proposed solution will also require reading, it's a quick snapshot supported by visually engaging elements. The objective is to generate interest and engagement and enable quick consumption that produces outcomes. Research has also shown that there aren't any identifiable brands that produce content related to running productive meetings. Most products are disjointed and don't seem to have or belong to a credible brand. Hence the purpose of ensuring the proposed solution starts with a solid brand.

Steven Rogelberg is one of the leading experts on the science of meetings and offers numerous resources for running productive meetings. Although his research is thorough, conclusive, and valuable, he also lacks good branding. His resources are not easily linked back to him or identifiable, reinforcing the need to establish a good visual identity.

An additional part of step one was researching brands in general. The brand research consisted of easily identified brands through their mark, logo, color scheme, or messaging (fig.7).



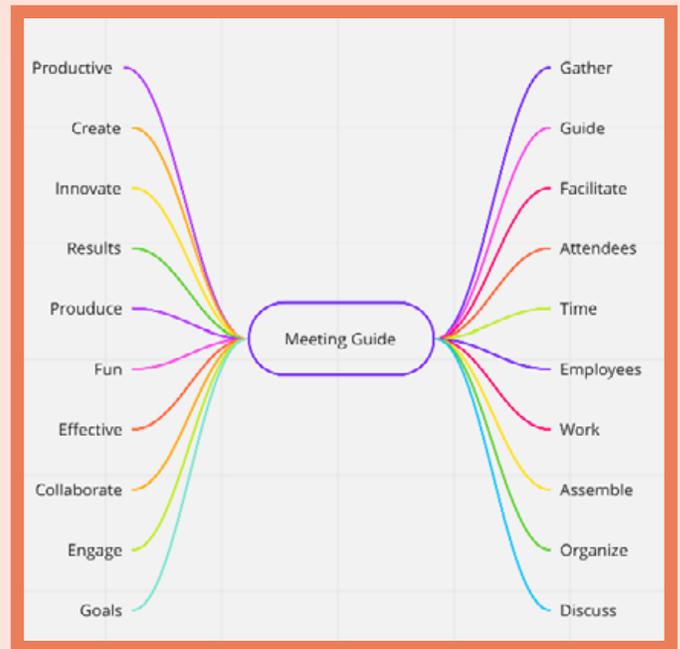
▲ Fig. 7 | Brand Research

## STEP 2: BUILD OUT THE VISUAL IDENTITY

**Visual Identity.** The first stage in building the visual identity is to come up with a name for the meeting guide. I started out by mind mapping the word “meeting” and coming up with positive words to describe the actions taking place within the meetings and then literal words associated meetings (fig.8).

After that, I utilized the online tool called, namelix to come with a name for the brand guide. Namelix allows you to enter several keywords into their search bar and it generates a list of potential names. You can widen or narrow your search by filtering the results through a series of options. From there I narrowed it down to 2 names; Tastic (fig.9) and MeetingFuel (fig.10). The tagline or slogan was developed by revisiting the objective of the meeting guide which is improving meetings. Improving meetings enhances positive culture, increases engagement and drives results.

Lastly, the color scheme was chosen at the beginning of this project when I designed my thesis proposal. I knew I wanted to utilize that same scheme for the solution. The colors are soft, have depth, are easy on the eyes, and work well all year round (fig.10).



▲ Fig. 8 | Mind mapping process

**MeetingFuel** is the name I chose to use for the meeting guides (fig. 10). The name explains the product. The audience knows immediately that the product is related to meetings. The word “fuel” evokes this idea of energy, production, reactive, movement, and power source. Meetings need to be the power source of an organization. It’s where good ideas can begin, grow, and be implemented. Organizations need their meetings to fuel innovation.

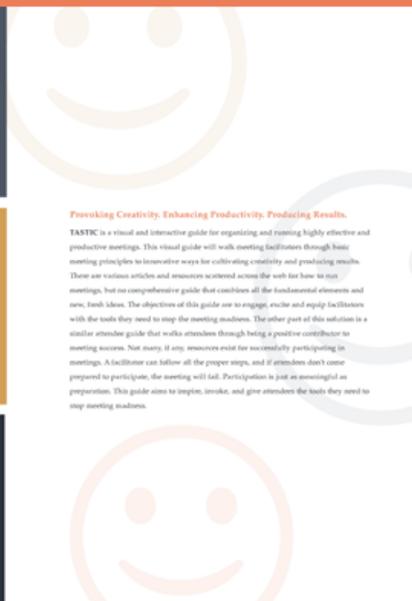
## STEP 3: CREATE CONTENT OUTLINE

**Content Outline.** The next step is building out the content outline for meeting guides. I utilized mind mapping to determine the correct steps and the order of those steps (fig.11). The content outline consists of general steps for running productive meetings. I started by listing the primary and most fundamental steps and then building

# TASTIC<sup>®</sup>

BRAND GUIDE

# TASTIC<sup>®</sup>



▲ Fig. 9 | Visual identity exploration

# MeetingFuel

BRAND GUIDE

MeetingFuel  
IGNITING PRODUCTIVITY

MeetingFuel  
IGNITING PRODUCTIVITY

MeetingFuel  
IGNITING PRODUCTIVITY

**Provoking Creativity. Enhancing Productivity. Producing Results.**

MeetingFuel is a visual and interactive guide for organizing and running highly effective and productive meetings. This visual guide will walk meeting facilitators through basic meeting principles to innovative ways for cultivating creativity and producing results. There are various articles and resources scattered across the web for how to run meetings, but no comprehensive guide that combines all the fundamental elements and new, fresh ideas. The objectives of this guide are to engage, excite and equip facilitators with the tools they need to stop the meeting madness. The other part of this solution is a similar attendee guide that walks attendees through being a positive contributor to meeting success. Not many, if any, resources exist for successfully participating in meetings. A facilitator can follow all the proper steps, and if attendees don't come prepared to participate, the meeting will fail. Participation is just as meaningful as preparation. This guide aims to inspire, involve, and give attendees the tools they need to stop meeting madness.

