

BORING
MEETINGS

SUCK

GET **MORE** OUT OF
YOUR MEETINGS, OR GET
OUT OF MORE MEETINGS

≡ JON PETZ ≡

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*Boring Meetings Suck is dedicated
to the ladies who allow
my wonderful life to have meaning
and not suck: Stacey, Sydney,
Mackenzie, and Madison.*

*It is also dedicated to all those
like-minded souls who have ever been
in meetings that were a colossal waste
of time, energy, creativity, and money
and are willing to do something about it.*

*I further dedicate this to three special people
who have made a tremendous impact on
my personal and professional life in ways
greater than they ever will realize.*

Thank you, Larry and Cindy H., and Jeffrey D.

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(Foreword)

What's that loud sucking sound?

Oh . . . it's your MEETING.

You'd think you'd know by now.

Meetings suck.

And BORING meetings?

They suck the most.

When Jon Petz and I began collaborating on the original version of this book in 2006, we decided to poke fun at some of the worst meetings we'd ever had the misfortune to attend. We offered humorous suggestions on how to improve a bad situation—all the boring meetings you have to facilitate *and* attend.

But you weren't *listening*.

You went right on having your boring meetings, inviting even more attendees and putting them into a coma with your pointless PowerPoint slides.

What choice did Jon have?

You've forced him to create a bigger, badder, louder alarm clock to wake you up to all the time, energy, creativity, and money you're wasting by meeting in boring and banal ways.

Consider this revised and updated version of *Boring Meetings Suck* a paginated intervention—a tough-love text to help you help yourself. Jon has added chapters about using technology to reduce the number of meetings, identifying meeting types, and helping you to decide whether a meeting is even necessary in the first place. (That's right. Nobody said you *had* to hold meetings at all!)

But take it slow.

The information in this book flies in the face of how the corporate world has trained you. At first, use the *Boring Meetings Sucks* SRDs (Suckification Reduction Devices) to lower the suck level of your meetings. Once you're comfortable doing that, then strive to eliminate that sucking sound altogether.

I suggest you give this book to your boss (personally or anonymously), hand it to anyone in charge of a committee, or conveniently leave it in plain sight on the conference room table. Most important, keep your own copy close by and follow the advice within. You'll see how it can benefit meeting *attendees* just as much as meeting *facilitators*! Yes, even as an attendee, you can use these tips to suggest meeting alternatives when possible and speed up the meetings you can't avoid altogether.

So then what's that loud sucking sound?

Must be someone else's meeting . . .

—**Don The Idea Guy Snyder**

www.dontheideaguy.com

Agenda Item 1

Boring Meetings Suck . . . so Why Do We Have 'Em?

Why do so many meetings have to suck . . .

So badly?

So consistently?

How many millions upon millions of people are wondering every day: *Why* am I stuck in this meeting? I have far better things to do than listen to people put in their two cents several times over. And how on earth do I get out of here?

They're also asking—

- Why was I even invited?
- Why is this presenter *reading* PowerPoint slides? Couldn't this person have just mailed the presentation to everyone and skipped the meeting?
- Why is this meeting going a full hour even though we finished the agenda in 35 minutes?
- Why is this conference call being constantly interrupted with the question, "Who just joined?"
- Why is this meeting wasting thousands of dollars of human capital by endlessly talking about problems but never solving them?

- Why is the boss holding a meeting to get our input, but all the while wearing the intended solution on his or her sleeve?
- Why is the dreaded annual meeting a time we're told what we're doing wrong and preached to all day? Don't they ever want to hear from us?

Ever felt like this? *Then you're in the right spot!*

Where did we, as humans, go wrong? I think it goes all the way back to Adam meeting Eve. The objective of their meeting—to stay away from that fruit—was never clearly identified as an action item. And not much has changed since then.

In September 2010, a front-page story in *USA Today* reported that 49 percent of all office meetings are found to be “wasted time.”* Given that, let me be perfectly clear: **Meetings aren't the problem. The people running them are!**

Humankind has landed on the moon, embraced new technologies at breakneck speed, and advanced in so many ways, but we are still plagued with this billion-dollar problem of running meetings poorly! No one has stood up to aggressively battle this plague! Something needs to change in a way that will be received, understood, and implemented by the everyday worker.

It's going to take a revolution, folks! Workers of the world, unite!

*“StrategyOne Labor Day Public Opinion Survey on the American Worker” on the PR newswire on September 3, 2010.

Boring Meetings Suck introduces a radical new approach and premise, and it dares to admit what other books avoid—that every attendee has a right and responsibility to make every meeting productive for all involved. Only when empowered attendees diplomatically speak up and get meetings on track will everyone benefit, instead of suffering in silence as an ineffective facilitator loses control.

What I'm calling for is for you—and everyone you meet with—to become part of the Bore No More! movement, and this book, *Boring Meetings Suck*, is the backbone of that movement.

I'm not encouraging outright mutiny here, and I definitely don't want you to get fired for walking out of all your meetings. I simply want to help make your day more productive. Don't let yet another era pass full of finger-pointing, faultfinding, and miserable meetings. Personally and financially, we simply cannot afford to do so a moment longer.

