Infermedica

Fewer & Better Meetings Guide
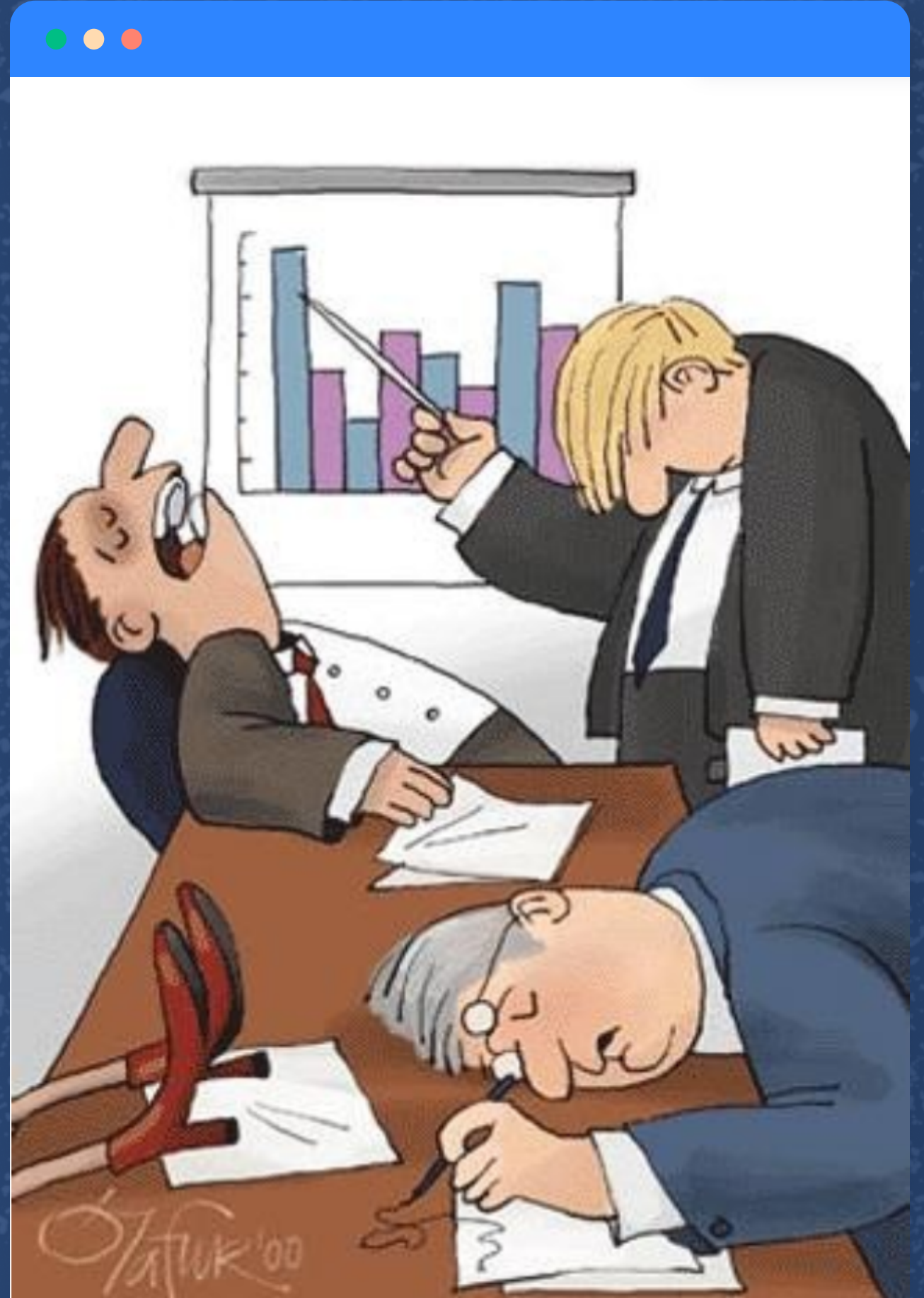
Contents

PLEASE END THIS MEETING

theawesomept.com

BEFORE MY BRAIN MELTS

TOO MANY MEETINGS?

MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI
BUSY	BUSY	BUSY	BUSY	BUSY
BUSY	BUSY		BUSY	BUSY
BUSY	BUSY	BUSY	BUSY	BUSY
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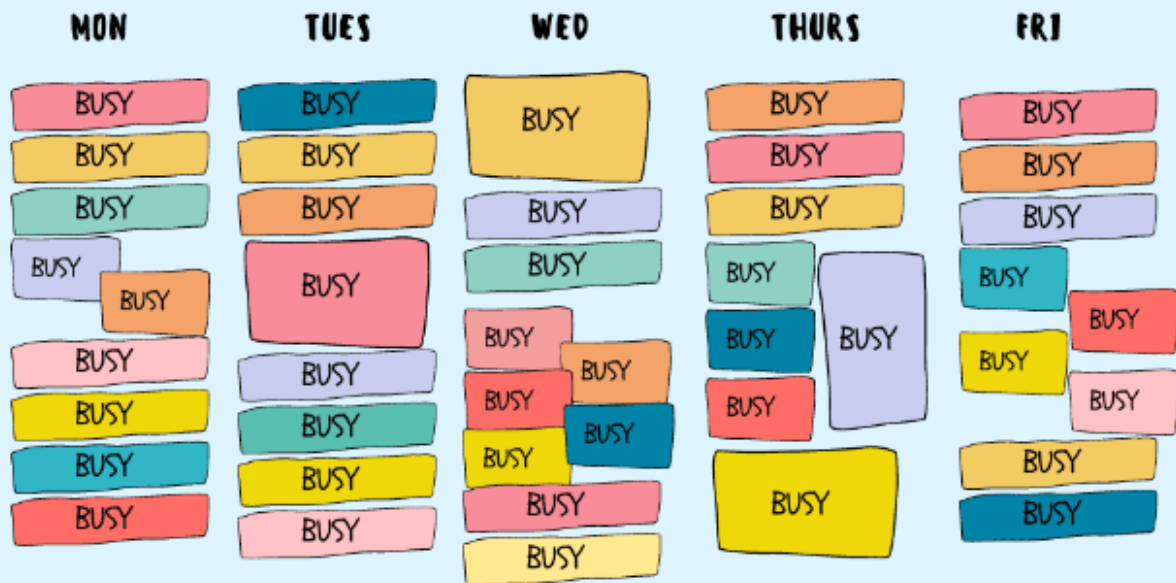
WE'RE HAVING A MEETING TO DISCUSS EMPLOYEE RETENTION.

TELL THEM THAT EMPLOYEES QUIT BECAUSE THERE ARE TOO MANY USELESS MEETINGS.