MeetingFuel



IGNITING PRODUCTIVITY



IGNITING PRODUCTIVITY



IGNITING PRODUCTIVITY

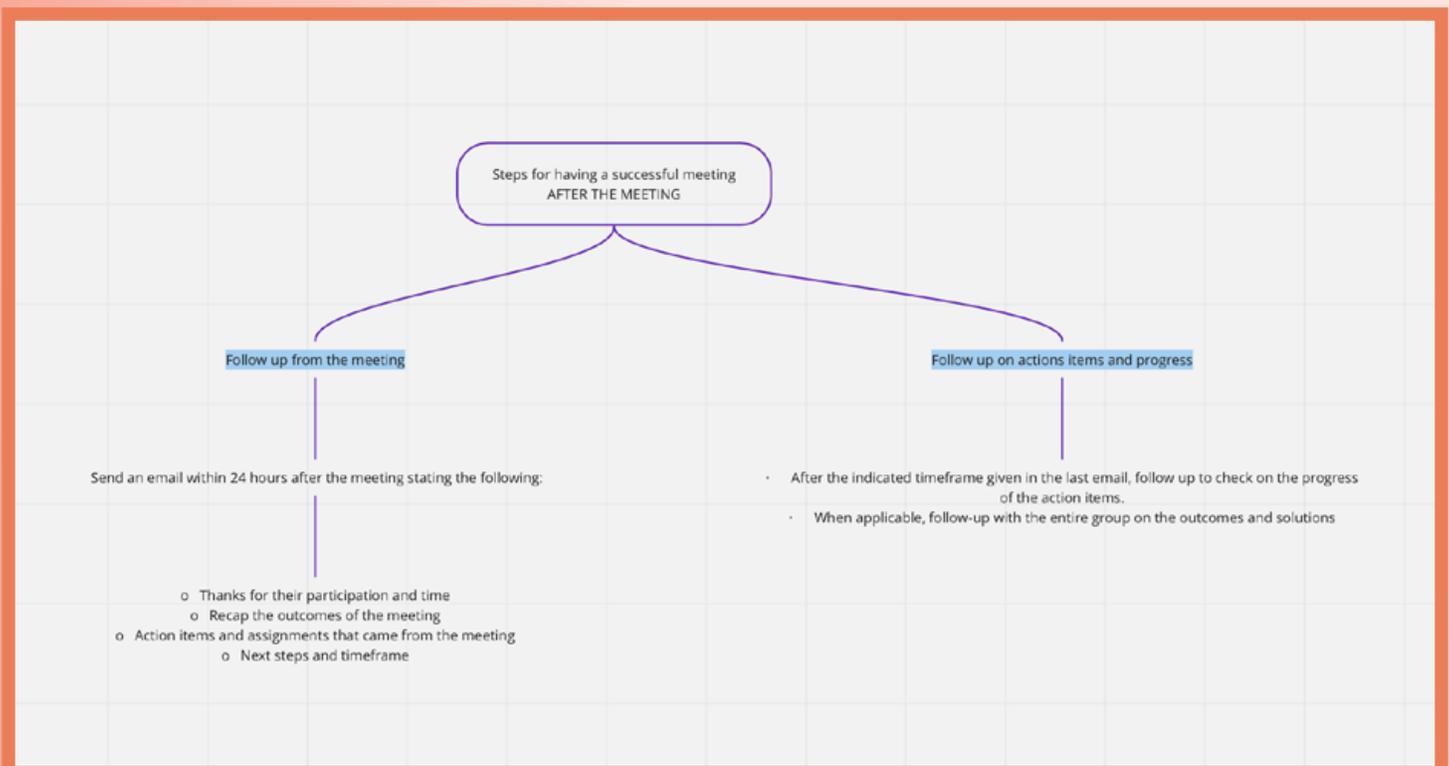
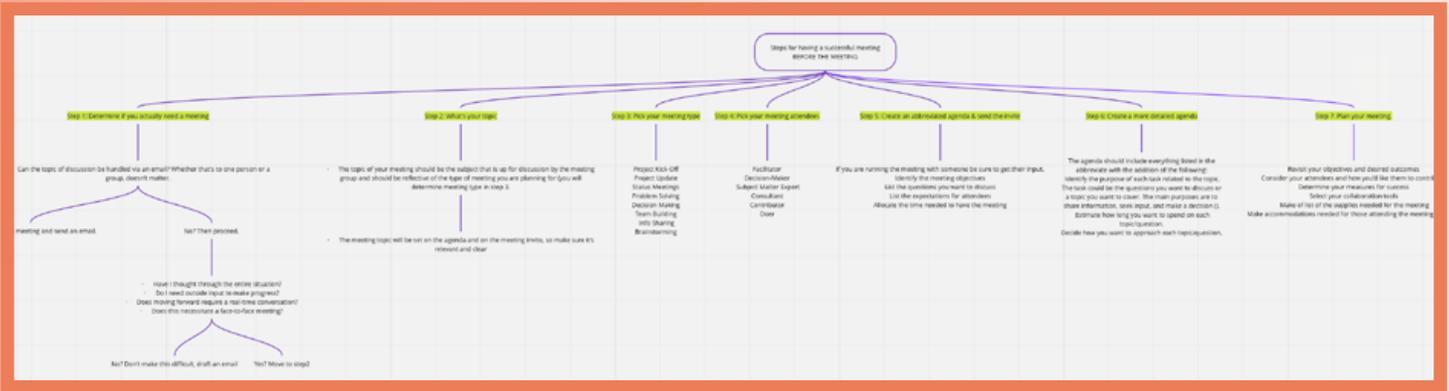


