

Three Sure-Fire ways to Get Out of a Meeting . . . Without *Being* Fired

By Jon Petz

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Do you breathe a great sigh of relief when the message in your inbox says:

Subject: Meeting cancelled – Friday 2:30 p.m.

From: your meeting host

You feel glad to skip this one because far too many meetings fall into the category of “this is a colossal waste of my time.”

Now, this isn't leading to another rant on the how and why to run a meeting. Not at all — been there, done that. It's about the far more important issues pressing on your mind right now: *Why are you even in this meeting when you have so many more important things going on . . . like your real job?*

As you know, your days can get filled with back-to-back meetings that leave little time to do what's considered the purposeful, productive aspects of your actual job. They're the ones your performance review is based on. What's at stake? Your ability to direct your time toward what matters most.

So stop suffering in silence at the whim of meeting facilitators who just don't get that. And while I *can't* tell you how to get that upcoming PowerPoint-prison meeting cancelled, I *can* suggest how to get out of that meeting . . . without getting fired.

That, my friend, requires you to employ these three Suckification Reduction Devices.

Suckification Reduction Device #1 – First in, first out (FIFO)

The setup: Once you receive an agenda, respond with a note saying “looks great. I'll be there. However, I'm hoping you could meet me a few minutes before the meeting. I want to share my updates and thoughts in person because I'm not able to attend the entire meeting.”

The desired result: Meet the host five minutes beforehand and fully share your good, legitimate input. This is key. This also gives you the opportunity to grab a seat by the door for your discreet exit a few minutes into the meeting. You walk out, nothing more than a thankful nod needed.

What you didn't see: The other dumbfounded attendees jealously glare as you whistle back to your own agenda. Meanwhile, the host regards you as a committed team member.

Suckification Reduction Device #2: Start late, then leave a note

The setup: Does your office have that 15-minute grace window for meeting start times—that is, meeting time at 10:00 a.m. means be ready to start by 10:12ish? Try this. Arrive exactly on time (and I mean that). If the meeting host hasn't arrived by five minutes past the start time (and you haven't heard from that person), then leave a note. Either write this on the whiteboard or on your business card left on the table: "It's Jon. Assume the meeting got cancelled. Nobody here. 10:05 a.m."

The desired result: If the remainder of your day (or your job) isn't affected by the objectives of that meeting, you're out safely. Maybe you'll get a text requesting you return to the meeting; maybe you won't. Now, if you're feeling apprehensive about doing this, send the host a similar email when you get back to your desk. For added security, include the ideas you planned to share at the meeting in your email.

Suckification Reduction Device #3: Free Meeting Fridays

The setup: Take better control of your personal calendar so others can't automatically schedule time for you. For example, do you schedule in times labeled "work" to indicate you're unavailable for meetings? If not, then start. And start with Friday. ALL of Friday!

The desired result: No more stress because your entire Friday was consumed by back-to-back meetings. Now you won't have to prep Sunday night at home for Monday. You can fully enjoy your weekend.

Hey, will all of these devices be effective all the time? No. Certainly ground rules can vary. And what happens when your boss comes back with "If you want paid – you'll be there!" message? That's when you refer to the additional SRDs in *Boring Meetings Suck*.

However, these three will get you started with polite yet effective ways to open your schedule. The benefit? You can get your real work done in place of sitting through another boring meeting that sucks.

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Jon Petz is the author of *Boring Meetings Suck*, (Wiley Publishing 2011). He is also [Professional keynote speaker](#), [emcee](#) and [corporate magician](#). Learn how to GET MORE out of your meetings in our short-attention-span-high-distraction world and GET OUT of those that bore. Pick up *Boring Meetings Suck* at your local bookstore or at www.BoringMeetingsSuck.com