

How to make your meetings more engaging

You've probably spent the last 2 years adapting to working in a hybrid model, balancing the endless number of Zoom calls with team engagement. You might have a defined meeting cadence, regular calls with your team - but are these meetings working for you? Are you ever on 1h calls where you don't say a word? Do you wish some meetings were emails? Here are a few tips on re-thinking of how we meet to be more productive.

First, map out your current meetings

Before introducing new formats or cancelling meetings it's important to assess the situation. The goal of this exercise is to 1) understand how much time you spend in meetings and 2) understand what regular processes you have already.

Start by focusing on company or team wide meetings;

- the weekly team meetings, exec stand up and all hands,

- monthly regular meetings such as monthly reviews, or budget meetings,

quarterly, or bi-yearly meetings, mostly focus on strategic planning, board meetings, hiring plans

The next step is to understand what is the purpose of these meetings; is it to inform staff, is it to get opinions, to solve problems? This will help assess if they are currently serving their purpose or not.

The goal is not necessarily to decrease the amount of meetings, but making them more productive to ensure you get the most of that time spent together.

Improving meetings

Some meetings will be pretty repetitive by nature, and might not need changing, the goal here is to focus on the meetings where you're not extracting value.

One of your most expensive meeting will be the C-suite or exec meeting; as this meeting gathers the most senior people in the organisation. You most likely want to use it to discuss big issues, and discuss critical business updates. Before trying to change it by yourself, ask the attendees 1) how useful the meeting is currently, 2) an example of a really good previous meeting, 3) how they'd like to use this time.

Once you have this data you can then think of ways to change the agenda, maybe your meetings are lacking problem solving time, or they don't have enough informal catch up, maybe you'll realise your team wants to discuss metrics more. There is no right or wrong when it comes to meetings; they need to work for those who attend them, so work from their needs first.

For meetings that are about looking back on a time period (month, quarter) to assess performance vs plan and progress on OKRs or strategy, I recommend doing this with a pre-read. It will contain a look on metrics and making sure you include a view of monthly metrics, vs plan and month over month, then a look into each departments ups and downs. Make sure you focus these on the learnings they got, and the updates cover key progress on OKRs and any metric that is behind plan (or above), with the reason behind it.

Did you really need that meeting?

After looking at your yearly schedule, and fixing some broken agendas, you still might have some meetings lacking engagement, or that feel like a waste of time for you or the team. Maybe this is a sign that you don't need them all. Here are a few examples where you might not need a proper meeting:

you only need one person's view

you didn't want to type something up and rather put 30min to walk someone through something

you use meetings to give updates to a group (for example on a joint project)

If you're in any of these situations, there are alternative to meetings;

Loom helps you record up to 5 min videos of yourself and your screen to walk people through something

Voice message (you can leave them on Slack directly, to explain something quickly)

Send a short pre-read or some clear slides; or even a screenshot of an excel with bullet point commentary

You can find free templates for meeting agendas [here](#).

If you need more hands on support to re-define your meeting culture, you can book a one day consultation with me on aliceivanoff.com

Alice Ivanoff is the founder of [Alice Ivanoff Ltd](#), a consultancy to support founders tackle challenges and lead well run companies.