IGNITING PRODUCTIVITY



IGNITING PRODUCTIVITY

▲ Fig. 10 | Visual identity exploration



▲ Fig. 11 | Content outline development

out more complex and creative steps. Additional details surrounding each step will be expanded upon when writing out the content for the solution. Below you will find a general content outline.

### **Fundamental steps for running productive meetings:**

#### **Step 1: Do you actually need a meeting?**

- Can the topic of discussion be handled via email? Whether that's to one person or a group, it doesn't matter.
- Yes? Then skip the meeting and save everyone some time.
- No? Then proceed.
- Have I thought through the entire situation?
- Do I need outside input to make progress?
- Does moving forward require a real-time conversation?
- Does this necessitate a face-to-face meeting?
- No? Don't make this difficult; draft an email.
- Yes? The move to step 2

#### **Step 2: What's your topic?**

- The topic of your meeting should be the subject that is up for discussion by the meeting group and should be reflective of the type of meeting you are planning for (you will determine meeting type

in step 3.

- The meeting topic will be set on the agenda and the meeting invite, so make sure it's relevant and clear

#### **Step 3: Pick your meeting type. Any one meeting can fall into multiple categories.**

- Project Kick-Off
- Project Update
- Status Meetings
- Problem Solving
- Decision Making
- Team Building
- Info Sharing
- Brainstorming

#### **Step 4: Pick your meeting attendees. Any one person can fall into multiple categories.**

- Facilitator
- Decision-Maker
- Subject Matter Expert
- Consultant
- Contributor
- Doer

#### **Step 5: Create an abbreviate agenda and send the meeting invite.**

An abbreviated agenda is for the meeting invite and should be shared with your attendees. This agenda should include the following:

- List of objectives for the meeting.
- Questions you want to discuss.
- Directions for how to prepare.

- Allocate the time needed to have the meeting.
- Send the invite with the abbreviated agenda to the list of attendees that you've identified in step 4. Make sure to accommodate anyone who might be attending virtually.
  - If you are planning an on site meeting, make sure to give our remote workers plenty of advance notice.

**Step 6: Create a more detailed agenda for you to follow.** The agenda should include everything listed in the abbreviated with the addition of the following:

- Identify the purpose of each task related to the topic. The task could be the questions you want to discuss or a topic you want to cover. The main purposes are to share information, seek input, and make a decision (Indeed Editorial Team).
- Estimate how long you want to spend on each topic/question.
- Decide how you want to approach each topic/question (see creative steps for running productive meetings).

**Step 7: Plan your meeting.**

- Revisit your objectives and desired outcomes.
- Consider your attendees and how

you'd like them to contribute.

- Determine your measures for success.
- Select your collaboration tools (see creative steps for running productive meetings).
- Make of list of the supplies needed for the meeting.
- Make accommodations needed for those attending the meeting virtually.

**Step 8: Have your meeting**

- Start on time
- Recap the agenda
- Be prepared
- Follow the agenda
- Give space for people to speak and share ideas
- Watch out for the following:
  - The person who takes a long time to say a little
  - Silence
  - The weak
  - Clashing ideas
  - Suggestion-squashing
  - Finish the meeting on time

**Step 9: Follow up on the meeting**

- Send an email within 24 hours after the meeting stating the following:
  - Thanks for their participation and time
  - Recap the outcomes of the meeting

- Action items and assignments that came from the meeting
- Next steps and time frame

### **Step 10: Follow up on actions items and progress**

- After the indicated time frame given in the last email, follow up to check on the progress of the action items.
- When applicable, follow-up with the entire group on the outcomes and solutions

### **Creative steps for running productive meetings:**

- Graphic facilitation (fig.12). Graphic facilitation utilizes large-scale displays that include graphics and/or imagery to help people “see what you mean” (Sibbet 15). These graphics can be prepared ahead of time or created in real-time as the meeting progresses.
- Playing a game (fig.13). Playing games encourages interaction, inspires creativity, and can get people thinking. These games can be virtual interactive games or an unlimited option of physical games.
- Visual inspiration (fig.14). Visual inspiration can be a video that supports the meeting topic, encourages innovation, and

inspires thought. It can be a piece of art that’s used to provoke deep thinking.

