



by Katherine Rosback

Organizational efficiency initiatives have quickly jumped out of the 2025 starting gates, with many companies now heavily engaged in cost-cutting and reorganization. As you consider these challenges, don't forget the easy opportunity to free up resources: Time lost attending worthless meetings.

In a blog from August 2024 ([Maximizing Your Return on Investment for Face-to-face Meetings](#)), I shared how you spend roughly 30 percent of your work time in meetings, and that most of that time is wasted. So how about creating a meeting effectiveness initiative that will assist resources being asked to do more with less get some time put back in their day? Interested?

The good news is you've seen the suggestions to achieve this before; you just need to put them into action. Here's your list.

1

When you are planning a meeting, **write down the two or three key questions that should have answers by the end of the meeting.** Include them with your invite, review them at the start of the meeting, and use them to keep the talk focused. End the meeting when you have those answers, regardless of how much time is still left in the schedule. People will love you for that (see my recent blog from December 5, [Please State Your Purpose](#), for more on this).

2

Quit leaping to solutions! **Practice problem-learning before you engage in problem-solving.** If you hear a conversation heading down the rabbit

option. But before we jump into more assessment, let's think about the specific problem that solution seems to address." People waste so much time debating the merits of solutions that fix problems no one has (see the blogs on the [power of narratives](#) and [how to stop speaking in solutions](#) for more on this).

This step is vital for successful cost-cutting initiatives, and will eliminate time spent on solutions that do little to move the needle.

3

And speaking of focusing on topics that make a difference, **stop with the bikeshedding!** I recently came across the term while doing some research, and it hit home.

According to an article in [techtarget.com](#), "bikeshedding" describes conversations focused on trivial details rather than on items that make a material difference. Think: Rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. Discussing what color to paint the kitchen before you've even chosen a floor plan.

How much of your valuable time do you waste listening to lively debates on something that will not make a difference? Likely a lot. When you hear that kind of talk popping up ask, "Will the outcome of this discussion make a difference to the question we are trying to answer?" That's all it takes.

4

Ask a better question (you knew this was coming). Most of my 2024 blogs (such as [Why Brainstorming Doesn't Work: On Becoming](#)



Wickedly Innovative, Enhancing Idea Evaluations: Why Narratives Promote Better Questioning, and How “Why” Can Crumble the Psychological Safety in Your Meetings) gave suggestions for improving the thinking, creativity, and engagement of meetings you attend or lead.

To emphasize the essential role that better questions play in your cost-cutting initiatives, next week’s blog provides insight into why using question structures such as, “What are things we can do to cut costs?” will fail to provide you and your team the insightful, transformational, and sustainable answers you seek.

Until then!

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