

Your 3-hour meeting is going to be awesome! By Kathi Guiney President **YES!**HRSolution - GPHR, SPHR, SCP.

You've got your agenda, slideshow, and handouts and your audience's attention for the first 52 minutes of your 3-hour meeting... maybe... Surprised? It gets worse: within those 52 minutes, your audience can focus for up to 10 minutes at a time, and that's if they're interested; if they're not, they'll start checking their phones, yawning or doodling. When the average meeting clocks in at more than 75 minutes, that's a lot of wasted PowerPoint graphics! So what tactics can you use to maximize your audience's attention?

- **A story** commands instant attention, and is more memorable than facts and figures. Sprinkling short, relevant stories throughout will keep the audience's eyes from glazing over.
- **Regular, short breaks**, 5 minutes every 30 minutes, resets the attent-o-meter and lets people check their phones and use the restroom. Text breaks are very 2018.
- **Interactive exercises**, such as polls and problem-solving questions, take the audience on an engaging detour.
- **Moving to a different position** in the room can catch people's interest—don't pace, or you'll seem nervous!
- **A new topic**, "Now let's move on to something different," signals that it's time to focus on a fresh direction.
- **A two-part meeting**, held in shorter chunks, is more efficient than one marathon session no one absorbs, plus you can email a summary with takeaways.

With so many choices, you can plan strategies, and deploy if the audience starts to nod off. Snoring is bad – audience eye contact is good! Have a few approaches ready if audience attention drifts away. So go for it and engage your audience for the glorious 52 minutes they are yours—and please 3 hours are for Quentin Tarantino movies NOT business meetings!