- Audio inspiration (fig.14). Audio inspiration can come in the form of a podcast that motivates attendees to action or music that sets the tone for the music and creates an atmosphere.
- Team building exercises (fig.13). While similar to games, team-building exercises can consist of business simulations, ice breaker activities, celebrating team wins, and taking time to get to one another. Team building exercises can help lighten the mood, encourage interaction and create a safe place where people feel the freedom to share their ideas.



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXbUsTcHqnU&feature=emb\\_imp\\_woyt](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXbUsTcHqnU&feature=emb_imp_woyt)

▲ Fig. 12 | Graphic facilitation

## Meeting Games & Team Building Exercises

The 10 Best Icebreaker Games for Meetings (Quick & Easy)	Creative Games and Exercises to Spur Creativity in the Workplace
17 Fun (Not Cheesy) Ice Breaker Games Your Employees Will Enjoy	10 Effective Brainstorming Techniques For Teams
Brainstorming- Generating Many Radical, Creative Ideas	35 Team Building Activities Your Team Will Actually Love
Games For Fresh Thinking and Ideas	51 Best Employee Team Building Games For Improving Productivity at Work
37 Best Virtual Team Building Activities for Remote Teams in 2021	Team Building Ideas That Will Strengthen Communication and Collaboration
100 Team -Building Activities That Actually Work	38 Quick and Easy Team Building Activities Your Employees Will Love
10 Quick and Easy Team Building Activities	24 Virtual Team Building Activities Remote Teams Love in 2021

▲ Fig. 13 | Icebreakers & team building activities

## Video & Audio Inspiration

Video- YouTube	Podcast- Buzzsprout
Video- Ted Talks	Podcast- Podbean
Video- iSpot.tv	Podcast- Simplecast
Video- Vimeo	Podcast- Apple
Video- LinkedIn Learning	Podcast- Spotify
Video- EduMe	Audio- Amazon Audio Books
Video- Hubspot Academy	Audio- Learn Out Loud
Visual- Pinterest	Audio- Audible
Visual- Behance	Audio- Google Audio Books
Visual- Dribble	Audio- Librivox
Visual- 500px	Music- Pandora
Visual- Awwwards	Music- YouTube Music
Visual- Archdaily	Music- Tidal
Visual- Booooooom	Music- Spotify

▲ Fig. 14 | Audio & visual inspiration

# MEETING MADNESS

## CHAPTER 4: FINAL SOLUTION



# CHAPTER 4

## FINAL SOLUTION

The final solution for Meeting Madness is a facilitator and attendee meeting guide entitled Meeting Fuel. Meeting Fuel is a visual and interactive guide for organizing and running highly effective and productive meetings. This visual guide will walk meeting facilitators through basic meeting principles and innovative ways for cultivating creativity and producing results. There are various articles and resources scattered across the web on running meetings, but no comprehensive guide that combines all the fundamental elements and new, fresh ideas. The objectives of this guide are to engage, excite and equip facilitators with the tools, they need to stop the meeting madness. The first section of this guide focuses on the facilitator's role in planning a meeting. The second section, Creative Ideas for Fueling Productivity, has a comprehensive list of resources and ideas that can be infused into meetings to make them more productive. The last section is an attendee guide that walks them through being a positive contributor to meeting success. Not many, if any, resources exist for successfully participating in meetings. Facilitators can follow all the proper steps,

and if attendees don't come prepared to participate, the meeting will be less productive (Daum) Participation is just as meaningful as preparation. This guide aims to inspire, invoke, and give attendees the tools they need to stop meeting madness.

### **VISUAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

The first part of the process for developing the guide is to develop the branding. Without branding, the guide has no credibility. Branding is essential because it makes your product memorable and enables clients to know what to expect from the product (Dandu). The part of the brand that I developed was the visual identity which gives the product a unique and recognizable personality. Researchers from Princeton discovered that within .1 seconds, people form judgments about the likability, trustworthiness, competence, attractiveness, and aggressiveness of faces in photographs that they were shown (Willis and Todorov 595). If people form judgments almost instantaneously on photographs, then it's reasonable to think they are forming judgments on

your brand just as quickly. Visual identity is vital to the impression you have and leave on customers. The visual identity includes name, logo, colors, typography, and creative design (Crawford). Naming the guide was the first step. Without a strong name, the product has a greater chance of drowning in the red ocean. While naming isn't the only thing to keep the product afloat, it is a crucial first step in the process. The case studies research from chapter 2 show examples of several products that are highly designed but have no visual identity connected to them. If there is a name attached to it, nothing intrinsic about the name helps the audience establish validity between the content and the company that produced it. If it's difficult to find who created the product, then the audience begins to question the content's credibility and reliability. The brand must evoke trustworthiness, and a big part of that is the visual identity. I chose Meeting Fuel (Fig. 15) because (1) the word meeting indicates what the product is for, and (2) fuel indicates a power source. Meeting Fuel is the power source for putting on and attending meetings that power creativity, ignite productivity, and fuel results. Immediately the audience can recognize that the product has something to do with meetings. As we learned from the Princeton researches that immediate recognition is essential to those initial judgments.