WE WON'T BE GETTING INTO REASONS AT THE FIRST MEETING.
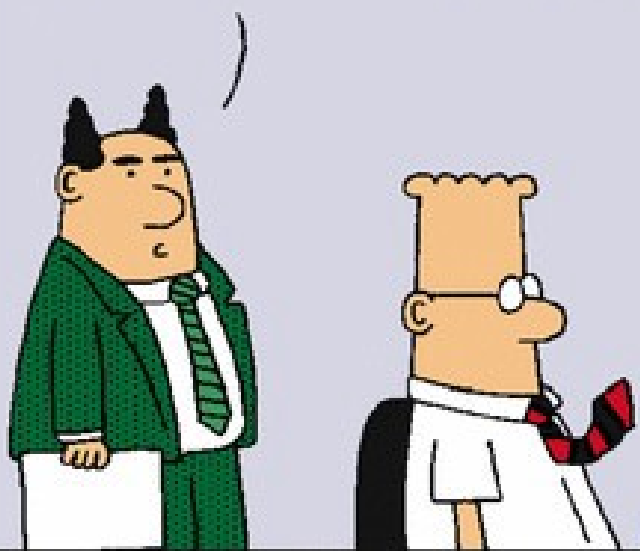
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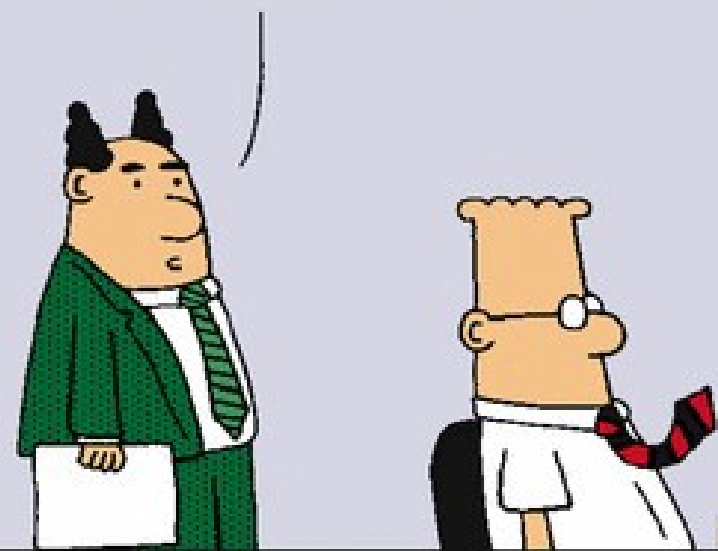
Intro

In Infermedica we stand that meetings are important and collaboration is key to the success of any enterprise.

Meetings should be organized in the spirit of the values we represent.

As part of **honesty & transparency**, we encourage you to present the meeting agenda so that participants know what it is about.

To remain **supportive** during the meeting, remember that a willingness to communicate and showing an optimistic attitude can do a lot.

Last but not least is **quality**, which manifests itself in the way the meeting is conducted. We want your meetings to lead to the merits, help achieve goals, contain specific information, and take place respecting the time of people participating in the meeting.

71%

of managers thought meetings were costly and unproductive.

SOURCE

85%

Today's knowledge workers typically spend more than **85% of their time in meetings.**

SOURCE

õfficevibe

Your feedback is important to us and we want to shape Infermedica together, listening to your needs. You alert us via the Office Vibe to the staggering number of meetings and the problem with work organization due to jumping from meeting to meeting.

WHEN YOUR WORK-LIFE BALANCE IS AFFECTED NEGATIVELY, WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE MAIN CULPRIT?

Overload of meetings, usually. If I have to many, I struggle to keep myself on top of things, which results in extra hours at work to fulfill my day-to-day tasks.

Less meetings

dużo tematów do pogodzenia/zmieszczenia w czasie, mało czasu na myślenie, dużo spotkań, często jedno za drugim (2-4 pod rząd)

Having a feeling of rush and "being busy" culture

Where to start?

1 ## Define a problem

Do you feel your calendar is packed? Are the meetings you attend effective? Do you know how to manage your calendar?

2 ## Measure

Try to measure your current habits. Check, how many hours did you spent in meetings last week or last month and how it affects your daily work. How it looked in the past?

3 ## Review process of all of the current meetings/ Create a time audit

Analyse the results of your "scheduling" so far:

- Did you feel all meetings in past week were necessary? Which were and which wasn't?

- Did you feel your presence were obligatory in all the meetings?

- Did you complete all scheduled tasks according to the deadline? If no, why so?

- Do you think some people could skip some meetings?

4 ## Improve

Read the advice in our guide, choose the ones you feel you can apply in your calendar.

