30 The Science and Practice of Workplace Meetings

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Abstract

As much as the field of industrial-organizational psychology and allied fields associated more generally with organizational science strive to be scientist and practitioner oriented, much organizational research conducted by scientists is not readily accessible to practitioners in the field. Scientists in recent years have built an impressive research base on the topic of workplace meetings. There is also a voluminous nonscientific, or at least not explicitly scientific, practice literature on effective meetings. This chapter provides an overview of some of the primary evidence-based conclusions from the behavioral-science research on meetings and of central dominant themes from the practice literature. Then, acknowledging the similarities (and differences) between the two spheres of meeting knowledge, the chapter outlines core prescriptions for effective meetings drawn from both domains as well as from my applied experience. In concluding, I offer some thoughts about making our science more relevant.

Keywords: scientist-practitioner, workplace meetings, meeting research, meeting practice, leadership, prescriptions for effective meetings

Meetings serve an extremely wide variety of purposes. Following the liberal definition of two or more individuals interacting in a relatively structured way in the context of work-related issues (e.g., Rogelberg, 2006), meetings may, among many other purposes, serve to exchange information for planning, coordinating, monitoring progress, goal setting, giving feedback, training, brainstorming, solving problems, making decisions, and establishing and cementing social relationships (Cohen, Rogelberg, Allen, & Luong, 2011; Shanock, Allen, Dunn, Baran, Scott, & Rogelberg, 2013). Although meetings may by this definition involve interactions with customers, clients, competitors, prospective employees, outside experts, and regulatory agencies, and the practice literature spans those sorts of interactions, the research on meetings typically targets interactions among employees of the same company as the primary focus. Such is also the focus of this chapter, from the perspective of implications for practice.

As I discuss the science and practice of workplace meetings in general, I use specific examples from two domains in particular: safety meetings and project team meetings. I am intimately acquainted with both as an organizational consultant, and both are quite common in the workplace. Although some differences exist between these two meeting types, both exemplify many of the core elements of organizational meetings.

I have deep research and application experience in behavior-based safety processes and have worked closely with a number of companies to enhance their safety efforts, ultimately through building a "positive safety culture" within their overall

organizational culture. I write a regular column by that name for the *Industrial Safety & Hygiene News,* a professional journal with a global circulation in excess of 70,000. One of the visible markers of a positive safety culture is the high-impact safety meeting – a safety meeting that actually increases mindfulness about risks and best practice safe behaviors and that activates safe behavior in self and in others via peer-to-peer safety coaching (Kello, 2008).

Project team meetings are also commonplace in the organizational world, especially in larger organizations, and I have had a great deal of experience helping organizations plan and structure such meetings around a wide variety of projects. Because project team meetings capture most of the core elements of meetings in general, they provide concrete examples of more general principles about effective meetings.

My meeting experience is by no means limited to these two meeting formats. I have also consulted with organizations in such areas as quality circle meetings, process improvement meetings, steering committee and design team meetings, self-directed work team meetings, senior leadership team meetings, and board of directors meetings. But in my current consulting practice, safety and project team meetings are the most salient types in which I have made observations and sampled leader and participant opinion.

Although in this chapter I address practical implications for meetings in general, as does most of the research and practice literature, it is useful to be mindful that meetings in particular may display less than a full set of the general principles and may even be at variance with some of them. It is not an exaggeration to say that "no two meetings are alike" (Allen, Sands, Mueller, Frear, Mudd, & Rogelberg, 2012, p. 406). I would add that no two participants or leaders are alike. I recall one of my neuroscience professors in graduate school telling the class that the "generic neuron" (a spinal motor neuron) illustrated the core structural and functional properties of nerve cells, but that in fact most of the nervous system did not look like that. There was wide variation, as well as frequent exceptions to the rule. Similarly, although there are some reasonable conclusions to be drawn about Americans in general or about a typical face, differences emerge in the details. There are meaningful common denominators for meetings, on which I focus in this chapter, but it is useful to keep in mind that each meeting has some unique properties.

The Hoped-for Integration of Science and Practice

There have been many calls for our science to be more relevant, coming from, among others, presidents and top officers of our premier national professional associations, including the American Psychological Association (APA), the Association for Psychological Science, and the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, and going back many years (e.g., Klatzky, 2009; Miller, 1969; Ryan, 2002; Zimbardo, 2002, 2004). In fact, W. L. Bryan's (1904) APA presidential address, delivered when American psychology as an organized discipline was in its very early youth, is just such a call. Yet it is still the case that organizational science researchers generally study issues and publish research articles in a somewhat closed

system, in which their readers and those inspired by their research are primarily other researchers; see the special issue of the *Journal of Business and Psychology* of May 2011 and the illustrative paper by A. N. Garman (2011). Business leaders and many consultants, who could benefit greatly from the outcomes of such research, are generally outside that loop, typically relying on past practice and best guesses based on popular sources that are not particularly rooted in behavioral-science research.

The disconnect between the focus of the scientist and the needs of the business leader and practitioner is a shared responsibility, to be sure. Although many leaders in business with whom I have worked do regularly read such general business sources as *Harvard Business Review*, business magazines such as *Fortune* and *Forbes*, and the top trade journals in their discipline, few if any read the *Journal of Applied Psychology* or *Personnel Psychology*, nor the numerous less prestigious but also valuable academic research sources.

I believe that we on the academic side are well positioned to reach out to those in the organizational world with best-practice distillations from our research, especially to the extent that we have some understanding of the actual needs of practitioners and leaders "out there." Indeed, if we are serious about being scientist-practitioners, we have some obligation to do so.

What Does the Research Literature Tell Us about Meetings?

In this section I outline some of the central conclusions from the growing body of research on workplace meetings. Although interest in meetings has a long history, rigorous scientific analysis of the structural and process elements of meetings and their impact on participants started in earnest only about a decade ago, but has gained momentum dramatically since then.

Conclusion #1: A Lot of Time Is Spent There

Scholars widely acknowledge that employees at all levels in a wide variety of organizations spend a great deal of time in meetings of many types (e.g., Luong & Rogelberg, 2005; Rogelberg, 2006; Rogelberg, Leach, Warr, & Burnfield, 2006; Rogelberg, Scott, & Kello, 2007). One estimate going back more than 15 years and often repeated in the research literature suggests that Americans experience approximately 11 million business meetings . . . er day! (MCI, 1998; Rogelberg et al., 2007; see also Rogelberg, Allen, Shanock, Scott, & Shuffler, 2010). That estimate is only for business meetings. To make the point even more vividly, some sleuthing through the literature revealed that the 11 million per day figure, still floated in the current literature, did not originate in the seminal 1998 survey study, which has provided so many of the statistics that are so widely cited today, but instead was stated more than 20 years earlier, in the mid-1970s (Jay, 1976) – and it is not clear whether the author was citing then-current or even older statistics, because no source is offered! Even assuming that Jay was quoting valid, then-current data, one has to wonder what has happened to that average estimate in the intervening 38 years.