The next part of the visual identity

process was establishing a color scheme (fig 16). Colors are important to how you want people to identify with your brand. Color evokes feelings, incites emotions, strengthens trust, and better attracts your ideal customer (Ferreira). The goal of Meeting Fuel is to be a knowledgeable, trustworthy, and reliable brand. The colors I chose for Meeting Fuel are a combination of complementary and analogous colors. Ironically analogous colors create the least amount of contrast, and complementary colors create the most significant contrast. The purpose of my color scheme is to have a balance, a high enough contrast to create interest but subtle enough, so the design isn't overwhelming. As shown in chapter 3, many visual designs are very high contrast, depicting multiple colors that make the design feel cluttered and overwhelming. I chose hues and combinations of blue, orange, and yellow. Blue is the primary color and evokes harmony, stability, peace, and trust (Ferreira). Based on my research from chapter 2, meetings can often be associated with feelings of stress and anxiety. Going with a hue of blue as the primary color was a strategic approach to combat the feelings of stress and anxiety upfront. The secondary color I chose was a combination of yellow and orange. Orange evokes creativity, adventure, enthusiasm, success, and balance (Ferreira). Yellow evokes feelings of happiness, positivity, and optimism (Ferreira). I chose to pair blue with gold for obvious reasons so that



▲ Fig. 15 | MeetingFuel visual identity

Meeting Fuel represents stability, success, optimism, and more. For the tertiary colors, I used hues of orange, yellow, and pink. These colors are meant to add dynamic and interest without overwhelming the design with too many colors, as represented in Figures 1 & 3 of chapter 2.

The last part of the visual identity development is the typography (fig. 17). The intentionality around the font was inspired by figure 1 in chapter 2. As pictured in that design, the typography is dated, hard to read, and somewhat messy. In figure 4, the designer uses the same font repeatedly and instances where the handwritten font doesn't necessarily work. Choosing the right font was a vital part of the process. For Meeting Fuel, I wanted the typography

to be invisible, meaning you don't notice it. The audience can digest the content without the typography getting in the way and becoming a distraction.

### **CONTENT & FLOW DEVELOPMENT**

When working through the content for this guide, I knew I wanted to include all the fundamental steps and wanted to encourage creative thinking. There are some basic steps that facilitators must take to put on productive meetings. However, there are more creative steps they can take to elevate the meeting even more. I separated those sections as not to confuse the step-by-step process. I wanted the facilitator to have the option of including the creative steps and not feel they had to. I chose to put the attendee guide in with the



▲ Fig. 16 | MeetingFuel color scheme

facilitator to have one cohesive document. While not all meeting attendees are facilitators, most facilitators will participate in meetings as attendees. It made sense to include them in the document for more con-text for the user. In the first few pages of the guide, you’ll notice there are places for notes. This is so the facilitator can take notes, where applicable, along the way. The PDF format allows the facilitator to save their notes and delete them quickly for organizing the next meeting. Below is an outline of the content flow:

*Final Solution 1:*

**MEETING FACILITATOR GUIDE**

- Do you actually need a meeting?
- What is your meeting topic?
- What is your meeting type?
- Who should come to the meeting?
- What is your agenda?
- Now, what’s your real agenda?
- Time to plan the meeting!
- Time to have the meeting!
- Now you have to follow up.
- Time to follow up again.

**Seravek Bold:**

**ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
12345678910**

**Lato Regular:**

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
12345678910

▲ Fig. 17 | MeetingFuel fonts

**CREATIVE IDEAS FOR FUELING PRODUCTIVITY**

- Graphic Facilitation
- Playing a game
- Visual inspiration
- Audio inspiration
- Team building activities

**ATTENDEE GUIDE**

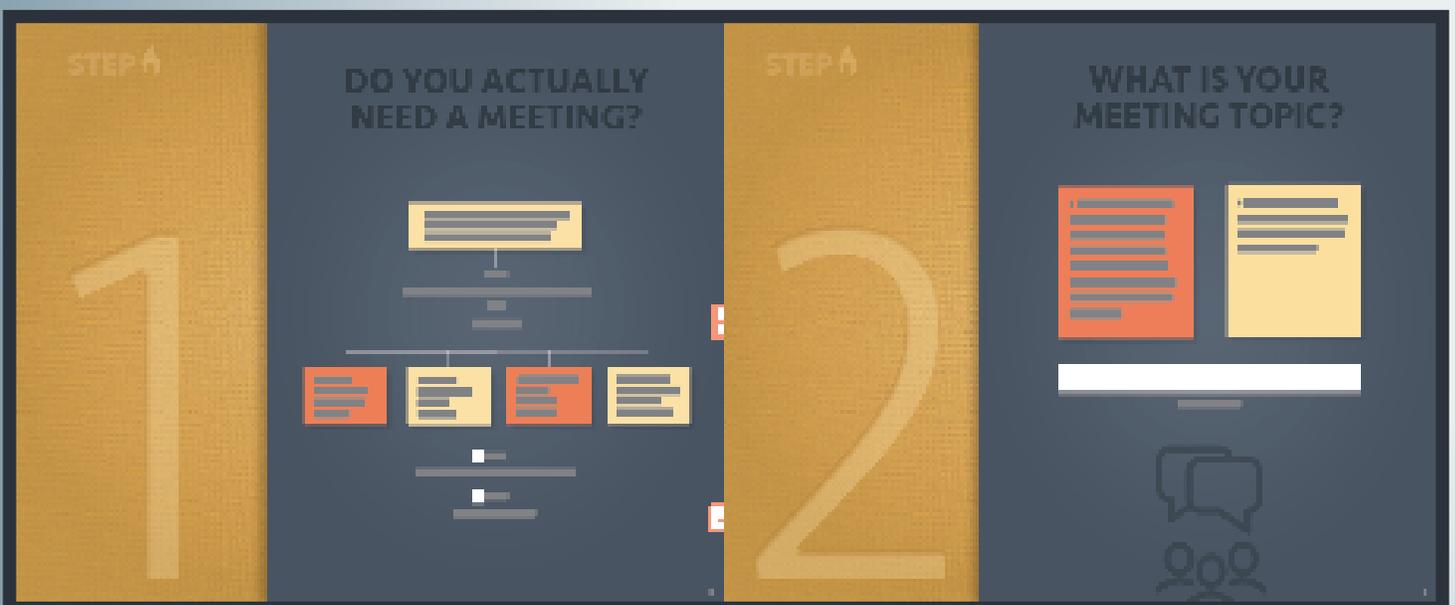
- Do I actually need to attend the meeting?
- How do I prepare for the meeting?
- How do I contribute to making this meeting productive?

