

Meetings

Brooke: In this video, we're going to talk about meetings.

Kris: Oh wait, sorry.

Brooke: Is that how you replied? Some of you aren't even watching this video.

Kris: They skipped it. They're not even paying attention.

Brooke: They're not even watching this video. Listen, meetings are terrible. Why do we hate meetings? And we may have post traumatic, 'cause we both worked in corporate. You may not even know what we're talking about. But here's the thing. Most meetings are so unproductive.

Brooke: Most meetings, what happens is people just get in a room, there's no agenda.

Kris: They're late.

Brooke: Yeah. They're late, they're coming in. My favorite is there's a current commercial where it's a video conference. The lady comes in, "Hello? Can y'all hear me?" And the meeting's already been in session for ten minutes, seriously. We're making meetings fun right now. But—

Kris: Yeah.

Brooke: Meetings seriously, I sat in so many meetings in Hewlett-Packard where, I first of all didn't even know what they were talking about, I shouldn't have been in the meeting. I don't know why it was requested. Half of the people were on their phones or on their laptops, not even paying attention. Super unproductive. Waste of time for sure.

Brooke: So we love meetings and we think meetings can be super useful and super effective if done properly.

Kris: Absolutely. Meetings matter when they are productive, they have a purpose, there are outcomes that we expect them to meet. But all too often it's just like the fallback, right? Well, Let's have a meeting about that.

Brooke: Yes.

Kris: And then we put people in a room and make them talk incessantly about things that are irrelevant.

Brooke: So think about a meeting this way. You have to look at who's in the meeting and how long the meeting is. So, if the meeting has eight people in it and the meeting is an hour long, that's eight hours of your company's time that is in that meeting.

Brooke: And you have to think about, first of all, do all those people need to be in there? And if they do, is this topic, is this result we're going to get, worth eight hours? And I think a lot of times we'll set up meetings with employees or with our managers and they're just an hour by default because that's how our calendars roll. Most meetings need to be less than ten minutes and we set them for an hour and then we fill up the time with, "So how was your weekend or how ..." And that doesn't mean that the first part of all meetings can't be that, because I like to know what's going on with people and we chat a little bit. Never longer than five minutes. Ever longer than five minutes. I've gotten in meetings where people are chatting for 15, 20 minutes before we've even gotten to the meat of it.

Brooke: So think about your business' time and that meetings can really steal your business' time. So we set up our meetings at The Life Coach School very carefully and they're always very short. Every week we have a meeting with the whole company. It's a half an hour and everyone gets a couple of minutes to speak. And that's been super powerful for us, for everyone to be introduced to each other. Everyone gives an update on what's going on with them. That's usually when we find out what's going on in our own company. It's where the communication happens. And even though it may seem like just idle, like, "Well this is what I worked on and this is what I worked on and this." It's not an end result. The end result of that meeting is to make sure everyone's on the same page.

Brooke: So that's what we do and a lot of people call that stand up meeting where they get together and it's standing up so it's fast and they just present what's going on. Everyone's on the same page and we'd go to the next.

Kris: Yeah.

Brooke: Everyone looks forward to that meeting. I always tell lots of jokes. I always make fun of myself. We always introduce the new hires and in the beginning, I mean, we're going to keep that meeting as long as we can have everyone speak within a half an hour. Eventually we'll probably have to ... Managers will have their own meetings and they'll do the same sort of thing and then I'll just meet with the managers. But for now it really works for us and it's made a huge difference.

Brooke: The other meetings that I have on the regular are once a month I meet with my executive managers. So those are managers that work for me that manage other people. And that's an opportunity for me to meet privately with them and talk about what they're working on and any issues they're having with their employees then get conveyed to me. Those meetings are always directly after my weekly meeting and they're always just a half an hour.

Brooke: There are other times when we need bigger, longer meetings to brainstorm, to create results, to document processes, and all of those meetings are done by meeting requests. So if someone wants to meet with me and wants to work with me on something, they send me a meeting request and I either accept it or I tell them to go ahead and take care of the issue themselves. Those are the main meetings we have on a weekly basis in our organization.

Kris: Yeah, I think we just have to be really careful, especially if you did work in a corporation before you started your business, that there's just this default behavior to have meetings.

Brooke: Yes.

Kris: And the first question you should ever ask yourself, as the leader, because you set the tone here, right? Brooke's company doesn't have a lot of meetings because Brooke doesn't want to go to a lot of meetings, right? There's a lot of other people who just think you're supposed to have meetings.

Kris: So as the leader you have to set it up here and ask the question, what is the result I expect from this meeting? I expect the stand up meeting is to get everybody on the same page. I expect a one on one to ensure that this person is directed for the week. I expect if I have a project meeting that we are going to deliver the result of this project by this day. There should never be a meeting about the meeting. Which is also so insidious, right, companies as we just start meeting about meetings about meetings and nobody's getting any work done.