It has also been estimated that managers in large organizations spend as much as 75% of their time in meetings and activities related to meetings, such as preplanning, postmeeting circulation of minutes, and so on (Van Vree, 1999). Other estimates, also 15 years or more out of date but still widely cited, indicate that the direct-participation time in meetings for executives may be on the order of 30% of their work week, and their typical work week may extend well beyond the classical 40-hour week (e.g., Carlozzi, 1999). The global estimate passed on in the MCI (1998) white paper was that, in the aggregate, the employees they sampled spend 37% of their time in meetings, with busy professionals attending 60 or more meetings per month. More recent scientific studies generally confirm such meeting load and emphasize the impact both of the total amount of time spent in meetings and, perhaps more importantly, the frequency of meetings (see Luong & Rogelberg, 2005).

I must note that the validity of the heavily relied-on MCI survey data is called into question by the acknowledged fact that the telephone survey targeted "professionals who are heavy meeting-goers," as did the second step of the study, the diary part. At one point the white paper claims that the target group attended on average 6 meetings per month; in other sections it relays the "60 per month" figure. Setting aside such apparent contradictions, the huge preponderance of evidence from many additional sources supports the general conclusion that most people experience a considerable meeting load.

Conclusion #2: Meetings Are Not Free and They Are Not Cheap

In addition to the significant time commitment of managers, it is estimated that employees who are "down" where the work of the organization gets done participate in scheduled meetings an average of 6 hours per week (not counting any pre- or post-meeting prep and debrief time) and that in larger organizations the time commitment for employees is even greater (Rogelberg et al., 2006). It is also widely acknowledged that a significant direct financial cost is associated with meetings (older estimates are in the range of upward of 15% of the personnel budget; Doyle & Strauss, 1982). It is certainly possible, even likely, that the classic 15% figure (like the decades-old 11 million per day figure) is an underestimate of the current state.

There are actually a wide variety of tools available online (including a "Time Is Money Clock") that allow one to enter a few parameters (number of attendees, average hourly salary) and track the direct cost of a meeting in real time. It is an eye-opening exercise to be sure, and again, such tools only estimate the cost of the meeting per se, not the pre-, post-, or other lost productivity costs associated with the "hour in the conference room." One of the tools I recently used calculated that a weekly 2-hour meeting with eight employees, with a mean salary of $40,000 per year, has an annual direct cost of $14,769.23. If I assume that the big boss is running the show (and skewing the mean salary figure to, say, $75,000 per year, the annual cost increases to $27,692.31. A similar sized weekly 2-hour management team meeting with employees with an annual average salary of $150,000 yields an annual cost of $55,384.62. Again, that figure reflects direct meeting-time cost only and does not include pre-and postmeeting time spent on the content of the meeting, nor travel and

lodging expenses if the meeting attendees are not all in the same location. Surely that is a big price tag, even if the meetings are yielding some value. Suppose they add no value, or worse, are actively deleterious to performance and/or morale?

Conclusion #3: Meetings Are Here to Stay and Are Most Likely Increasing in Frequency

There are no visible trends in the research to suggest any decrease in meetings. Indeed, meetings are widely forecast to continue to consume more and more organizational time and other resources (MCI, 1998: Tobia & Becker, 1990). If anything, the increasing use of available technology, allowing virtual conferences and team meetings, may be adding impetus to the increase in meeting frequency (MCI, 2003). The number of face-to-face meetings, in particular those involving costly long-distance travel, may well be decreasing (Arvey, 2009), but not the overall number of meetings per se. Such technological advancement is also adding layers of complexity to meetings, beyond the sheer quantity of meetings. Consider that in the increasingly prominent virtual team meetings, typical meeting challenges are exacerbated by the lack of face time (minimizing nonverbal communication and complicating team building in any meaningful sense), prospectively communicating with members in different time zones and from different cultural backgrounds, and so on (cf. Lyons, Priest, Wildman, Salas, & Carnegie, 2009).

Overall, despite the increasing frequency of virtual meetings and the increasing fidelity of the visual and audio technology to support them, meeting load appears not to be decreasing. Interestingly, there are still persistent calls for the face-to-face meeting, emphasizing the unique value of such live, personal contact (see Arvey, 2009).

Conclusion #4: In General, People Commonly Perceive Meetings as Unproductive

Despite the ubiquity and the huge organizational investment in meetings, many of them, by any measure, are not very productive. This is an absolutely crucial issue. Much of the time spent in meetings (a third to a half is the common ballpark estimate, identified by numerous authors) is considered by participants to be unproductive (Chaney & Lyden, 1997; MCI, 1998, 2003).

A recent salary.com survey indicated that 47% of workers sampled identified meetings as their number one time waster at work (Pozin, 2013). Interestingly, in the older MCI (1998) survey, meeting leaders self-evaluated the meetings they led to be "very or extremely productive" nearly 75–80% of the time. What an enlightening disconnect! This is a critical point, to which I return.

In my safety consulting work, I commonly set the table for a discussion of regular safety meetings by asking participants to think about the totality of the experience they have had in their entire career in safety meetings in which they have been participants and to estimate the percentage of those meetings that they would describe as highly effective, using whatever criteria they choose. To the likely disappointment

of those managers, safety engineers, safety committees, and HR staff who are the sponsors of such meetings, the responses range from a low of 5% to a high of 75%, with the most common and overall average response being in the 30–35% range. I recognize that my survey is not scientific. Nonetheless, I think it is interesting that my results, which are consistent across a diversity of industry and organization types, find that most safety meetings are not seen as "highly effective."

When I ask my effectiveness question differently, as in "What percentage of the safety meetings you participate in are 'not effective' (i.e., they didn't accomplish anything and you got nothing out of them)," the figures range from around 10% to around 80%, with the average being 30% or so. The older research on meetings in general yields the same overall conclusion as my less scientific observation: "maybe 1/3 of the meetings I am in are not effective" (cf., Green & Lazarus, 1991).

In my consulting role I have also polled experienced project team members about the overall effectiveness of their project team meetings. The satisfaction scores are typically higher (averaging 50–75% "effective to highly effective" ratings) than those among safety meeting participants. The difference between the assessment of safety meetings and of project team meetings may reflect any of several factors. For one, the practice literature identifies project management as a core management/leadership skill, for which there is training (and certification from the 2.9-million member Project Management Institute, http://www.pmi.org//About-Us.aspx) and for which there are a number of formal tools and techniques to aid project leaders and participants in following a specific process. Second, and related, project management meetings always involve some role specification for participants, and they encourage and even require active interaction. Third, project team meetings are time-bounded. There is a set period of time during which the team meets, clearly identified dates and deliverables, and an endpoint. Sponsors and others monitor and fine-tune the meeting process, as needed. Project team meetings eventuate in a visible product, a clear recommendation or set of actions for implementation. When the team has done its work, members depart, often to become part of another project team.