- What do I do when it's over?

I chose to use numbers (fig. 18) to indicate that this is a step-by-step process. It should happen in sequential order. I used questions, exclamations, and statements to help the audience understand what's needed in each section. For example, the questions indicate active seeking of information, inspire thinking, and show the need for answers before you can move on to the next step. The exclamations indicate an arrival to an essential step of the process. They've answered all the questions, and now they are ready to execute. The exclamations evoke success, celebration but also indicate the importance of the current step. Lastly, the statements in the last steps indicate finality; it's the end, conclusion, and ex-press the final idea. For the attendee guide, I chose to use all questions. The steps' content includes statements describing the concept and conveying the process for participating productively before, during, and after the meeting.

## DESIGN AESTHETICS

When brainstorming a design solution, the most significant factor I kept in mind was function versus aesthetics. This solution needs not only to be functional but also aesthetically pleasing to the eye. There are many solutions out there in manuals, books, and blogs that walk people through best meeting practices. Not any one solution contains all the correct answers. There will likely be something that I or someone else didn't think of. That's when aesthetics become important. Users are more tolerant of minor usability issues when they find the interface aesthetically appealing (Moran). The tendency for users to perceive attractive products as more usable is called the aesthetic-usability effect (Moran). According to the top user experience specialist at Nielsen Norman Group, world leaders in research-based user experience, "People tend to believe that things that look better will work better — even if they aren't more effective



▲ Fig. 18 | Solution- facilitator guide

or efficient.” While I’m not downplaying the substances of the content, I do want to emphasize the importance of the design solution. If we look back at the case studies in chapter 2, we see applicable, relevant, and usable content, but it was paired with a solution that wasn’t aesthetically appealing.

In some instances, the design was off-putting, chaotic, lacked flow, organization, and visual appeal. The reason for the design decisions is to resolve the conflict. The conflict is the stress that meetings can bring and how to fix it. The design can either emphasize that stress or relieve it. In this solution, I wanted to create space and flow. While there is a lot to take in some instances, the hope was to develop a systematic and organized approach to ingesting and digesting the content. I wanted to create enough interest with the visuals and interactivity that people would engage. The different use of graphics and icons engages the user enough without overstimulating with too many visuals. There must be a happy medium between visual components and content; I believe the right balance keeps the user engaged.

Wasting time, which translates into wasting money, was one of the most significant issues that employees and companies faced with too many unproductive meetings. The design of this solution enables that functional usability that will help meeting

facilitators and attendees save time.

Meetings in and of themselves can take a lot of time. It’s important that preparing for those meetings doesn’t also take up too much time. The simplicity, interactivity, ease of flow, and aesthetic design enable the user to walk through this effortlessly. The resources are just one click away; the aesthetics are easy on the eye and visually appealing. The user should feel well equipped to tackle their next meeting.

*Final Solution 2:*

## **MEETING FACILITATOR CHECKLIST**

A second component to the solution is the facilitator and attendee checklist (fig. 19), a condensed version of the guide. The purpose of the checklist is to move quicker through the meeting process once the facilitator and attendee are more familiar with the guide. It carries the user vertically through a shortened checklist to quickly reference whether they have adequately planned and prepared for the meeting. When you read a book, you might often underline and highlight critical statements that you want to refer back to or try and remember. This checklist is meant to operate as a visual that highlights all the key elements of the guide. The color palette, balance, emphasis, and hierarchy are consistent with the larger guide bringing unity to the pieces and staying on brand. The rationale for the checklist is to break up the massive amount of content

that exists to provide a simplified version that's easy for users to digest and engage with. I chose to utilize the infographic format because, as depicted in chapter 2 (fig. 2 & 3) and chapter 3 (fig. 5 & 6), it's a popular form of communicating the message and designing the layout that easily guides users through the content.