Kris: And the last thing I really want to comment on, I love that you brought up, it's eight hours of work, right? When you've got eight people in a one hour meeting. And talk about how much that costs your business. I want you to look at how much you're paying everybody who's sitting at that table or on that Zoom call and that's how much you just paid for that meeting. Is that a worthwhile investment in your business to spend that money with everybody sitting there?

Kris: So meetings have become, they can be incredibly powerful. We need meetings. But even if we've had a consistent meeting that we've always run, you've got to evaluate what you're asking people to do and where they're spending their time, including your meetings. Very frequently, I would say a couple of times a year if you have standard meetings that you run, make sure they're still effective.

Brooke: Yeah.

Kris: Are they still necessary? Are they still contributing to the result that you expected in the first place?

Brooke: Those are the regular meetings that we have. I also often call for a working meeting. And this is a super powerful and effective way to get work done. When you can get three, four people in a room max and say, "We are going to create something and we were going to start at zero and finish at 100%, at the end of that and have it actually be complete and work together during that hour." You will be able to create massive results, much more than you can create on your own in my opinion.

Brooke: For example, right now we are having a meeting to record the videos for this product that we're creating. We decided to do it over a two day period. We come, we video the meetings, we will be done and it will be accomplished. Versus maybe Kris Plachy videoing some and me videoing some different time—

Kris: Or we even meet to talk about the videos.

Brooke: That's right. That's right. So having working meetings where you're like "We need to get this done. Let's all just do it together." Is super powerful. Be careful. You don't want to get together and talk about doing the work later. You actually get together and type and do and produce and print out the result at that meeting. Working meetings, I highly encourage when they are going to produce a result and not just talk about a result.

Brooke: In addition to our weekly meetings, we also have quarterly in person meetings with the whole team and those usually are working meetings. So we will work for an entire day and create all of our new goals, all of our new products and the products that we're going to introduce and the processes that we're going to use in the first part of the day and the second part of the day we'd get into our teams and actually create the documentation that we're going to need for the quarter.

Brooke: Those are the most productive meetings that we have. Everybody's in the same place, everybody's focused, nobody's being interrupted. And we're going to do that with our whole team quarterly until our team gets too big to be able to do that. And then we'll probably adjust and, again, do them in smaller groups.

Brooke: And the last thing that I do is a quarterly review meeting with all of my employees. So I will meet with them and remember, we base the quarterly review on all of our core values, so I evaluate them on the work that they've done over the quarter. I evaluate them on our top three core values and the three goals that they had for the quarter they get evaluated on. They evaluate me on our core values and my communication and style and feedback style to them as a manager. That meeting, again, is usually about 30 minutes.

Brooke: It's not long and drawn out and painful and beating around the bush until we get to the point. We both fill out those forms before we get on the call. We get on the call, we give each other feedback and that's the end of the call and that's been super useful to clear any air about anything where the performance isn't quite right or maybe I haven't been showing up as a manager.

Brooke: One of the questions that I have on there is how would you rate me on a scale of one to ten as a manager and how can I make it a ten? So I get lots of ideas about how to improve myself as someone that's managing my employees.

Brooke: So that's it for meetings. You have your standard meetings that you have set up, keep them short and sweet, offer meeting requests and deny most of them. We don't need to meet for every single thing. And when you have a meeting that you can tell is going to be ineffective, that there's not a lot of production happening, end it immediately and move on with your work day.

Kris: So a couple of other things to talk about when it comes to the meeting. One of the most important things about meetings is whoever calls the meeting is in charge of the meeting. Which means that when you decide you're going to corral people into a room or onto a Zoom call and take their time, you have to have, as we mentioned, a result designed, you have to know what the point of the meeting is.

- Kris: You also need an agenda. You need to help everyone know what is going to be discussed in the meeting so that your directing the conversation. If you call the meeting, you're in charge. That also means no sidebars, no runaway conversations. We used to have, where we used to work, a squirrel that we would throw at each other if someone started talking about things that were totally irrelevant. Right? Squirrel!
- Kris: You have to have a way because people's brains are very hard to manage and so your job as the leader is to set the tone for what a meeting should be like. And that's why, with what you heard Brooke talk about, she's very clear about what these meetings are for. She has a very clear agenda. It's not wasteful. It's purposeful. People know it, they respect it, they honor it. So always, if your meetings are not effective and you're kind of annoyed with how your meetings are running, you've got to look at you. So you're in charge of the meeting.
- Brooke: That's right. And having really clear expectations for your meetings as a rule. You show up on time for meetings. There's no showing up late. If you show up late, we can just keep you out of the meeting. The expectation is all employees show up on time. We start on time. We end on time or earlier always. And we bring people back to the main topic. I want to encourage you not to have multiple things that you're trying to handle in one meeting. If you need different, smaller, shorter meetings, so much more effective. Because sometimes what we do is we're like, "We want to cover all these three topics so we better bring this person in." Well, this person is only relevant for the one topic, and so they have to sit through this whole meeting, right?
- Brooke: So smaller meetings, short, start on time, finish early, have an agenda, and one person is in charge of that meeting and they need to manage that meeting very well and very clearly in stay on topic.