



# IIFAC

International Institute for  
Facilitation and Change

## From Tedious to Terrific:

Your business meetings transformed in 2015

### 7 ACTION STEPS

to convince the boss that your meetings need  
to be more focused and productive NOW



Complaining about unproductive, boring meetings is easy.  
Changing dysfunctional meeting habits requires action.



## **From Tedious to Terrific: Your business meetings transformed in 2015**

### **How to convince the boss that your business meetings need to be more focused and productive NOW**

As a team leader, you are the perfect person to take proactive steps to transform the problems you see every day in the meetings you convene and attend.

You see firsthand the boredom, distraction and apathy that are the result of meetings that lack focus, planning and relevance to the work of the meeting participants.

You hear the grumblings and complaints about time wasted in meetings.

You recognize that the people seated around the table have other work responsibilities that they are neglecting while the meeting drags on.

You are sure that there are more effective ways to bring teams together and make use of their collective intelligence to address important organizational challenges, but how can you convince the boss to investing in training NOW?

**Complaining about unproductive, boring meetings is easy. Changing dysfunctional meeting habits requires action.**

To make an informed decision, you boss needs information, including

- Clear evidence that the problem exists
- Data about how much wasted time in meetings is costing the organization
- The benefits of investing in training the staff in Effective Meetings
- Proposals about where to get outside help



## **Seven proactive steps to make a “business case” for transforming your organization’s meeting culture in 2015**

All the action steps are designed to provide solid arguments for transforming boring, unproductive meetings into dynamic opportunities for working together. Implementing any or all of these will help you build a convincing case for the need to invest in more productive meetings in 2015. They can also serve as a baseline for measuring the effectiveness of any changes introduced.



## Action Step 1

### Ask your team

**What:** a simple survey

**Who/Where:** Team members; face to face or virtual

**Use:** Responses can serve as guide to making immediate improvements and/or as input into the documentation you give the boss to justify the need for training in effective meetings.

**How:** Introduce the activity by explaining that you are committed to improving the group's meeting practices and would like their input. Then ask two simple questions:

- What would you like to see MORE of in our meetings?
- What would you like to see LESS of in our meetings?

In a face-to-face meeting, provide half sheets of paper, 4"x6" cards or large post-its and markers with dark ink. Explain that they can contribute as many responses as they like, but should write only one comment on each card.

On a wall or white board, place two signs: one titled "MORE" and another titled "LESS".

Invite the participants to post their responses under the appropriate sign, clustering similar or repeated comments.

Debrief the results with the group.

In a virtual meeting, follow the same procedure, but ask participants to post their responses in the chat box, writing "More" or "Less" at the start of each comment so you will know which category it belongs to.



## Action Step 2

### Collect baseline data

**What:** Online survey

**Who/Where:** Team members; virtual

**Use:** Identify problem areas; create a baseline against which future changes can be measured.

**How:** Ask questions that will provide information about

- Amount of time spent in meetings
- Percentage of time in meetings that the respondents consider productive and useful in their work
- Recurring difficulties, problems in meetings
- Recommendations for improving meetings
- Overall level of satisfaction with meetings



### Action Step 3 Analyze your current meeting practices

**What:** Written format

**Who/Where:** Proponent(s) of the change process; Individual reflection or as part of a group process

**Use:** Identification of strengths and weaknesses; input into presentation to the boss

**How:** Review the following list, putting a √ in the column that best describes the frequency with which these conditions occur in the meetings you convene or attend.

Part 1	Always	Sometimes	Never
Meeting purpose and desired outcomes are defined			
Participants understand why they are present			
Written agenda			
Agenda shared in advance			
Agenda visible during the meeting			
Participants have a voice in modifying the agenda			
Meeting starts at the announced time			
Meeting process is explained			
People with key information are present			
Each agenda item has a specific person assigned to present the issue			
Time limits set for each agenda item			
Review of commitments and next steps before the end of the meeting			
Meeting evaluation by participants			
Meeting ends at the announced time			
<b>Total √ per column</b>			

Part 2	Always	Sometimes	Never
A few people dominate the discussion			
People repeat what has already been said			
Too many agenda items for the time available			
Time limits are not respected			
A lot of time spent listening to reports			
<b>Total √ per column</b>			

Guide to interpretation: In Part 1, the conditions marked as “sometimes” and “never” are impeding the effectiveness of the team. In Part 2, the conditions marked as “always” or “sometimes” contribute to dissatisfaction, boredom and apathy in meeting participants.



## Action Step 4

### Calculate the opportunity cost of your meetings

**What:** Spreadsheet

**Who/Where:** Proponents of the change process

**Use:** Documentation of the current cost of meetings

**How:** Follow the steps described below; see example in the attached excel document.

#### A. The opportunity cost of a single meeting

1. Identify the participant groups (i.e., senior management, middle management, administrative assistant, etc.) represented at a specific meeting in your organization
2. Estimate the hourly salary of each group
  - Start with the average annual salary of those in each group
  - Divide the amount by 240 (number of working days in a year)
  - Divide this amount by 8 (number of hours in a workday)
3. Multiply estimated hourly salary by the number of people in each participant group present in the meeting
4. Multiply this figure by the hours the meeting lasts
5. Repeat this calculation for each participant group.
6. Add together the results for all the participant groups to know the opportunity cost of this meeting

#### B. Weekly cost of this kind of meetings

To estimate the weekly cost of all meetings similar to the one calculated above, multiply the single meeting cost by the average number of similar meetings held in your organization or department per week

#### C. Annual cost of these meetings

Calculate the annual cost by multiplying the weekly figure by 50.

For a GLOBAL ESTIMATE of the cost of all meetings in your organization

- #1. Identify the number of employees in each of the participant groups mentioned in A.2 above.
- #2. Calculate the average hourly salary for each of the participant groups as described in A.2-4 above.
- #3. Estimate the number of hours per week the employees in each group spend in meetings
- #4. For each group multiply the results of #1 x results of #2 x results of #3
- #5. Total the #4 results from all the groups



## Action Step 5 Share the infographic about time wasted in meetings

**What:** Poster based on Verizon study

**Who/Where:** Post in company newsletter, on bulletin boards; discuss in team meetings.

**Use:** Raise awareness; provoke conversation; support the case for making a change

**How:** Download complete image: <http://english.iifac.org/images/iifac-Infographic-english.jpg>



## Action step 6 Consult IIFAC's Guide to Excellent Meetings at Work

**What:** Free guide that describes 5 common meeting mistakes and how to correct them

**Who/where:** Team leaders interested in improving their meetings

**How:** Download <http://english.iifac.org/guide-to-excellent-meetings>





## Action Step 7 Discuss your training needs with us

**What:** Initial conversation – no cost, no obligation

**Who/Where:** Proponent(s) of the change process with Beatrice Briggs or Ana Rubio by telephone or skype

**Use:** Explore your organization’s need for training to transform business meetings from tedious obligations to dynamic, productive interactions that justify the cost of bringing people together

**How:** Write to Beatrice Briggs ([bbriggs@iifac.org](mailto:bbriggs@iifac.org)) to set up an appointment



### Planning worksheet to transform your meetings in 2015

✓	Action step	Allies/ Stakeholders	Next step	When
	Informal poll			
	Online survey			
	Meeting analysis			
	Calculate the cost			
	Share infographic			
	Download Guide			
	Consult with IIFAC			