

Quick! Schedule a doctor's appointment for 1:30—Bob is having a meeting!

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Is a mysterious illness racing through the office ahead of your meetings? Your meetings could be causing these sudden ailments. If your team would rather miss work than be stuck with you in the conference room, your meetings need first aid, stat!

Clues to a sickly meeting: You have no agenda. People arrive late. One or two people dominate. You read presentation slides verbatim. People are on their phones. The meeting requires a bathroom break.

Craft healthier meetings that value everyone's time. Before you schedule, ask:

- **Is this meeting necessary?** Is everyone's input required at once, or can this be handled by email or conference call? If this is a regular meeting, is there new information to discuss, or would a 10-minute stand-up do the trick?
- **Do you *need* to invite Stu, Sally and Steven?** Unless they are required to solve a problem or directly impacted by a change, let them read the post-meeting summary. You are writing one, right?
- **Is your objective clear?** Email an advance agenda with a clear objective, so people can steer their data and ideas toward results.
- **Can you manage your meeting times?** Aim for 50-minute meetings, including pauses for feedback and questions, plus 10 minutes of review, Q&A, or discussion. Starting on time ensures people arrive promptly, and if someone is late, don't stop to recap. End on time, or risk key players leaving for other obligations.

Preparation is the preventive care your meetings need to be their best. An agenda a day keeps the doctor away!