Such is generally not the case for safety meetings (Kello, 2008), in which a supervisor, who usually has little or no training in meeting management skills, talks to the workgroup, usually in the same format, about safety. But even with the relative advantages of the structured project team meeting, as many as one-quarter to one-half of all such meetings are seen by participants as relatively unproductive and mostly a waste of time.

Interestingly, when I ask my respondents in both safety and project team meetings to identify common problems that limit the effectiveness of their meetings and what should be done instead, their complaints and their recommendations across the two distinct venues are closely similar and indeed constitute a valuable list of meeting do's and don'ts. In fact, their experience-based suggestions mostly turn out to be supported by both behavioral-science research and by much of the popular literature on meetings.

Although it is not the case as claimed in much of the practice literature that "we all hate meetings" (Symanowitz, 2013, p. 45), there is abundant evidence that from the participants' perspective much of the time they spend in meetings is not well spent.

Conclusion #5: Meetings Have Impact Well beyond the Confines of the Meeting Itself

Meetings are not isolated, stand-alone events, divorced from the other elements that make up an employee's overall work experience. Consider that the meeting is a work context in which the leader, commonly the boss, creates impressions that can strongly influence participant/employee feelings and cognitions, not only about the boss and the meeting but also about "our meetings" and even "my organization." Meetings then are not just about the ostensible content. They are arenas of performance with affective as well as cognitive components. Judgments are made in meetings about the participants (who are the "players"?), about the leader (can he/she be trusted . . . is he/she competent?), and about the organization. Meetings have symbolic, ritual impact, well beyond the mere exchange of information (Islam & Zyphur, 2009). A meeting culture arises over a period of time, and it affects employees' attitudes about the organization overall. Thus, unproductive, poorly planned and led meetings may have detrimental effects that certainly include, but extend well beyond, the wasted hour of the poor meeting (Luong & Rogelberg, 2005; Rogelberg, Shanock, & Scott, 2012; Rogelberg et al., 2006). One of the many interesting side effects of such meetings stems from the empirically supported observation that employee satisfaction with meetings is a significant facet of overall job satisfaction. The data show that low reported satisfaction with meetings correlates significantly with low job satisfaction, and that the greater the number of unproductive meetings that are held, the stronger that association (Rogelberg et al., 2010; see also Tobia & Becker, 1990).

Even as the research literature focuses mostly on the spread of the negative impact of ineffective meetings, recent research also supports the conclusion that effective, productive meetings have considerable positive effects beyond the bounds of the meeting itself – not only on job satisfaction (Rogelberg et al., 2010) but also on overall employee engagement (Allen & Rogelberg, 2013). Encouraging news indeed! The better we can make meetings, the more satisfied and engaged the employees, and the better the organization and its human capital are able to function. Very recent studies strongly support the conclusion that, when meetings have a clearly communicated and understood objective and are experienced by participants as productive, participants even welcome more meetings (e.g., Allen et al., 2012; see also MCI, 1998). Good meetings actually do a lot of good!

To return to the dark side, though, the behavioral-science research also supports the general conclusion that the negative impact of bad meetings is greater than the positive impact of good meetings (e.g., Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012).

The problem then is not "meetings;" it is "bad meetings."

Conclusion #6: Leadership Does Make All the Difference

Many factors contribute to the perceived effectiveness or ineffectiveness of meetings, and the greatest single influence on these factors is the leader of the meeting. There is an abundant literature, extending well beyond the context of meetings, showing that

the leader has a huge impact on every aspect of organizational functioning. Some of the most visible popular research and writing on leadership strongly support the conclusion that the leader makes all the difference (e.g., Collins, 2001; Collins & Porras, 1994). The leader of the meeting (commonly the meeting "owner" as well; i.e., the boss or project manager who calls and runs the meeting) has the primary responsibility for planning the meeting, running the meeting, and managing the aftermath of the meeting.

In a seminal study of the impact of leader behaviors on meeting effectiveness, Malouff, Calic, McGrory, Murrell, and Schutte (2012) identified 19 expert-recommended leader behaviors and studied the extent to which the actual observed implementation of these behaviors was associated with attendee satisfaction and ratings of productivity of the meeting. Of the 19 candidate behaviors, 9 showed significant correlations with attendees' ratings of satisfaction with the meeting, productivity of the meeting, or both. Yet, these critical, simple behaviors (e.g., "encourages participation") were not visible in 100% of the observed meetings. Of the subset of four behaviors that correlated significantly with both satisfaction and productivity, only 72% of the meeting leaders who were observed in action demonstrated all four (range from 52% to 93%). These best practice behaviors are identified more specifically in the recommendations that follow. For now, note that in many of the 60 meetings that Malouff's research team observed, critical behaviors that affect perceived productivity and satisfaction were not consistently shown. Interestingly, some of the lowest percentages were for "at the end of the meeting, summarizes the decisions made" (52%) and "starts on time" (a lowly 40%!).

Conclusion #7: Participants Can Compensate to Some Extent for Less than Optimal Leadership

Although it is primarily the leader's responsibility to structure the meeting experience, active participants who are familiar with the critical elements of an effective meeting and are empowered to speak up can prompt the leader to fill in the missing pieces; they can also fill them in themselves and, in general, can implement a model of shared leadership in the meeting setting. And a central part of the leader's initial structuring of the meeting experience can be letting participants know that the leader sees the meeting as a shared responsibility and opportunity. Thus, participants are not only allowed to speak up, provide direction, and help manage the meeting process – they are expected to do so.

In the same way that an airline captain ideally meets with his or her co-pilot at the start of the month in a team formation briefing and sets the tone for how communication and coordination are expected to work during the time they fly together (Hackman, 1993), so can a meeting leader establish and support the expectation that participants play an active role in the meeting. It is more likely that participants will step up and actively help the leader make the meeting effective if the leader explicitly empowers them to do so (see Baran, Shanock, Rogelberg, & Scott, 2012).

Because active participation is widely identified in the research literature as one of the key moderators of participant assessment of meeting effectiveness (e.g., Leach,

Table 30.1. *Summary of Main Conclusions from Meeting Research*

Conclusion	Brief Explanation	Sample Sources
#1: Huge time cost	Employees at all levels spend an extraordinary amount of time in meetings.	Rogelberg et al., 2007
#2: Huge financial cost	Direct costs, plus pre- and postmeeting costs and lost productivity, during the meeting are significant.	MCI, 1998
#3: Meetings are ubiquitous	There are no signs that meetings are decreasing in frequency.	MCI, 2003
#4: Meetings are seen as unproductive	Participants generally rate meetings as ineffective.	Chaney & Lyden, 1997
#5: Meetings have broad impact	Meetings significantly affect employee attitudes about their job and organization	Rogelberg et al., 2010
#6: Leadership is critical	The meeting leader has the primary responsibility for every aspect of the meeting.	Malouff et al., 2012
#7: Participants can co-lead	If empowered, active participants can help make the meeting a success.	Baran et al., 2012

Rogelberg, Warr, & Burnfield, 2009; Malouff et al., 2012), leaders who set the expectation of open participation, and even of respectful dissent and challenge (see Scott, Allen, Bonilla, Baran, & Murphy, 2013), reap a double benefit: They leverage that participation, and they thereby get help in managing the meeting for optimal effectiveness.