Strategies for more effective meetings

✅ **Is this meeting really necessary?**

Ask yourself this question before scheduling every meeting. First, try to avoid the need for a meeting whenever it's possible. Some things are complex and need to be discussed, but in most cases, it can be done without the meeting - via mail or group Slack conversation.
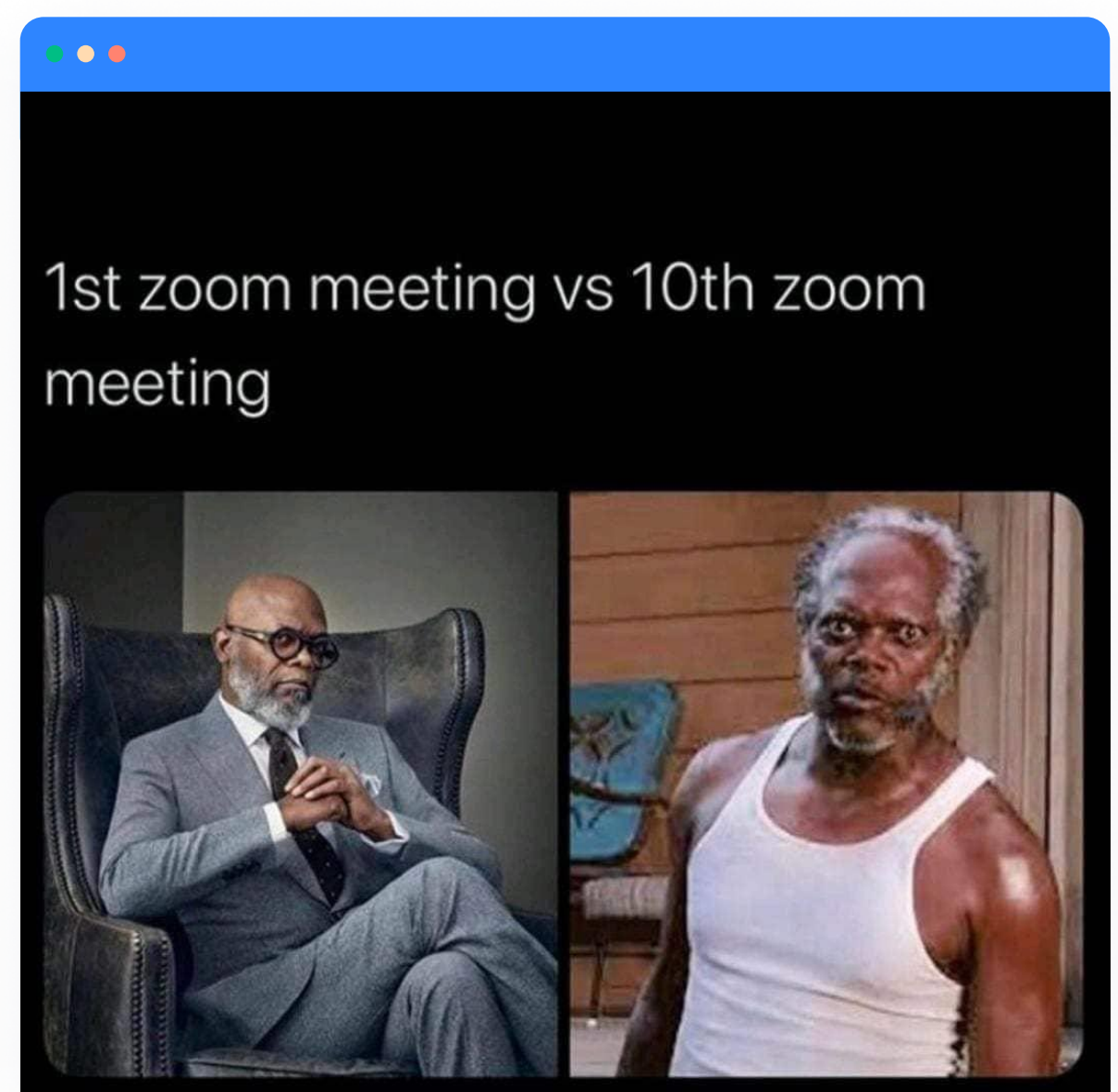
✅ **Did you optimize frequency and duration of meetings?**

Look at all your weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly meetings. Do you need them at the current frequency? Identify which weekly meetings can be turned into bi-weekly meetings or which bi-weekly meetings can be turned into monthly catch-ups.

