Reactiv SUITE
Enabling **Remote Creativity**

Meetings Suck
The art of wasting US$1,500 per employee per month

Introduction

Meetings suck! That's the conclusion of hundreds of studies and reports completed over the past few decades.

In any organization, regardless of size, there are never-ending discussions at the water cooler: "too many meetings"; "too long and unproductive"; "useless"; "waste of time" - and - "simply pointless". One article even described an employee wanting to "stab her leg with a pencil" to stop from screaming during a particularly torturous staff meeting. Another study discovered that a third of workers have seen colleagues fall asleep during presentations. This is becoming a modern plague that is consuming our workday and directly impacts overall workplace culture and happiness.

One study showed that 17% of US employees would rather "watch paint dry" and 8% would even endure a root canal over a meeting. According to the Harvard Business Review, 65% of participants in a study said meetings keep them from completing their own work, 71% said meetings are unproductive and inefficient, 64% said meetings come at the expense of deep thinking. And that's just the tip of the iceberg. Because meetings are seen as a distraction by most employees, they actually bring other work to do during their meetings: another survey of more than 2000 US workers highlighted that 92 percent confess to multitasking during meetings and 41 percent admit to doing so "often" or "all the time." The most common activity being checking email (69%), working on unrelated projects (49%) and even eating (44%). Even with this level of inefficiency, the trend is increasing. According to sources, like the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, and software corporation Fuze, in the USA alone there are an unbelievable 36 Million meetings per day, with an average duration of 1 hour per meeting.

This takes a collective toll on productivity, focus, and engagement. Not only does it impact the wellbeing of your teams, but also the bottom line. SalesCrunch, (now a part of ClearSlide) did the math; the cost of unproductive meetings can reach an average of US$1,500 per employee per month, increases to US$2,800 for managers, and balloons to US$8,000 for executives. At a national level, according to software company Decos Minute BV, US firms lose $37 Billion due to ineffective meetings annually. Even though this seems like a high number, the impact on the US economy could be even higher. If current average private sector hourly salaries and lengths of meetings are considered, over $180 Billion is lost on ineffective meetings. And that is still just the US.

What is the root cause of all this inefficiency? It is said that "only a poor craftsman blames his tools". Well, actually in this case it is ok to blame your tools: Clunky PowerPoint presentations, inefficient video conferences, and never-ending emails are wasting more and more of our time. It turns out that a simple hour-long meeting can easily cost the team two and a half hours of time. We routinely don't consider the time that is consumed before, during and after the meeting. A host of mundane tasks; technical issues; the complexity of follow ups, and creating linear PowerPoint presentations all burn-up time and cause your teams to lose context.

Let's consider the process for a typical meeting

Preparation
The time spent on meetings actually starts long before the beginning of the meeting itself, both for the presenter and the attendees.

With an estimated 1.25 million PowerPoint presentations each hour, PowerPoint is still the "go to" app when comes the time to present. An employee will spend an average of 10 minutes per slide to create it. Each piece of information must be gathered; every piece of content or media must be transformed and formatted to fit the PowerPoint presentation. Giant Excel spreadsheets must be converted and spread across several slides, videos must be embedded (if they are not too large), and web pages have to be converted to screenshot, or integrated as "hyperlinks". The latter assuming that the presenter will have WiFi access during the presentation.

As well as gathering information, before each presentation the team members will share and review documents, adding revisions and versions; often in and repetitive email chain. The lack of real collaboration tools makes the entire process inefficient and time consuming.

Whether the presenter will present from his laptop or from a different PC in a remote boardroom, the presentation may have to be uploaded to the cloud, compressed to fit into an email, uploaded via a USB flash drive... another average 10 minutes of lost time. All of this prep time easily burns through a minimum of 30-40 minutes of time from your team members.

Will the meeting use Skype? Zoom? GoToMeeting? How do I join? Every product is different. None of them are click and go. Often, many minutes are lost just to get everyone connected.

The Meeting Starts
Or does it? From remote meetings to local presentations, reports show that the main reason for wasted time is the technology used. Where is the HDMI cable? How do I connect to this projector? There is no shortage of problems to address. Why can't we hear you, are you muted? Can you see us?

CBTS reported that, within the span of a 38-minute call, it can take eight minutes just getting set up, and a further thirteen are spent on interruptions. We did an internal study: when was the last time a video-conference started on time at our office? No-one could remember and every meeting is delayed by an average of 5 minutes; time wasted for all participants.

In the case of in-person presentations, most are done from the presenter's laptop, and the beginning of the meeting is spent trying to set up the projector, mirror the laptop screen, connecting to the network. Another 10 minutes easily burned.

Most of our meetings today revolve around rich media, content from varied sources and we routinely have to deviate from prepared decks and think in a more non-linear manner versus the structured linear presentation that has been the norm in the past. When Microsoft PowerPoint or other presentation tools were initially developed text and numbers were pretty much the only things to present, but these products have not changed much over time, and now fail miserably when it comes to presenting Web content, video, and all the new types of file formats that people need to present. With time taken to switch from one window to another, and possibly a full minute to start a new program to present a

different type of media, efficiency is again taking a major hit.

Because products like Skype are unidirectional presentation tools, your attendees are simply watching you passively. Like watching TV, but without the ads. While you diligently present some PowerPoint slides, they are checking their emails. A recent survey discovered that 92% of US workers admitted multitasking during meetings, 41% admitting to doing it "often" or "all the time". It doesn't help that after the first 30 minutes, attention span drops by 30%; 40% after 45 minutes. "Sorry, I missed that, what did you say?"