As nice as it sounds, the foregoing is often easier said than done. As noted earlier, there are good empirical data to support the conclusion that the leader (most often the boss) is prone to see his or her meetings as more productive and satisfying than do the participants (MCI, 1998). It has also been shown that participants in meetings are prone to regulate their expression of emotion (so-called surface acting) and that such regulation is associated with emotional exhaustion and related negative affective states and intentions (Shanock et al., 2013). More recent research demonstrates that the likelihood of such surface acting is increased in the presence of "higher ups" (Thomas, Allen, Rogelberg, & Kello, 2014). Such surface acting may take the form of participants' agreeing and appearing to be engaged, even as they are expending emotional labor to "fake it." Thus the leader would be prone to think the meetings are going well, while the participants have a different opinion, which they are suppressing. The leader–participant status difference makes it that much harder for participants to speak up and play a more active role in the meeting unless the leader sets the expectation and makes it safe for them to do so.

Summing up, a substantial body of rigorous scientific research exists regarding workplace meetings, factors that influence their perceived quality, and the immediate and broader impacts of effective versus ineffective meetings. Table 30.1 presents in

an abbreviated form the central conclusions extracted from that growing body of research.

There is also a very large practice literature that addresses the same issues from a lay perspective, as elaborated in the next section.

What Does the Popular Practice Literature Say about Meetings?

The largely nonscientific practice literature on meetings is vast. My experience and my general scan of this voluminous practice literature support the view that practicing managers are well aware of the ubiquity and, to some extent, the resource cost of meetings. Many of the relevant figures about the time and financial costs of meetings that are cited in the research literature are relayed in the practice literature, sometimes quantitatively (quoting the venerable "11 million per day" figure) and sometimes qualitatively ("most meetings . . . many managers"). Much of this popular literature does provide some practical, experience-based guidance for leaders and participants. Indeed, if one had no prior knowledge of or opinion about workplace meetings, the sheer mass of popular material on the topic would virtually force the conclusion that meetings must be of great interest and great importance to a very large group of people!

A cursory scan of current popular sources (an Amazon.com search for books on business meetings is eye opening) yielded literally dozens and dozens of such "how to" and "what not to" books and opinion pieces, far too many to catalog individually here. Similarly, many nonacademic professional sources include occasional articles and columns, which are opinion pieces aimed at their professional audiences that cover the same territory (for example, Anderson, 2013; Arvey, 2009; Hequet, 2013; Kello, 2008; Pozin, 2013; for running effective meetings, see Symanowitz, 2013; *Tips for More Effective Meetings*, 2011). A typical, fairly comprehensive example is the opinion piece by Caruth and Caruth (2012), which outlines detailed experience-based guidelines for what they identify as the "three prongs" of meetings: preparation, control, and evaluation.

Additionally, there are websites devoted largely or entirely to sharing strategies and tactics to promote meeting effectiveness; for example, parts of Dummies.com and MeetingWizard.org, as well as the especially comprehensive resource site EffectiveMeetings.com, a treasure trove of practical advice on making meetings work. Again, even a cursory look at such sources provides a rich array of practical tips for effective meetings.

Indeed, entries in the huge volume of popular material consistently capture many of the most central conclusions of current behavioral-science research. The popular literature emphasizes universally that meetings are indeed extremely common, high-cost events that continue to grow in frequency and that many of them are considered by participants to be unproductive and dissatisfying. The popular articles generally lambaste the common elements of the bad meeting, and some identify such meetings as having wider negative effects on participants' attitudes about their work, not just

about their meetings. In their efforts to share positive how-to advice, the popular sources generally acknowledge that meetings are not going away (nor should they) and that good meetings are quite valuable, a point that some of the sources make quite explicitly.

Much of the practical advice is aimed squarely at the leader, as the meeting owner, who bears primary responsibility for planning, organizing, conducting and guiding, concluding, and following up the meeting. Some of the practice literature does acknowledge the role of the active participant in helping make the meeting a success. However, there is not much of a thread in the practice literature that I reviewed that addresses the likelihood that the leader may be predisposed to consistently see his or her meetings as better than the participants do, again a telling point.

Some of the legions of practice-oriented opinion pieces do include some reference to scientific sources. But most often the practical guidelines offered in the popular sources are presented without any reference whatsoever to empirical data. It is certainly possible that writers of practical how-to's for effective meetings are in fact well versed in the behavioral-science literature and are just adapting evidence-based conclusions for their lay audience. More likely, though, the practice literature is not drawn from the relevant research, but rather from commonsense and everyday experience (and other practice articles). For whatever reasons, however, the overlap between the science and practitioner literatures on the fundamentals of effective meetings is, frankly, pretty impressive! For a particularly instructive example, albeit only one of many, the "Meeting Basics" section of EffectiveMeetings.com lays out, in brief outline form, a great deal of applied, experience-based wisdom (with an occasional citation to mostly secondary or other practice-oriented sources) that is quite consonant with evidence-based conclusions from the available research.

A more critical point perhaps is that, although such prescriptive information is more readily available than research-based information to people in the organizational world, and it is largely internally consistent and generally useful if followed, the experiential evidence suggests (strongly) that such information is not universally implemented. Meeting leaders may think they are doing fine, even following best practice, without their needing to consult a meeting website or popular book, much less to get training in effective meetings. Again, meeting leaders generally see their meetings as more effective than do their participants (MCI, 1998), an observation strongly supported by my consulting experience.

Taking it as a given that the meeting leader has the greatest impact on the ultimate design, conduct, and overall impact of the meeting, in the rest of the chapter I target that role as I combine information drawn from multiple sources and suggest prescriptions for meetings that "work."

What Must the Leader Do to Ensure an Effective Meeting?

There are an array of structural issues, or "design characteristics" (Leach et al., 2009), that must be addressed for an effective meeting, and these issues are largely controlled by the meeting leader. Synthesizing what we know from both

evidence-based and popular sources, combined with my consulting experience (as well as my experience in contributing to the research and practice literatures), I offer the following guidelines – in the form of questions to be addressed and prescriptions to be followed – for effective meetings.

Question #1: *Why?* Do We Really Need a Meeting at All?