✅ **Do you stick to your meeting rules?**

We all know that prevention is better than cure. To avoid problems and poor meeting management, establish rules for meetings in your team, like having to raise your hand to google meets or take a break during the meeting.

✅ Are you mindful of your audience?

Carefully consider who you invite to the meeting – the smaller the group, the greater the interaction. If you select a larger group of people mark in the invitation whose presence is obligatory and whose presence is optional.

The conference's purpose must be clearly defined, and all participants should know why they will meet and discuss the topic. **Share a structured agenda with your teammates.**

What types of agenda items are there?

Agenda topics usually fall into one of three categories:

1. **Informational.** An update or presentation.
2. **Discussion Topics.** A conversation to understand an issue and reach a decision.
3. **Action Items.** An update and discussion on the status of a task.

PRO TIP: Be careful with how much time you spend on informational agenda items. Too many updates and long presentations may not only be boring, but they're also not always necessary.

What should an agenda include?

Here are some of the key components of an agenda:

- Welcome & introductions

- Agenda overview

- Presentation

- Status Updates

- Discussion

- Decision

- Question & Answer (Q&A)

- Action Items (initially left blank)

✅ What is Lean Coffee?

Lean Coffee is an innovative format that allows participants to run meetings without a facilitator or an agenda. The structure evolves naturally from the needs of the people present, leading to a rewarding meeting where everyone gets a say.

Lean Coffee, at its heart, is just a set of rules that mimics the natural ebb and flow of conversation. It's possible to hold them virtually by inviting everyone to a Miro board with the Lean Coffee Template.

The term "Lean Coffee" creates the impression of efficiency in a relaxed atmosphere. "Lean" means the meeting won't waste anyone's time, and "Coffee" suggests it will be laid-back and enjoyable. Of course, it's up to the participants to ensure the name is accurate!

✅ Did you remember to switch on your video?

This creates a closer connection between attendees, people also tend to focus more when on video.

✅ Do you know how to end meetings?

You've talked all over the subject and suddenly there's an awkward silence, so ... you start talking about a completely different, down-to-earth topic. It doesn't have to be this way. **It's okay to point out that everything has been settled and that you should now end the conversation** - say: *Ok, to sum it up - you do this, you do that. We know everything, we act and we stay in touch.*

✅ Do you send pre-reads and follow-ups?

Share any tools or files you'll use during your meeting in advance, along with the meeting agenda. After your meeting ends, send follow-up materials or notes if needed.

✅ Do you record teams meetings whenever possible?

Encourage organizers to press the record button at the top of each meeting—provided attendees have given permission—so anyone who is not there has confidence that they can catch up later.

✅ Do you keep meetings short?

In general, it's hard to take part in really long video calls. It's tough on the eyes and drains focus. So plan meetings to be as short as possible. Then, when you're in the meeting, make sure to stick to the agenda and keep to time. Everyone — no matter where they're located — will appreciate that. Also, consider a buffer between meetings.

✅ Have you made sure everything works?

If you are the meeting organizer, make sure you send invitations, inform everyone about any changes, and ensure everyone has access to the shared files. You can prepare a document for the meeting summary.

✅ Can you make your meetings shorter?

Instead of scheduling an hour-long meeting, let's set it up for 50 minutes. With our days filled with meetings, it's time to recharge, refocus, and re-engage with the topics discussed in the meetings.