In almost every presentation, someone has something to share, and that person will likely start by uploading the file to a remote cloud service or network drive. Then they will email the link to the presenter or others in the meeting, who then must download the file, to finally launch an app to open it. Assuming access to the network or Internet, and that the file revision is compatible. That process burns up more time and, whilst the process is going on, the attention span of others is affected. People start to look at their emails or engage in other things. It can take several minutes to regain control of the meeting.

Again, in many meetings… "Can I share my screen? How do I do that?" If it's a video conference, you must have the right permissions to share the screen. In each case, the meeting is disrupted, attention span is lost, time wasted. "By the way; anyone have a mini display port cable?"

Our analysis has shown that people have become accustomed to wasting 20-30 minutes during every meeting due to these issues.

Post Meeting
Because attendees are multitasking during the meeting, the message gets lost on many people. This results in multiple follow-up questions and requests: time wasted on follow up.

Each presentation is often followed by multiple requests for the presenter's PowerPoint presentation. Between gathering all participants' email addresses, gathering the requests writing the follow-up emails, you will spend an average of 20 minutes post meeting on just that activity.

The lack of focus during the meeting leads to the team wasting time asking questions that were answered during the meeting. It can lead to mistakes. Employees that got the information wrong, or partially wrong will lose anything from hours to days on a misdirected task; another hit on the overall productivity.

"Let's just have a quick follow-up meeting." The usual result of an inefficient meeting. The follow-up meeting is unlikely to be any more efficient than the original meeting. Again, teams can easily waste an additional 20-30 minutes in the post meeting dealing with all of these issues.

Talk is cheap, meetings are not.
Time is money. Between the creation of the first PowerPoint slide and the last follow up email, the hit on the bottom line grows. As much as US$25 million per day in the USA alone. That's a huge yearly total of US$37 billion, and it's not just a US problem. A recent study from the UK that estimates the cost of

ineffective meetings to be about L20,000 per year for employees as well in the UK.

Does this data make you anxious? It should, because that's not the "best" part. The quoted numbers are a "low estimate"! Because the trend is one of moving toward more remote teams and more meetings, these numbers are likely to grow - rapidly.

While industries are struggling to cut costs and increase productivity, meetings seem to be the ideal budget consuming trend to begin with. But, even if they have been identified as a point of improvement, the solutions are not there yet.

Each company has its own ideas for a solution. Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos applied a simple rule; "Don't plan a meeting in which two pizzas are not enough to feed everyone present", and he banned PowerPoint. LinkedIn banned PowerPoint as well. Even if these two giants are on the right path, mostly blaming outdated tools, they still came up short on proposals to replace them.

Need for an easy solution
With such an impact on productivity, office morale, and most of all on the result of companies, there's a big opportunity for something better. Where most productivity solutions are falling short of expectations, there are some existing "solutions" that try to address each above within one package.

Consider for a moment… What if there were a simple and intuitive, off-the-shelf software solution, packaged with the right hardware, that can help people prepare their meetings faster and more efficiently? What if it were also able bring a high level of interactivity and attention meetings, and make taking notes and follow-ups obsolete?

What if there is an existing solution out there that can save each employee a total of 1.5 hours between pre, during, and post meetings?

At Vizetto, we are taking productivity solutions to another level with a new software ecosystem: Reactiv SUITE.

Reactiv SUITE is revolutionizing the way people communicate and share by creating a "Digital Table" where multiple remote users can simultaneously access, push, and manipulate any type of content as if it were a piece of paper. Reactiv SUITE simplifies mundane tasks involved with collaboration such as, inking, marking up, tracking changes, and archiving not only to save you time but to let you focus on being creative. How would that translate to your weekly meeting? Let's take a look.

Meeting preparation: because Reactiv adapts to your workflow, you still gather the information that you need to present, but instead of doing multiple screenshots and arrange them into a PowerPoint, you simply drop every document, web-links and media you need into a single folder on your company network-drive, a cloud of your choice, or on a USB flash drive, the choice is yours and that simple process alone will make any employee save from 10 minutes to hours.

Looking at the process during meetings, we identified every bottleneck and addressed them one by one. The software is bundled with many smart features, all designed to improve productivity, interactivity

and simplicity. The cherry on the cake? These numerous features are not at the expense of the user experience. Within one intuitive interface, you can open any type of file, you can interact with files as if they were papers on a table, move them; resize; compare; also marking up; saving; editing; making our ecosystem the most versatile tool to date for all types of meetings, from presentation to brainstorming or training. Simply ink natively into documents, automatically save new revisions and track changes back to your data repository. Share these changes with your team mates without the need for creating additional email threads and clunky attachments. All of your meeting attendees can write, manipulate, discuss and contribute as if they were sitting at the same table with you.

By removing the empty pauses during presentations, Reactiv SUITE drastically increases the level of attention of attendees, as well as the level of comprehension, while helping to each presentation more concise and effective, and thereby up to 15 to 30 minutes shorter.

At the end of your meetings, because of the saving and archiving capabilities, there is no need to follow up. If the presenter wishes, every attendee can have direct access to not only every piece of content and media presented, but also every markup and note taken directly on the documents.

Because Reactiv SUITE makes your meetings shorter, attendees' attention and motivation stay high, comprehension is improved, reducing the need for follow-up emails and meetings, and most of all your message will be understood.

Just like that, with these simple but smart features, Reactiv SUITE process will improve productivity and communication, while reducing the wasted time per employee by one and half hour per meeting. The solution is intuitive enough to be mastered within 15 minutes, removing training need and increasing utilization, yet powerful enough to handle any type of workflow, from a 30 minutes sales meeting to an 18-month project.

It's not a coincidence that fortune 500 companies are already adopting Reactiv SUITE as the go-to tool for collaboration needs.

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