An abundance of behavioral-science research supports the conclusion that busy, productive people who are results oriented and place great value on their time are prone to resent and resist anything that misuses their time and impedes their productivity. People who are high in conscientiousness (in terms of the increasingly prominent Big Five factor model of personality; McCrae & Costa, 2008), especially those who have strong scores on the "achievement striving" facets of the conscientiousness factor, really hate to have their time wasted in a pointless meeting or in any other way (see Rogelberg et al., 2007). If they are in charge, they are more likely than others to not call a meeting unless there is a clear need for the group to get together. Similarly, they are likely to cancel a planned meeting if in their judgment it seems to be unnecessary. If they are participants and are made to attend a meeting that is in their judgment unnecessary, they are likely to resent it as a time-waster. If they cannot fix the meeting (i.e., step up as an active participant and de facto co-leader), they are likely to disengage or at least multitask (to make better use of their time).

As a sidebar, one of the risks of the increasingly common teleconference is that high-conscientiousness folks are prone to use the mute button and work on something else during the meeting (this is both an anecdotal observation and a personal confession). The foundational MCI (1998) study indicated that individuals confess to a fairly high frequency of disconnect behaviors in meetings, including daydreaming (very common), bringing other work, and even dozing off! Although that research did not sort respondents by personality type, I would expect that high-conscientiousness individuals are the most likely to do so. It is good for meeting leaders to be mindful that some of their best employees are especially demotivated by unnecessary meetings (e.g., Rogelberg et al., 2007). Leaders would also do well to be wary of the regularly scheduled weekly (or monthly, etc.) staff meeting, where a group may meet mainly because a meeting is on the books. If there is not enough real work that requires the participation of the group, there is no need for the meeting, period.

The purpose of the meeting is an absolutely central, foundational consideration in terms of its ultimate effectiveness or ineffectiveness. The agenda, important as it is, is really just a roadmap or blueprint for getting to some desired outcome. That outcome is the point, the objective of the meeting. Furthermore, if real interaction among participants is not needed to accomplish the objective, leaders would almost always do better to use another communication medium. If an e-mail or a memo will do, let it do so. The practice literature captures this seminal point clearly and widely.

At the same time, there is in the practitioner literature a theme supporting the value of meetings, as long as they meet the other criteria, over the less personal

communications media of phone/voicemail or e-mail (e.g., Arvey, 2009; SMART Technologies, 2013).

> *Prescription #1 – Make sure there is a clear objective that requires and justifies the meeting. Otherwise, do not use the meeting process, and if a meeting is scheduled, cancel it. Recognize that it is likely the most conscientious and achievement-oriented employees who are most turned off by unnecessary meetings and the unwelcome interruption of the workday that they bring.*

Question #2: *Who?* If the Meeting is Justified, Who Really Needs to Be There (and Who Does Not)?

An issue related to "do we really need a meeting" is "do *I* really need to be there?" If a meeting is truly needed, but the leader does not need the whole group to be there, some players can be excused from attendance, with the commitment that they will be kept informed, in some appropriate and agreed-on way, as to the outcome of the meeting. As long as there is a commitment to share the output of the meeting, most employees (again, especially the highly conscientious ones) will be happy to read the minutes at their own pace, rather than sit in a hour-long meeting they really did not need to attend. Compared to the core players, who may need to be at a given meeting, the peripheral players, whose expert input may be needed at times, usually do not need to be there (Rogelberg et al., 2007).

The "Is the meeting relevant to me?" question strongly colors participants' assessments of meeting effectiveness (cf. Allen & Rogelberg, 2013). This point is widely trumpeted in the practice literature as well, but in my experience meeting leaders rarely trim the attendee list in ways that both the research and practice literatures suggest.

Are roles for participants in the meeting clearly defined and communicated? Again, assuming we do need to meet and the right people are invited, do the meeting participants have specific roles and responsibilities? Are some expected to present specific information? Are all going to help decide an issue? Is there a facilitator? Will someone be assigned to make notes/take minutes for the group?

Rather than just assuming that "my team" needs to be there, effective meeting leaders should make a conscious, informed decision as to which players are essential to accomplish the work of the meeting and which can and should be excused (and kept informed).

> *Prescription #2 – Target the "right" participants, clarify their roles as needed, and relieve those who do not really need to be there, making sure to keep the "excused but involved" members informed as to what was accomplished in the meeting.*

Question #3: *How Many?* Size Matters

There is an abundant behavioral-science literature on small group process that indicates that, if group interaction, brainstorming, and other examples of harnessing the collective brainpower of the group are part of the meeting process, the size of the

group should be no larger than 12 (nor smaller than 5 or so). "Around seven" seems to be the optimal size for the synergy of small group process to work. Beyond the extensive social psychology literature on small group process, there are speculative evolutionary considerations that support the notion that "about seven is about right" for an interdependent working unit (Kello, 2005, 2013; Nicholson, 1998). Again, if real interaction is needed, too large a group stifles that interaction, and too small a group may be below the critical mass needed for brainstorming or other approaches to creative thinking.

Many of the variables that relate to participant perceptions of overall meeting effectiveness are mediated in their effect by attendee participation. That is, design characteristics that ultimately relate to effectiveness do so in considerable part by their influence on the crucial variable of attendee participation (Leach et al., 2009). Participation in a large meeting is going to be very limited and is likely to involve only a few. The practitioner literature suggests that, if it is truly justified and necessary for the participant group to be very large, some form of subteaming is essential to generate threshold levels of shared participation (e.g., Dannemiller & Jacobs, 1992; Kello, 2006).

> *Prescription #3 – Strive to keep the meeting size within the small-group process range to help in generating full, active participation, which is crucial to meeting effectiveness. If that is not possible, break up the larger group into meaningful subunits to elicit more participation.*

Question #4: *How?* What Agenda Steps Will We Follow to Achieve the Objective of the Meeting?

This is probably the most common and most universal issue of concern in the practice literature. As obvious as it may seem that meetings need a roadmap to indicate how to get to their objective/desired outcome, many meetings do not have an explicit agenda (Kello, 2008). And most of the existing research to date supports the conclusion that having the agenda clearly specified does indeed correlate with participants' perceptions of meeting effectiveness (Leach et al., 2009).

Some of the practitioner literature emphasizes further the value of placing the most important issues early in the agenda (for the obvious reason of making sure they get fully covered). Additionally, there is some impetus in the practice literature to focus the agenda on "moving forward" (i.e., positive strategies, rather than looking backward and reflecting on "misses;" for example, entrepreneur.com, Aug. 2012).

In light of the venerable Parkinson's law (variously phrased, but commonly stated as "work expands to fill the time we have to do it"), it is widely advised in the practice literature, and supported by research, to estimate time frames for each agenda item, state those time frames on the agenda, and then stick as closely to them as possible.