If you were to apply this same approach and methodology for half-hour meetings, your organization could achieve massive gains in productivity. People will be less resentful of long meeting times and will likely work better together to ensure all topics are given their best attention, knowing they won't have to rush from one issue to the next trying to play catch-up all-day.

Let's Review the Math:

- 15 Minute Stand-up Meeting = ok
- 20 Minute Discussion, 10 Minutes Free = ok
- 50 Minute Meeting, 10 Minutes Free = ok
- All Day Planning/Training Sessions Without Breaks = What's wrong with you? ;)

Strategies for better time/calendar management

✅ **Use The Eisenhower Matrix For Calendar Priority Management**

One thing extremely helpful to be productive is to break tasks into 4 parts and assign each task to the correct category. It will help you build a priority management calendar.

	🔥 Urgent	Not urgent
Important	**Do** Do it now **Examples** • Finishing a client projects • Submitting a draft article • Responding to some emails	**Decide** Schedule a time to do it **Examples** • Strategic planning • Professional development • Networking
Not important	**Delegate** What can do it for you? **Examples** • Uploading blog post • Scheduling • Responds to some emails	**Delete** Eliminate it **Examples** • Social Media • Watching TV • Video games

✅ **Are you aware "Focus time" is okay?**

Introduce yourself to the possibilities of Google Calendar, and consider setting **Focus time** or **Out of office hours** to facilitate communication. Let your team know when you'll be offline or less available. It will be important information for your colleagues not to organize meetings during this time.

✅ Plan your day in advance

Before you start work, check your today's schedule - prepare for the meetings and check if they are all up to date 100%. Review your "to-do list" for today and find out when you can complete the tasks - and block time in your calendar.

✅ Do you use individualized reminders?

Make sure that the appointment reminders are set well in advance - do not set a reminder only e.g. 30 minutes before the meeting - add another 5 minutes before.
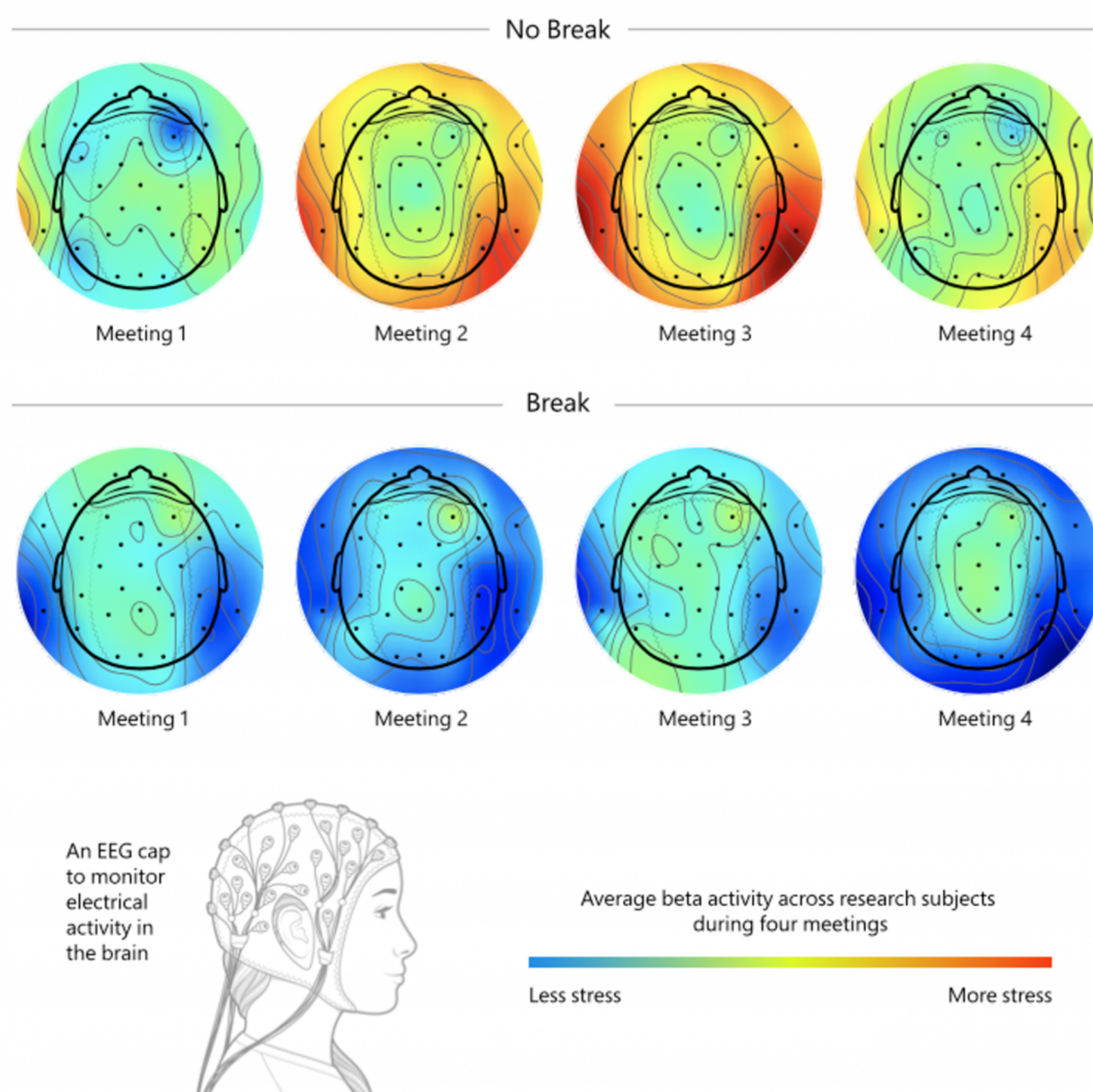
✅ Include breaks