**MEETING ATTENDEE**  
*Check list* ✓ ○ ○ ○ ○

- Determine if you need to attend the meeting or if someone else from your team or another team is the best fit to attend. The meeting agenda should help aid you in this process.**
  - YES
  - NO
  - If not, then who?
- Prepare for the meeting.**
  - Read the agenda & familiarize yourself with the topic.
  - Determine if the meeting is on site or virtual.
  - Complete any action items listed in the meeting invite.
- Attend the meeting and contribute.**
  - Be on time.
  - Come prepared.
  - Listen, share, and interact.
  - Bring a positive attitude.
  - Stay on topic.
  - Be concise.
  - Ask questions.
  - Don't dominate or interrupt.
  - Volunteer for assignments.
- Participate in follow up action items and communication.**
  - Complete your action items.
  - Follow up with the meeting facilitator on your action items.
  - Attend any follow up meetings.

Meeting Notes

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▲ Fig. 19 | Solution- attendee checklist

**MEETING FACILITATOR**  
*Check list* ✓ ○ ○ ○ ○

- Determine if you need a meeting or if your topic can be handled via email.**
- What is your meeting topic?**
- What kind of meeting do you need to have?**
  - Project kick-off
  - Status
  - Decision making
  - Info sharing
  - Project updates
  - Problems solving
  - Team building
- What are your meeting objectives?**
- Who should come to this meeting?**
- Write a brief agenda for your meeting invite.**
- Send out the meeting invite- be sure to include the agenda.**
- Write out a more detailed agenda.**
- Plan your meeting!**
- Have your meeting!**
- Followup with attendees- include meeting notes and actions steps.**
- Follow up with meeting attendees on action steps.**

Abbreviated Meeting Agenda  
(to be sent in the meeting invite)

Meeting Agenda  
(to be used in the meeting)

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▲ Fig. 19 | Solution- facilitator checklist

# MEETING MADNESS

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION



# CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUSION

This research shows the impact that poorly run and unproductive meetings have on employees and organizations. Employee satisfaction with meetings is directly tied to job satisfaction based on a series of meeting demands. If meeting demands can be structured to produce affect-generating responses like achieving goals, planning, recognition, and acts of management, then research shows that meeting satisfaction is more significant. When implementing and enforcing some practical guidelines around meeting preparedness, agendas, creating space for ideas and feedback, employee morale not only goes up, but meetings are deemed more productive. The research establishes the importance of some foundational practices that should be considered when having a meeting. It also shows that an even greater level of investment, the inclusion of more visually engaging elements, can produce better meeting results. When meetings are more productive, the organization wastes less money and, in turn, invests more into creativity, innovation, collaboration, and culture. The research gaps lie with the understanding that every human being

operates differently. Not everyone retains information the same way, understands ideas the same way, learns the same way, or collaborates well in groups. Given this acknowledgment, it's understood that not anyone solution will produce results that meet the needs of every person and organization. So, what is the answer?

Hundreds of books, articles, and infographics exist that provide practical steps for putting on productive meetings. The content related to meeting productivity and putting on good meetings is lengthy and cumbersome. Not as many resources exist that extend beyond practicality and give creative ideas, and no resources exist that combine practical steps with creative ideas for running more productive meetings. What is lacking is a quick guide for both meeting facilitators and attendees for putting and contributing to productive meetings. It takes both the facilitator and attendees to achieve the objectives of the meetings. Research also shows that next to nothing in existence equips meeting attendees with the tools they need to participate

in meetings. It takes both the facilitator and attendees to achieve the objectives of the meetings. Meeting Fuel, a guide for facilitators and attendees, is a practical guide that can equip employees with the tools to have meetings that accomplish goals. These guides deliver intentionality and structure. Meeting Fuel aims to be simple yet comprehensive. It's not a book with hundreds of pages to read and try to remember when putting on a meeting. It's not an overly designed infographic that delivers too much content and too many graphics, adding more stress to an already stressful situation. This guide doesn't just tell you what to do, but it enables you to do it by providing resources, interactivity, and step-by-step instructions. Meetings take time and energy to facilitate and to participate in. The main goal of this guide is to make that process easier. Meeting Fuel is a deployable guide that can be implemented in any situation in which a meeting needs to be held. These guides can change the future of meetings around the world. Let's work together to cut down our meeting time, make the meetings we do have more productive, save money, boost human capital and engage in real work that gets actual results. That's what Meeting Fuel was made for.

Meeting Fuel can significantly impact how organizations conduct meetings, increasing productivity, less wasted time and energy spent by employees, and financial and human capital savings. The following steps

would involve doing case studies in organizations on their meeting outcomes before the implementation of Meeting Fuel to establish a baseline. Additional case studies should be performed after implementing the Meeting Fuel guide and analyzed against the conclusions of the initial study. The following outcomes would need to be addressed in each study:

- Level of participation and engagement
- Meeting objective outcomes (e.g., did you get through the agenda? was the problem solved? were the questions answered?)
- Overall satisfaction of employees before and after the meeting (e.g., how did you feel before and after? were you prepared for the meeting? were you able to add value?)
- Meeting duration (e.g., was the entire time used and needed?)

There are several ways to measure the effectiveness of Meeting Fuel. One of the most significant determinants of success is listening to employees, hearing what they have to say, and seeing how they respond. After these studies, I would analyze the results to determine how the solution could be further developed.