Assuming there is an agenda, then should it be circulated in advance? Again, there is good research-based evidence of the value (in terms of participant perceptions of effectiveness) of an agenda-in-advance. The benefits include allowing participants time to prepare for an active discussion/active role in the meeting (Spencer & Pruss,

1992) and giving them the opportunity to influence the agenda if they see issues that are more germane to achieving the desired objective.

Do meetings actually follow the agenda? If the objective is a clear and important one and the agenda is a good roadmap for getting the group to that outcome, actually following the agenda should indeed be important. Surprisingly, some of the existing research-based data suggest that "follows agenda" is not significantly correlated with attendee satisfaction or perceptions of productivity (Malouff et al., 2012). This finding is a counterpoint to a great deal of the practice literature and my consulting experience. I am clearly speculating, but I believe such a finding begs the question, in that if the objective is unclear and/or unimportant, then following steps to get there may well be uncorrelated with meeting effectiveness. And even if the objective is clear and important, if the agenda is poorly constructed in the first place, then following it yields no great advantage. Where the right objective and agenda are in place, however, to deviate from the agenda would likely be to waste time. There is no suggestion in the practice literature that following the agenda is unimportant; to the contrary, sticking to an agenda is widely seen as essential to the effectiveness of the meeting (e.g., EffectiveMeetings.com).

The main exception to the forgoing logic is, if with the understanding and support of the leader and attendees, they happen on other unanticipated issues that they deem to be more critical in reaching the objective (or if a more critical objective is identified), then deviating from the initially set agenda may be in order. In practice, there is a comfortable middle ground approach to off-agenda issues. Known variously as the "parking lot" or the "bin list," the meeting leader (or facilitator or note-taker) can capture the issue for later discussion. By putting it on the list, it is not lost, but it also does not take time away from the primary agenda.

Along with the agenda (and objective), the leader should send any relevant background material in advance to participants and alert them to any specific roles they will be expected to play in the meeting. Ideally, participants thus notified in advance should have the opportunity to suggest changes to the agenda as they see fit.

> *Prescription #4 – The agenda is absolutely critical. To get to the objective, identify the agenda items/steps that must be covered to get there. Attend to the order of events, the planned timing of each item, and, unless a mutually agreed higher priority issue comes up, stick to the agenda. Whenever possible, circulate the agenda in advance, along with any additional information that will help participants come prepared.*

Question #5: *When?* What Is the Best Time and Time Frame for the Meeting?

For an ad hoc, nonrecurring meeting, the best time is when the right people can come together and concentrate on the issue at hand. The question is more challenging for recurring meetings, which are the most common kind and which are most prone to the whole range of problems outlined both earlier and in the later discussion. With the regular recurring meeting, it is all too easy to lapse into "useless rituals" (entrepreneur.com, Aug. 2012) and meet because "this is our regular meeting time."

If a meeting is justified, the leader should want people to be at their freshest and sharpest, in which case the meeting should probably be scheduled relatively early in the day or shift. Although some of the practice literature suggests that a routine meeting, in which the leader does not want people to spend productive work time, should be scheduled explicitly *not* during the time when employees are freshest and most productive (e.g., Girard, 2012), I would suggest that such a meeting probably cannot be justified in the first place.

A related temporal topic much referenced in the practice literature is the issue of keeping meetings very brief. Some of the practice literature suggests limiting meetings (absolutely) to 30 minutes and/or starting meetings at, say, 12 minutes past the hour, or just before lunch or just before the end of the workday, and possibly having no chairs, so that we have a "standing meeting." All these common suggestions from the practice literature (e.g., Caruth & Caruth, 2012; Symanowitz, 2013) are aimed at making sure that meetings do not just run on and on. But if we limit meeting time, it is surely important not to increase the number of such meetings, because the frequency of meetings (therefore the number of interruptions) may be more deleterious than the amount of time spent in the meeting per se (Luong & Rogelberg, 2005). And if we have an objective and agenda that can be accomplished in less than 30 minutes and while standing up, either at 11:30 a.m. or 4:12 p.m., do we really need a meeting?

How about start and stop times? Starting late and running long are common frustrations of meeting attendees and are often a result of the leader delaying because of latecomers to the meeting. Although people define lateness in a surprising variety of ways, some objective and some very subjective (see Rogelberg et al., 2013), participants generally see attendee lateness as a major irritant that influences their overall assessment of meeting effectiveness (e.g., Allen et al., 2012). Recall that the Malouff et al. (2012) study found "starts on time" to be one of the expert-recommended leader behaviors that occurred least often in the meetings observed by the research team. (Note: As discussed later, in some non-Western cultures lateness is not only tolerated but is also the norm, often to the confusion and frustration of unsuspecting Western-culture attendees.)

> *Prescription #5 – Design the meeting to fit a time frame that allows adequate time to get the work of the meeting done. Start the meeting at the designated time, and end it no later than the designated stop time. If you feel the need to dramatically shorten meetings to prevent their running on and on, consider whether the meeting is necessary at all. Short meetings can mean many subsequent work interruptions, a risky tradeoff.*

Question #6: *Where?* What Is the Best Location for the Meeting, and How Should the Meeting Space Be Configured (and with what Technology)?

Interestingly, good behavioral-science research supports the conclusion that the physical and logistical characteristics of the meeting space and its amenities (including refreshments!) correlate well with attendees' judgments of meeting quality and effectiveness (Cohen et al., 2011; Leach et al., 2009). In most cases there will be a set

meeting space, such as a regular conference room or similar space, to accommodate the meeting. Most set meeting spaces these days have at least projection capability, and often more advanced technology.

In general, the meeting space should be as free from distractions and as reconfigurable as possible, allowing flexibility consistent with the purpose of the meeting. Thus, for a small-group discussion/ problem-solving meeting in which high participation is encouraged, movable tables arranged in a U-shape may be ideal and are a common configuration. Where smaller breakout groups are desired, it is beneficial to have tables that can be separated in order to have, say, subgroups of five working together. I have participated in a very successful meeting with more than 700 attendees, in which the meeting space was a hotel ballroom, with participants in groups of seven to eight seated around round tables (about 90 of them).

> *Prescription #6 – Recognizing the impact that environmental factors have on the effectiveness of the meeting, choose a comfortable location and engineer the space and other amenities to support the meeting purpose. Where high levels of participation are desired (as is usually the case), small groups in a face-to-face setting work best.*

Question #7: How Is the Meeting Managed in Process?

Once a well-planned meeting is ready to launch, the leader (again) has primary responsibility for managing the meeting process. In some cases that responsibility might be explicitly delegated (e.g., to a neutral facilitator or a skilled member of the team). Ideally the meeting leader can establish the norm of shared leadership, such that participants are empowered and expected to help.

As much as the meeting is a work event, it is good practice to greet attendees (doing introductions if needed) and foster some chit-chat, some social interaction, before getting down to business (e.g., Chaney & Lyden, 1997).