If you are the meeting organizer, make sure you send invitations, inform everyone about any changes, and ensure everyone has access to the shared files. You can prepare a document for the meeting summary.

SOURCE

Your brain works differently when you take breaks
Taking time out between video calls prevents stress from building up.

No Break

Meeting 1   Meeting 2   Meeting 3   Meeting 4

Break

Meeting 1   Meeting 2   Meeting 3   Meeting 4

An EEG cap to monitor electrical activity in the brain

Average beta activity across research subjects during four meetings

Less stress   More stress

✓ Is this update meeting really necessary?

Think of organizing some of your projects in a collaborative document and ask the team to update the status of each project along with highlighting blockers/milestones/help needed etc. You can review this and set up a meeting with only the members that need it. With LOOM you can easily explain the project status, and the following steps to the entire team.

✓ Don't be afraid to say "no"

Don't be afraid to decline the invitation if you know that, for example, the notes alone are enough for you. Saying no to attending a meeting shows that you are effectively managing your calendar.

If the meeting agenda is not related to your expertise

Hi [XYZ],

Thank you for inviting me to the meeting. Based upon the meeting agenda, I don't think I'm the right person to contribute to the discussion. My suggestion would be to include [ABC] from the team instead.

Thank You,

[PQR]

If you are too senior for the meeting

Hi [XYZ],

Thank you for inviting me to the meeting. I look forward to the continued collaboration between our teams. [ABC] from my team will be attending this meeting instead and will be including me in the meeting notes after the discussion.

Thank You,

[PQR]

If you think you are too junior for the meeting

Hi [XYZ],

Thank you for inviting me to the meeting. Looking at the agenda and expected meeting outcomes, I think it might be useful to have my manager [ABC] in the meeting, instead. I will fill him/her up on the details before the meeting.

Thank You,

[PQR]

If only one section of the agenda is relevant for you

Hi [XYZ],

Thank you for inviting me to the meeting. Scanning through the agenda, it looks like I'm needed only for the first [x] min of the discussion. If it's alright, I will drop off the call once the relevant discussion is over.