Fortunately, advanced guidance is here in the Agenda Items on these pages you have in your hands—a book that will revolutionize the new millennium.

Hey, Not All Meetings Suck

Please don't get the idea that, in this book, I'm only ranting about poorly run meetings. If I did that, I'd just be another victim blaming everyone and their mother for all the time wasted in meetings.

Let me set something straight right now.

I'm officially and boldly stating this: Meetings can be *awesome*. After all, face-to-face meetings are the lifeblood of

thriving organizations. By definition, meetings are the act of people coming together to achieve a common goal through communication and interaction. That “achieving a common goal” is the key to this whole thing. And when meetings are engaging, they accomplish amazing things. They:

- Deliver information that allows team members to excel.
- Foster a spirit of creativity.
- Supply much-needed motivation and incentive.
- Build unity, cohesion, and commitment to a mission.

In contrast, it’s those poorly planned, poorly facilitated meetings with poor participation that suck the life out of business, government, and non-profit organizations.

A *great* meeting can provide *great* value, especially when *great* value has been designed into it. Many professional meeting and event planners, executives, cubicle workers, and others have skillful ideas of what to do: They prepare well, engage others, get issues finalized, and end a meeting when it’s time for it to end. Their well-run meetings add value to everyone’s professional and personal growth as well as to the organization’s bottom line.

If you’re one of these accomplished meeting planners or facilitators, I commend you and offer you even more amazing advice. I promise you’ll find this book *indispensable* in achieving your desired outcomes.

Nothing More Boring Than a Boring Book about Boring Meetings

Yes, this is a book about meetings, but I solemnly promise it’s not another boring meeting book. The only thing worse

than a boring meeting is a boring book about meetings! Trust me, I know. This is a fun, doable-instead-of-daunting read, so even the busiest of road warriors can dig in and derive value in a few minutes.

In this book, *Boring Meetings Suck*, I want to do more than share my secrets. I want to empower you to take responsibility and make any meeting you attend better, even if it looks hopeless. If it's *truly* hopeless, I'll also let you in on my years of research about how to get out of a meeting without getting fired—an art form in itself.

To speed things along, I've introduced what we at Bore No More! headquarters have christened **Suckification Reduction Devices**—SRDs, for short. They're easy-to-read and even-easier-to-implement ideas that you'll appreciate having when you find yourself stuck in another boring meeting.

You'll see SRDs for facilitators, attendees, presenters and organizers noted at the end of each Agenda Item. They're true gems that can catapult you from a mere participant to a “Get More Out of Meetings, or Get Out of More Meetings” master.

What's in It for You?

I'm on a mission to get everyone on the Bore No More! bandwagon. I want good meetings to be great; I want unnecessary meetings to stop; and when they're not productive, I want to show you how to fix them or get out of them gracefully.

This book is for you if:

- You're a meetings expert looking to improve your already stellar meeting performance and enhance client meetings with new ideas and methods.

- Your organization needs an easy reference blueprint for more effective meetings.
- You and your team want to stop wasting time with poorly planned and administered meetings.
- You're willing to step up and take responsibility for every meeting you're in, even if you're not hosting it.
- You're among the millions upon millions who see that boring meetings suck the energy, time, creativity, and even profit out of our organizations—and want to change that.

When you take the Agenda Items to heart, you'll learn:

- How to excuse yourself from a meeting without losing your job.
- Three polite, proactive ways to motivate people to “wrap it up.”
- Why you and others should turn your phones *on* in meetings.
- Quips and tips to make your presentation powerful, not pointless.
- Essential elements for planning large meetings or conferences.
- New techniques that will enable you to run “Get In, Get It Done, and Get Out” meetings.
- How to be the hero of your meetings, have people show up on time, participate fully, and applaud your efforts as they return to their desks with extra time in their pockets.

The more people who understand and accept these concepts, the better, so everyone can reap the benefits of using them in meetings.

How Do You Use This Book? Jump in and Read the Agenda Item You Need

Frankly, beyond the first Agenda Item, it doesn't matter where you start reading this book. That's right. Read it completely randomly or out of order if you like. Look at the contents headings. If a particular Agenda Item piques your interest, go for it. Grab what you want when you can use it most.

You'll find *Boring Meetings Suck* to be an essential book that can be referenced at a moment's notice whenever the need strikes. In most cases, the SRDs in each Agenda Item can be used right away, no long deliberation needed. Read an item, pick your favorite SRD, and apply it. Then repeat as needed.

Are You Ready to Make Meetings Rock?

Join other large and small organizations that have made the Bore No More! philosophy their guide. And bring the movement into your office with help from our Bore No More! staff at www.BoreNoMore.com.

As you read *Boring Meetings Suck*, you'll laugh and maybe even cry. My hope is that you'll look at yourself and realize what others have whispered behind closed doors: "this meetings sucks!" And then you'll do something about it.

If you're sick and tired of being sick and tired of boring meetings, heed this advice. Either apply the ideas in this book

along with your team and organization and get on with your life, or risk another hundred-plus years of humankind making every kind of technological improvement imaginable yet foregoing one of our greatest strengths—our ability to make meetings *rock* instead of *suck*.

Are you ready?