It is generally helpful to establish explicit ground rules for the meeting. Going back to the era of quality circles and total quality management programs, consultants and practitioners determined that the leader or facilitator's job became much easier when there were explicit "rules of engagement" for the meeting. Many standard sets of ground rules were developed, which usually included guidelines to encourage full participation and mutual respect ("everyone's ideas are valuable . . . equal participation . . . disagree respectfully . . . no dominating . . . no personal attacks . . . rank does not equal right") and to help the leader ("help us stay on task and on time . . . ask questions when things are not clear . . . no sidebar discussions . . . one conversation at a time"). It is widespread good practice for the leader to offer a starter set of ground rules, subject to amendment and approval by the group. Having such explicit guidelines makes it much easier for the leader and participants to enforce constructive results-oriented behavior in the meeting (Doyle & Strauss, 1982).

It is also good practice for the leader to restate the objective (why we are here) and to overview the agenda before beginning the meeting proper. And because active participation is consistently shown to be such a crucial variable (e.g., Malouff et al., 2012), it is important for the meeting leader to not just allow participation but also to

actively encourage it and to foster a climate of shared leadership, wherein participants are free, without jeopardy, to step up and participate fully and show a wide range of what are identified as "meeting citizenship" behaviors (Baran et al., 2012). Although it may seem intuitively obvious, mere interaction is not sufficient: As the common ground rules identified earlier imply, it is positive and functional participation (not negative and dysfunctional) that has the defining impact on participants' positive perceptions of the effectiveness of the meeting. Excellent observational studies have made that point quite clearly (Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012).

The most effective leaders learn and use the standard tools of facilitation – including restating, clarifying, checking group understanding, summing up, and dealing constructively with any dysfunctional attendee behavior – to keep the meeting on track (cf. Doyle & Strauss, 1982).

An important sidebar point, especially for the familiar recurring meeting, is to vary the format. To avoid lapsing into the progressively less attention-getting routine of the "regular weekly meeting," leaders can use any of a variety of strategies to break up the pattern, such as having guest speakers, rotating leadership, changing locations, and bringing in case studies (Kello, 2008).

> *Prescription #7 – Keep the meeting focused, on task and on time. Establish ground rules as needed to make sure there is equal access to the airwaves and professionalism prevails. Encourage constructive participation from all attendees. Consider varying the format of recurring meetings.*

Question #8: How Do We Conclude and What Happens Next?

Although it is good practice for leaders to do some in-process recapping and summarizing along the way during the meeting, it is also critically important to recap at the conclusion of the meeting – summarizing what has been accomplished and agreed to – thereby ensuring that follow-up action assignments are clearly made (and accepted) and that participants are clear both how they will be kept informed and how they will inform others of progress on those assignments. Additionally, there needs to be a clearly understood process for how, when, and to whom the minutes of the meeting will be circulated. If appropriate, the leader might also preview the next meeting at this time.

A critically important concluding part of the meeting process, which is often neglected, is feedback on the meeting itself (a mini-form of the after-action review; see Scott et al., 2013). In general, but especially for set recurring meetings such as safety meetings and project meetings, it is extremely valuable for the leader to collect feedback from participants as to how they felt about the meeting they were just in and why. What were the effective aspects of the meeting (which we should continue)? What were the less effective parts (which we should change)? Overall, how would you assess the meeting on a 10-point scale? If you gave it less than 10, what specific factors caused you to rate it lower than that?

In some cases it will be better to collect such feedback anonymously. Thus, unsigned evaluation sheets might be used when and where there is reason to expect that participants might self-censor. Early in the process of establishing relationships

and expectations in a continuing meeting process, participants are in general likely to be more cautious about giving open, honest feedback. Recall the research on surface acting (Shanock et al., 2013) and the increased likelihood of surface acting in the presence of higher status individuals (Thomas et al., 2014). As trust level increases, such feedback may be able to be given and received comfortably in an oral report-out format. Either way, it is important that the leader encourage and accept open and candid feedback (Scott et al., 2013) and respond to the extent possible to participants' suggestions for improving meetings.

My consulting experience suggests that there are "moments of truth" in the development of an ongoing meeting process, in which durable patterns are established. Essentially, the ongoing meeting process is a form of a team development process, in which the earliest experiences, strongly influenced by leadership, set the tone. Such early experiences start what have been termed "self-fueling spirals" (Hackman, 1990) that, depending on the nature of the early experience, can build or limit trust and openness. If leaders build trust and make the meeting setting a safe place for the open exchange of ideas and feedback, ongoing assessment and improvement of meetings (upward spiral) can occur.

> *Prescription #8 – Before adjourning, make sure everyone knows what has been decided, who will do what next, how they will be kept informed on progress on the action items, and how participants perceived the meeting. Based on such feedback (the meeting may not have been as productive and enjoyable as the leader thought), implement constructive suggestions to keep refining and improving the meeting process. More generally, include in regular employee opinion surveys an assessment of meetings to gauge overall perceived effectiveness at a more macro level and to identify best practice areas and training needs relevant to meetings.*

Table 30.2 summarizes in very abbreviated form the central design questions to be addressed and the best practice strategies for addressing those questions.

Special Topic: Cross-Cultural Issues

The research conclusions, practice guidelines, and prescriptions identified so far are drawn from meetings in the United States and, to a lesser extent, in other Western cultures, therefore presumably reflecting Western norms and expectations. As business has become more global, it is interesting to see what research and practice have to say about meetings in other cultures. Numerous studies and equally numerous anecdotal experiences have supported the notion, now widely accepted, that there are general and significant cross-cultural differences in attitudes, expectations, and behaviors. Inspired to a significant extent by the ground-breaking and highly influential work of Hofstede (e.g., 1991), researchers and practitioners have characterized cultures (e.g., Asian, Latin American, Scandinavian) differentially in terms of their "power distance," "achievement striving," and other differentiating cultural dimensions. To what extent do those general cultural differences affect business meetings?

As business has become more global, an extensive practitioner literature on cross-cultural differences has developed, some of it applied specifically to meetings

Table 30.2. *Summary of Main Questions for Meeting Leaders to Address, and Some Prescriptive Answers*

Key Questions	Prescriptions
#1: Why?	Make sure there is a clear objective that requires and justifies the meeting.
#2: Who?	Target only those participants who have a clear role and truly need to be there.
#3: How Many?	Keep the meeting in the small-group process range or break into subgroups.
#4: How?	Create, circulate, and follow the agenda, covering critical steps to achieve the meeting outcome.
#5: When?	Select a meeting time when participants will be at their freshest. Start and end on time.
#6: Where?	Select comfortable facilities conducive to the nature and purpose of the meeting.
#7: How Managed?	Establish and follow ground rules, keep the meeting focused and on topic, and encourage full, active, positive participation.
#8: How Concluded?	Summarize, identify action items to be accomplished, solicit feedback from participants, and use it to improve subsequent meetings.