Thank You,

[PQR]

Unlock asynchronous collaboration

What is asynchronous collab?

Asynchronous work refers to the practice of working on a team that does not require all members to be online simultaneously. When you work asynchronously, individuals can maximize their productivity without waiting for others to complete tasks. The key to asynchronous work is creating processes that allow employees to work autonomously and providing employees with the trust they need to do so.

Asynchronous communication brings/enforces some of the long-sought best practices, such as:

- Good documentation

- Written procedures

- Messaging over calls

- Respect for interruption-free work slots

How to implement it in practice?

Asynchronous work relies more heavily on documentation and transparency.

- Use bulleted lists in messages

- Send screenshots with markups

- At the beginning of the message in the group conversation on Slack, mark who should especially read it

- Enter a name and surname by e-mail in front of each paragraph addressed to this person

- In long messages, use abstract TL;TR (too long to read)

- In the e-mail, attach only those people who are concerned by the thread

- Try to use as often as possible tools that allow you to archive the material and make it possible to return the archived documents (e.g. Loom, Slack audio messages, Slack recordings)… because video is often a great form of communication in the case of more complex concepts :)

- Before sending a message to a wider audience, make sure it is understandable - ask your teammate or someone outside the team if they know what it is about or if there are questions after reading it, and correct your message if needed
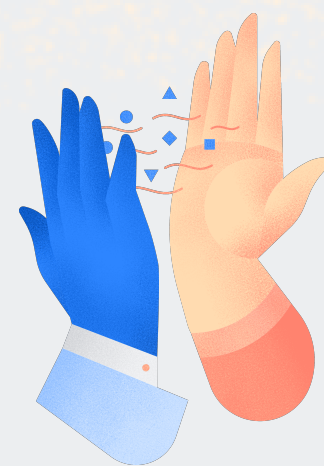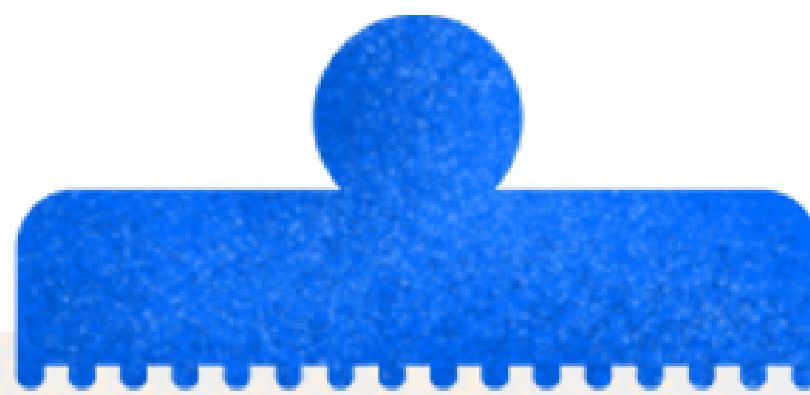
Advantages of asynchronous collaboration

- ✓ **Increased efficiency and boosted productivity**

- ✓ **Less stress and support of mental health**

- ✓ **Improved communication & reduced interruptions**

- ✓ **Trust, control, and autonomy empowered**

Summary/ approaching the end

- Don't be afraid to take a critical look at your calendar and make changes

- Remember to communicate your needs and availability frequently

- It's okay if you miss a meeting that you don't feel you should be attending

- Keep meetings and messages as short as possible

- We need both asynchronous and synchronous working - take the best of both worlds and keep it simple

In case you want to learn more...

It's worth to check out these sources:

- Microsoft hybrid work guide

- David Grady's Ted Talk - *How to save the world (or at least yourself) from bad meetings*

- Peter High's article in Forbes *Half Of All Meetings Are A Waste Of Time - Here's How To Improve Them*

- Gitlab *How to embrace asynchronous communication for remote work*

- No hello - *How to chat?*