Three Meeting-Busting Mistakes You Can't Afford to Make
By Jon Petz

Over the past century, humankind has made amazing advances in everything from technology and medicine to automation and instant communication.

Yet we're still plagued by the multibillion-dollar productivity loss from everyday office meetings that suck the life out of our organizations.

And while you can find countless books, articles, and blog posts about this exact problem, what happens? People still skip practicing principles that engage participants in meetings—and make them great. If you're in charge of leading meetings, pay attention to three meeting-busting mistakes you can no longer afford to make.

Mistake #1: Skipping the meeting's mission statement.

If a meeting doesn't have a clear stated objective known to all attendees about desired results from its action items should be, then don't even have the meeting. Or at least don't expect people to show up.

Your meeting mission statement could be as simple as this:
    Objective: Sharing information on retirement plan.
    Result: You can better understand the current environment and lessen future email inquiries.

Here's an example of a more detailed statement:
    Objective: Share progress and confirm understanding of our new retirement savings program.
    Identify areas of concern from your department and discuss possible solutions.
    Desired result: HR to send document with suggested changes and confirmations to provider by end of week.

Mistake #2 – Never starting on time.
Yeah, you've heard this one before, but you don't *do* it.

It's like the speed limit; a posted limit of 65 mph actually means 73 mph, right? But if you want to shake things up, start each meeting on time. Start it *exactly* on time, whether everyone is in attendance or not. When you do this consistently, watch the mood and pace of your meeting change—for the better.

The book *Boring Meetings Suck* lists lots of guaranteed ways to start meetings on time—that means with attendees fully present and ready to participate. One of these popular methods—called Suckification Reduction Devices--addresses the late start due to people socializing when they first get together. I believe having time for attendees to interact with each before the meeting is a critical element for team dynamics, commitment, and camaraderie—something you don't want to lose. But let it take over the start time and you're done! Therefore, identify this Social Time on the official agenda and stick to it.

> 9:50 a.m. –Coffee and dialogue
> 10:00 a.m. – Agenda Item 1: revenue projections from Scranton office

Then start Agenda Item 1 *right on time – every time* Here's the bonus: People love this approach because they get to choose if they want to socialize first and know the drop dead time of when that meeting starts.

Mistake #3 – Letting technology, not humans, be the core of the meeting.

Despite a plethora of presentation gizmos available for your next meeting, you can never hide behind the fact that human beings (not technology) are the core of the meeting. If you've spent all your time making sure your graphics spin and change colors to show a sequence, face it—your meeting will probably suck.

Yes, you can use technology to bring in participants or speakers at a minute's notice from anywhere in the world. Yes, technology allows you to get real-time feedback from a mass audience. But if you set up a videoconference and reason that, because you're together as a team, you can skip the formalities of a proper agenda, you're sadly mistaken.

Simply Know This: Meetings Don't Have to Suck

Overcoming these three meeting-busting mistakes will help you drive time productively. The good news? These mistakes are easily fixed using Suckification Reduction Devices (SRDs) featured in *Boring Meetings Suck*.

SRD #1: Unless people need an excuse to get out of their offices, they shouldn't come to meetings without having the right mission in mind. Don't let the meetings you lead be a colossal waste of time, energy, creativity, and profit.

SRD #2: Meetings that start late and end late throw off the rest of the day for all concerned. So conscientiously start on time, every time. When you do, the personality of the meeting takes on a strong commitment to what you've set forth in the agenda.

SRD #3: Stop hiding behind technology to drive the effectiveness of the meetings you host. *You* are in charge—not some slideshow, conferencing, or Internet technology.

Never let these three mistakes bust your meetings again.

<div align="center">

##

</div>

Jon Petz is a professional keynote speaker, master of ceremony and author of *Boring Meetings Suck, Get More Out of Your Meetings, or Get OUT of More Meetings. (*Wiley & Sons 2011). For info about books, speaking engagements, training or consultation please visit www.JonPetz.com .