(e.g., DiStefano & Maznevski, 2000). To date, however, there is relatively little published research on cross-cultural differences in meetings. That which has been done, however, brings into sharper focus some distinct cross-cultural differences, in a much more detailed fashion than Hofstede's "5 dimensions." In one particularly elegant example, Köhler, Cramton, and Hines (2012) conducted an in-depth study of American and German mixed teams, which were working on typical meeting tasks. Although the general literature on cultural differences typically lumps the United States and Germany together with other Western European cultures, the authors found distinct cultural differences in the expectations and structuring of meetings, as well as in the interaction patterns that developed as the meeting progressed. In general, the German team members preferred a "get down to business" approach, with a focus on detailed planning and little or no small talk, whereas their American teammates' approach was more informal (with joking and small talk to ease into the meeting) and then more action oriented than planning oriented.

Similarly, Kemp and Williams (2013) conducted an ethnographic study of meeting behavior among culturally diverse groups in the Gulf Arab region. Although perhaps not as surprising as the more fine-grained differences between Americans and Germans just cited, the authors found that in general the Arab leaders and participants, in contrast to those in Western cultures, were more time fluid/less time sensitive (meetings started late by Western standards, and there was much coming and going during the meeting), less formal and structured in the meeting (e.g., the agenda was

often not followed closely), and more status conscious (e.g., in seating position, use of formal titles, etc.).

In general, a richer understanding of such differences from the outset could enhance understanding and minimize the sorts of conflict across cultural lines that commonly bedevil multicultural teams. This is an area where more research would obviously be valuable and would have considerable practical relevance.

Concluding Thoughts

Our growing body of rigorous research identifies many core elements of an effective meeting and includes some dimensions that are not as clearly captured or as strongly underscored in the popular practice literature. For example, the research literature increasingly emphasizes how important it is for leaders to fully recognize the impact that their meetings have, not only in terms of the in-meeting time-and-money costs but also more broadly on employee perceptions and attitudes (such as job satisfaction and engagement), extending well beyond the context of the meeting per se. Additionally, ineffective meetings are most deleterious to the most conscientious, accomplishment-striving employees. There is also a strong likelihood that employees may surface act in meetings, especially in the presence of the leader or other higher up, and thus mask their true emotions, pay an emotional price for doing so (a negative morale factor), and in the process convey to the leader the false impression that a poor meeting is effective and satisfying and nothing needs to change. There is a need for leaders to fully understand the necessity of creating an environment of trust, making it safe for participants to speak up and even challenge, and then assessing (and improving) their meetings via candid feedback from participants.

The research shows clearly that excellent meetings do excellent work and both embody and contribute to a positive organizational climate and culture. Employees not only want them but they also welcome more of them! If poor meetings are the "silent killer" (of morale) in the world of work, consider that excellent meetings are a valuable and appreciated catalyst for employee engagement, satisfaction, and productivity, all essential elements of a positive work environment.

The core question is, How and to what extent do we get such valuable evidence-based information, both the unexpected and the intuitive, to the "frontlines" where it can be used?

Many in the organizational science world, who see themselves as true scientist-practitioners, as I do, aspire to bridge the world of rigorous research and the world of practice. In our research on meeting effectiveness, our published articles invariably include a section dedicated to practical implications. Some of these implications are indeed potentially beneficial – but they are not readily accessible to those who could most use the science to inform their practice.

One key activity for those of us who want our research to make a positive difference, and who therefore aspire to genuine scientist-practitioner status, has been digesting (and contributing to) the research literature, extracting from it the best evidence-based conclusions and putting them to work. Clearly, we want our consulting advice

to be firmly evidence based. I have found it to be a distinct advantage to be able to draw on behavioral-science research in my applied work. But many consultants and most of the clients they serve are not up on the current organizational science research literature. How do we reach them?

We can publish some of our work in outlets that are more accessible to the public outside the academy, though this is not widely done. One example, with which I was intimately acquainted, is the Rogelberg et al. (2007) article, published in the *MIT Sloan Management Review*. As one of the authors of this behavioral-science-based and intentionally practical and practitioner-oriented piece, I can verify that more than a few of my business colleagues, who do not read the research journals, contacted me (unprompted) once they read the article. I think this article (see a similar effort by Allen, Rogelberg, & Scott, 2008) was an object lesson in how researchers in our field can reach out to the intended beneficiary audience and get our science-based practical implications out in to the field where they can make a positive difference.

We behavioral scientists would be well advised to look to such nontraditional outlets for our research publications and thereby present our research directly in ways that are accessible to the lay audience. In addition to the premier, flagship business outlets such as *Harvard Business Review* and *MIT Sloan Management Review*, there are numerous human resources journals (such as *HR Magazine, HR Professionals Magazine, People Management,* and *T+D Magazine*) that span many industries, as well as journals that deal with cross-industry issues such as safety; there are even more numerous trade journals devoted specifically to industry types. Every industry has its trades. When I started consulting with a top aggregates company, I started reading *Rock Products, Pit and Quarry, and Quarry Management Magazine.* I am proud that some of my work is published in outlets such as *the CUPA Journal*, *Training & Development, The Nuclear Professional*, and *Industrial Safety & Hygiene News*.

This recommendation may be quite a stretch at this point in time, but if academic department chairs, deans, and tenure committees were willing to acknowledge and give credit to scientist-practitioners for at least some such publications in an overall research portfolio, it might be easier as a practical matter for us in the academy to devote the time necessary to reach those in the organizational world who would benefit from our research – instead of, forgive me, largely writing for each other.

In addition to our usual approach to our scholarly work, we can also learn from consultants and their clients – and certainly from our own consulting work, as well as from business journals and industry trade journals – just what are the actual prominent concerns of their organization and industry and shape our research agendas correspondingly. When our research more directly addresses "their issues," we can show those in the organizational world that our work is relevant and responsive to their needs and can write scientifically legitimate articles (drawn from our scholarly publications) in sources that they read, thereby making our evidence-based work accessible to them. Our *JAP* and *P-Psych* articles may well help us get tenure, grants, promotions, and the admiration of our academic colleagues. They may well inspire further research and theory in our field, which is of course all well and good.

But even if they are aimed at issues of current importance to business, they will rarely, if ever, directly affect practice if they stay in the "academic loop."

I think our research in effective meetings is an example of excellent behavioral-science research aimed squarely at a set of important practical issues. We can do a better job of making the knowledge we have generated available to those who need it and can put it to use.

Acknowledgments

I want to express my deep appreciation to members of the Organizational Science Doctoral Program at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, with whom I collaborate on several lines of research relevant to this chapter, and to the client organizations that have provided my invaluable base of experience with meetings in the organizational world. Additionally, I want to acknowledge the editorial team reviewers and Alex Kello for their insightful and constructive comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.

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