Wasting Time Together

A look at the time we waste in meetings, and how we can minimize it

Bringing colleagues together to accomplish a unified goal is an important ingredient in the formula for business success. But more often than not, meetings are a huge waste of time. We don't typically think of meetings in scientific terms but when we do, we can better understand how to harness their power to our advantage. This White Paper examines how much time and money we spend in meetings, the steps we can take to eliminate meeting inefficiencies and what we can do to better harness their power to become more successful.

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INTRODUCTION

It's a collaborative world. Ever since humans have been able to communicate, we have solved problems, devised strategies, sold things, celebrated victories, and shared information in that most maligned of activities: The Meeting. And since meetings are so important, we tend to spend an incredible amount of time in them.

The problem is, meetings tend to waste a lot of time and money. While most managers and executives have had extensive training on technology, marketing concepts, managerial skills and the like, most of us have never attended training on how to conduct an effective meeting. In addition, conference rooms in many corporate facilities lack the right technology to make the content we consume during meetings simple to manage and effective to execute. What's the good news? These behavioral and technological shortcomings are easily overcome.

THE FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

Busy professionals attend over 60 meetings each month.

Many people are shocked to discover how much time is spent and wasted in meetings. On an average day, there are over 17 million meetings conducted in the United States alone. According to a Verizon Communications study, business professionals attend over 60 meetings per month. And a joint UCLA and University of Minnesota study reveals that executives spend, on average, 40 to 50% of their working hours in meetings, and that as much as 50% of that time is considered "unproductive." You get the picture - business professionals at all organizational levels spend a lot of time in meetings, and typically this *isn't* time well spent.

Wouldn't it make sense for us to stop and take a closer look at this issue to see what can be done to make valuable meeting time more productive? Isn't it ironic that most companies have detailed processes and procedures to manage every aspect of their businesses, *except* how to run an effective meeting?
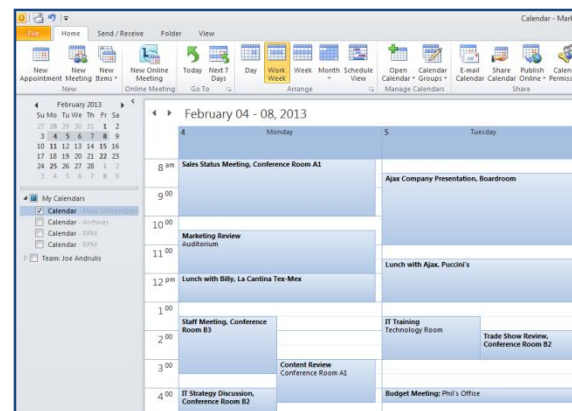
THE COST OF MEETINGS

It goes without saying that companies spend a lot of money on meetings, in both hard and soft costs. *Industry Week* famously called meetings "The Great White Collar Crime," estimating that they waste $37 billion dollars per year. In the previously mentioned Verizon Communications study, they found that a five-person meeting conducted in person costs a company an average

of $5,197 per attendee, while a

Industry Week estimates that meetings waste $37 billion a year.

video conference costs $1,701 and an audio conference $689. A Fortune 50 company estimates that poor meetings cost them in excess of $75 million per year. The costs are significant for companies large and small.

SNAPSHOT: MEETINGS BY THE NUMBERS

89% *Percentage who believe technology makes meetings easier*

88% *Percentage who become frustrated with the technology*

23 *hours per week an executive spends in meetings*

7.8 *of those 23 hours deemed unnecessary*

20% *of meetings run late due to meeting room technology issues*

2.83 *days per year each employee wastes due to meeting technology issues*

447 *conference room technology issues solved by each IT tech per year*

60 *meetings the typical business professional attends per month*

17 *million business meetings in the U.S. per day*

WHY SO MANY MEETINGS?

> Employees think meetings give them the best opportunity to contribute.

It's easy to demonstrate the financial costs of meetings. However, we must acknowledge the importance and value of *well-run* meetings. An overwhelming number of meeting attendees (92%) value meetings as the venue that provides them the best opportunity to contribute to their organization's success. A University of Tulsa study showed that meetings are essential to business success, and that their duration has been steadily increasing. And according to industry visionary Paul Doherty, connecting disparate people across the organization is the greatest challenge facing companies today.

Like it or not, meetings are here to stay.

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN MEETINGS

> We've come a long way since the flip chart and overhead projector.

Consider how a meeting used to take place during the pre-Internet era. Typically, a group of people would meet in a room and use the latest in *state-of-the-art* conferencing technology - flip charts, overhead projectors and maybe a "speakerphone."

Today, meetings are vastly more complex. They incorporate a wide variety of content (audio, video, data, images, etc.) from an even wider range of source devices (laptops, Blu-ray players, document cameras, tablets, etc.). And while meetings used to require remotely-located participants to attend in person, global competition and tightening budgets are forcing participants to attend from anywhere in the world in real time via audio and video conferences. Not only has the meeting become more technologically advanced; it has become infinitely more challenging to manage.

ABOUT CONFERENCE ROOM AUTOMATION

A simple and intuitive room automation system is essential in all types of meeting room.

In the previously mentioned Verizon study, 89% of respondents said that "technology is a primary way to make meetings more successful." In addition to common sense approaches like starting on time, keeping to an agenda and formalizing action items, technology is a key factor that can bring people, content and ideas together to ensure that time in meetings is time well spent.

Today's best room control and automation technologies include everything a meeting organizer needs to take command of all of a meeting's content and information sources, easily and effectively. With the right technology, companies can dramatically improve the efficiency of their meetings, saving them time and money.