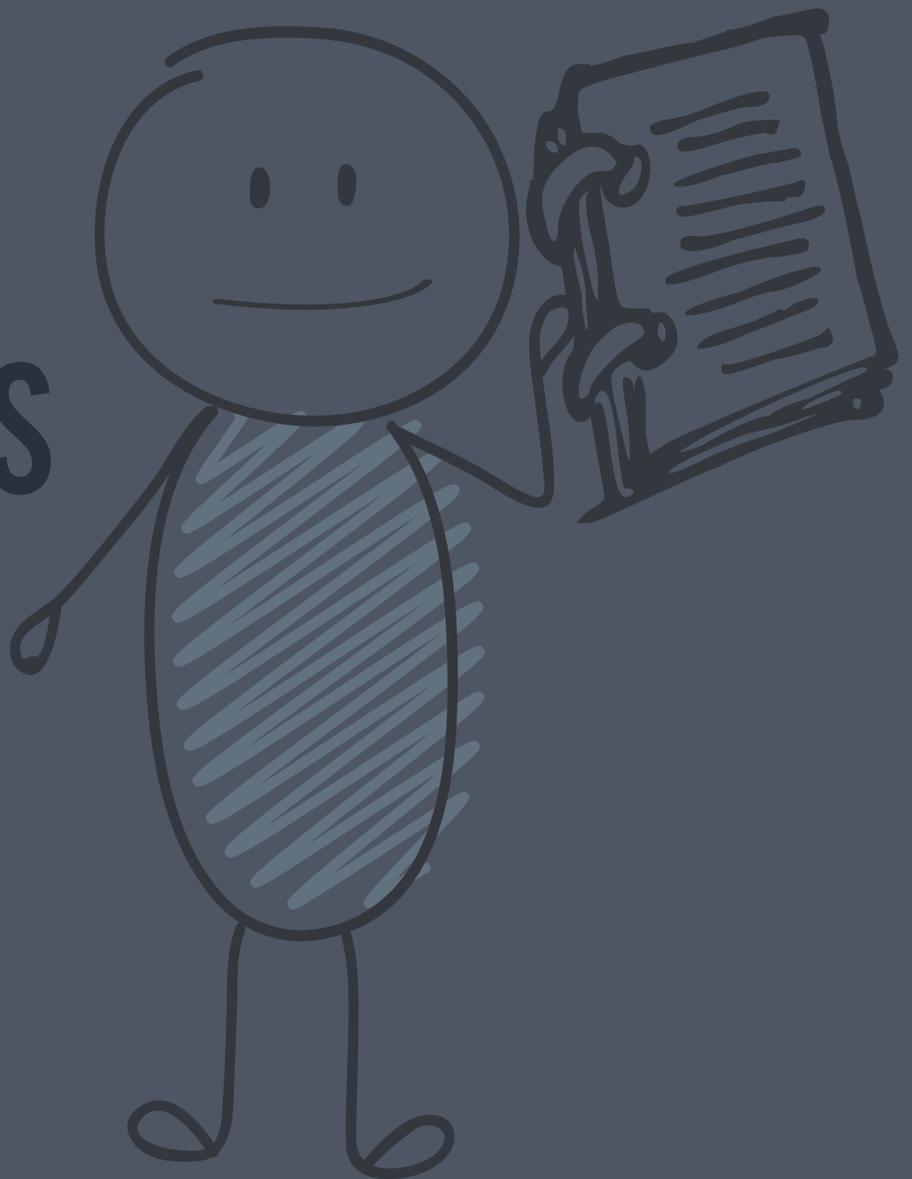
## PERSONAL GROWTH

As a designer and someone who is moved and compelled by visual design, writing is not my strong suit, especially academic writing. Pulling together all the sub-components of research can be challenging and time-consuming for someone who'd rather instead browse through visuals for creative inspiration. This particular part of the thesis project was the most difficult for me. However, it helped me slow down and focus my attention on the why and how of the solution. Rather than just creating a visual solution, it required me to think through the content of the solution. Beautiful design without meaningful content can fall flat. Writing what I was learning helped me connect the dots in my knowledge and acquire a deeper understanding of the subject. The writing process helped me organize my thinking, think reflectively, plan and sharpen my critical thinking skills. While research is common practice in designing solutions, the level of in-depth research required for this design solution was more comprehensive than I've ever done. The research stretched me to take what was on the surface and dig even deeper. It's easy to find information on any given topic. It's not as easy to find the expert opinion and reliable sources needed for a thesis. It takes some investigation skills to get the source of the knowledge. What I

learned about this level of research is how it can inform and change the solution. It helped to provide revelations that I couldn't have generated in my thinking. Solving problems through design requires looking through the user's eyes and visualizing how the solution can work, which starts with research. Beyond just that fundamental reason for the research, it also provides the means of deeper learning and uncovering knowledge and insights that can inform a more effective solution. It's important to know what exists, what's currently working and not working, so you have a framework from which to begin. Although I am the audience and certainly had enough empathy for the topic, the research allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of how meetings affect employees and organizations. I also learned that research and writing are comprehensive and complex so that the solution doesn't have to be. All the complex research should inform a solution that is practical and usable. When designing this solution, it wasn't about pursuing innovation; it was about the best course of action. Without proper research, it might be easy to miss the 'best course of action.' Meeting Fuel is a guide informed by in-depth research and designed by an extensive understanding of the problem and culture of organizational meetings. Now go light a fire under your next meeting.

# MEETING MADNESS

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