Conference room automation is the technology that can empower you to manage multiple collaboration tasks via a simple and intuitive user interface – usually a touch panel or keypad. The system manages all of your audio and video inputs and outputs, enabling you to easily control where and how your content is displayed on your projection screens and displays. More sophisticated systems can control virtually any analog or digital input or output, including video conferencing systems, Blu-ray players, document cameras, lighting and even screens and blinds - all from a single user interface rather than a bewildering collection of remotes.

Types Of Room Automation Equipment		
What it is	**What it does**	**Examples**
Display	Displays content for attendees to view	LCD Display Display Projector
User Interface	Enables users to control equipment by pressing buttons or icons	Control Panel Keypad
Switching & Control	Manages inputs & outputs behind the scenes	All-In-One Presentation Switcher Controller ControlPad
Connectivity	Provides a place for people to connect laptops and other devices	AMX HydraPort
Content Presentation System	Enables attendees to present content from mobile devices, web and other sources	AMX Enzo
Monitoring & Maintenance Software	Software that centrally monitors and maintains AV systems	AMX's Resource Management Suite (RMS)

The newest addition to the arsenal of meeting room technologies is the new class of content presentation systems that include AMX's Enzo®. These devices are designed to make it easy to present content from virtually any mobile device, including tablets and smartphones. One popular technology within this family is "screen mirroring," which duplicates whatever content is shown on the tablet or smartphone onto the room's display or projection screen.

TECHNOLOGY IN ACTION

Here's an example of conference room automation in action. Without a system, you would need to complete an encumbering series of steps in order to initiate and control a standard video conference. These steps might include:

1. Adjust room lighting to "ALL ON"
2. Adjust table lighting to "ALL OFF"
3. Power "ON" the video conferencing system
4. Power "ON" the LCD display
5. Set the video conferencing system volume to "LOUD"
6. Adjust the video conferencing system camera view to "CENTER OF TABLE"
7. "PAN OUT" the video conferencing system camera
8. "DISPLAY" the video conferencing system phone keypad
9. Initiate video conferencing system dialer to "DIAL 1-800-555-5555"

With conference room automation, this entire sequence of nine steps could be executed by simply touching "START VIDEOCONFERENCE" on your touch panel or keypad.

This is just one example of the many ways in which room automation can simplify technology and make meetings much more efficient.

HOW CONFERENCE ROOM AUTOMATION HELPS SOLVE THE PROBLEM

As mentioned above, technology (or the lack thereof) is a major contributor to meetings starting late or going off track. In many cases the problem is due to the fact that the room contains no technology other than a display, projector and remote. This leads to countless headaches as attendees try in vain to get their content to appear on the screen.

A second problem is when a room is loaded with technology that nobody can figure out how to use. It's easy to identify these types of meetings – they're the ones where all the people in the room are surrounding the offending piece of technology and arguing over how to turn it on.

Yet another common problem is when meetings start late because of the long wait for equipment to boot up. This is a particular problem in rooms that use a room PC for connectivity.

Here are some examples of how room automation technology solves these and other common meeting problems:

Problem	How Technology Solves It
Can't get content to appear on screen	A table box or architectural connectivity solution installed in the table provides simple ways to connect devices and deliver content to the display
Equipment is too confusing	An intuitive control panel or keypad makes controlling equipment as easy as pressing a button
Meetings start late due to waiting for system to boot	New types of equipment like AMX's Enzo require little to no boot time and can replace a room PC
Can't present from tablets or smartphones	Content presentation systems like Enzo can present content from virtually any web location or mobile device, including tablets and smartphones via screen mirroring
Equipment is unreliable	Monitoring and maintenance software can ensure equipment uptime. Also, all-in-one presentation switchers like AMX's Enova DVX eliminate points of failure and ensure top-notch reliability.

Of course, these technology-based solutions cannot cure every meeting woe. Another key to successful meetings is to adopt certain behaviors that foster better meeting performance, like always producing an agenda, showing up on time and generating and distributing notes and action items after the meeting ends.

TAKE ACTION!

In his book *The Strategy of Meetings*, George David Kieffer said, "Most professionals have had no real training in devising and managing an effective meeting; in fact, most professionals do not recognize the enormous impact their meetings have on their organizations and their careers." To that end, what quick steps can you take to raise the effectiveness of your meetings? Here are three suggestions:

1. Track the time and cost of your meetings. Since time is money, just being aware of the opportunity you have to improve effectiveness can go a long way.
2. Demand agendas and follow-up action items from every meeting. Keeping tabs on action items and staying on topic will help reduce the amount of time you waste.
3. Deploy consistent, standardized control and automation technology in your conference rooms to enhance the overall meeting experience. It's time to make the technology work for you, rather than vice-versa. To get started on this journey, explore AMX's website (amx.com) and make sure you click to contact an AMX Solutions Advisor. These well-trained professionals can help guide you through the process of determining the ideal solution for your particular workplace needs.

Many successful companies have remained nimble and effective by treating meetings as an asset rather than a hindrance. By incorporating a few quick suggestions and deploying the right technology, your organization can reap incredible benefits and turn meetings into a competitive edge.

To learn how AMX's award-winning products can help your organization optimize your AV investment in meeting spaces, we invite you to explore our website and contact one of our Solutions Advisors.

The **LEARN** page (http://amx.com/automate/learn.aspx) includes a wealth of general resources on the AV industry.

The **PLAN** page (http://amx.com/automate/plan.aspx) includes an interactive tool that allows you to visualize the typical conference room and huddle space configurations that AMX offers, and to explore which room configuration is best suited to your needs.

You can always **CONTACT A SOLUTIONS ADVISOR**, who will be glad to guide you through the process of identifying, specifying and purchasing your ideal conference room or classroom AV solution. The "Contact an Advisor" link is at the top of every page of the AMX website. Options to connect include chat, phone and email.