



**crativ meeting experience**

Some thoughts about our dusty meeting culture

## Introduction

Meetings, meetings, meetings... We don't have time to pee anymore and already the next session is coming up! In the evening we sit in the office and haven't finished anything yet. But from all the meetings we only took more work with us. The mountain is getting bigger and bigger. And actually we only really work after working! Then comes the whole mountain of mail, minutes of the meetings that we still have to read and validate. Tasks, from all the meetings that we still have to sort and prioritize somehow. Decisions which we have to search somewhere in seven files. We don't even notice that we're just turning and turning and turning in the hamster wheel.


STOP! What are we doing wrong? Why are we doing this to ourselves? Why are we in all the meetings? Are we sooo damn important that we have to be in everywhere? Do I really need to make decisions in this context? Can't we just replace all the info and exchange meetings? Why do we walk from meeting to meeting with a moleskine and a pen and take notes that we then have to laboriously transfer into our everyday electronic lives? Are we using the right tools that would make our work easier, or did we not realize we had them because we were running from meeting to meeting? Do we have a culture and the right conditions that allow us to work together towards our vision and goals? Have we ever sat down and thought about our cooperation together?

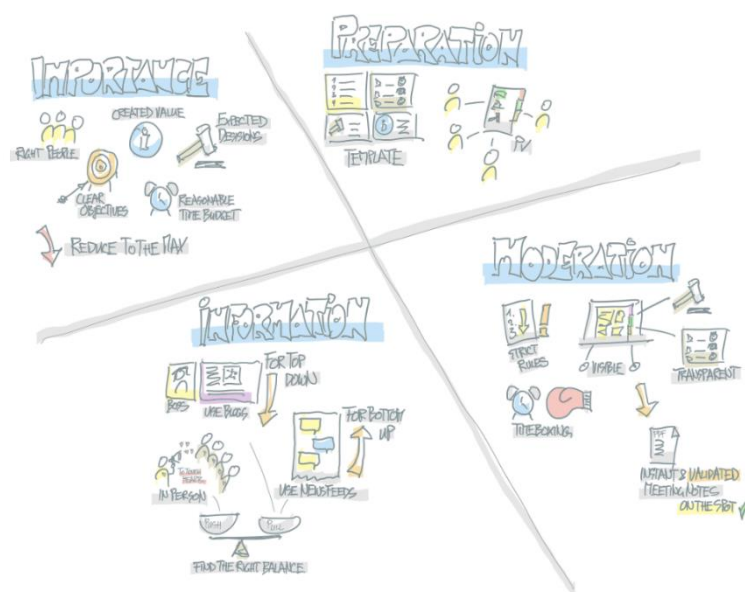
In this paper, we dared to think about how we could redesign our collective meeting and collaboration culture. Always with the premise that we can only tackle this together, that a certain commitment on the part of everyone is necessary and that it may take some courage to finally cut off old customs. We are looking forward to a lively dialogue and are constantly supplementing this little work with your input.

## Let's think differently about a meeting

We have chosen four fields of action as a basis for discussion, which we consider essential in order to rethink our meeting culture.

1. the relevance of the meeting
2. the preparation of the meeting
3. moderating the meeting
4. the information that is put into circulation

 **What do you think?** What did we miss?

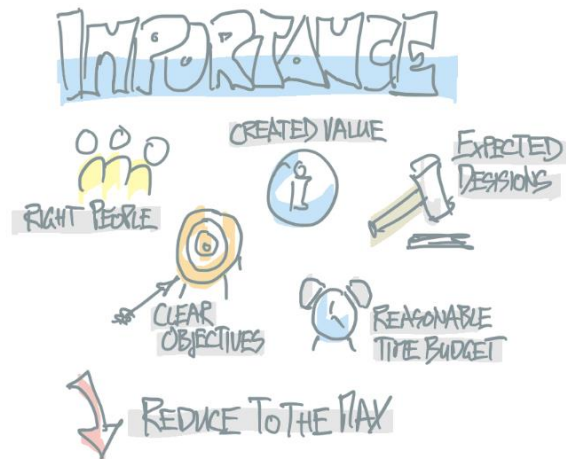


## When does a meeting become relevant?


We must manage our precious time more and more consciously. Therefore, it is important that we do not steal each other the little time that remains. We have to keep questioning each other in the teams and also personally. Why do we convene a meeting? What is its relevance, i.e. what benefits do we create? What do we expect to achieve? Who do we need to make decisions and in what time do we want to make them?


In general "reduce to the max" applies and we should do this from the point of view of the organizer as well as from the point of view of the invited person. We therefore ask ourselves consistently at every meeting:

- As a participant, can I offer substantial added value to achieve the expected results? Otherwise cancel it kindly!
- Do I as an organizer have the right people to make the desired decisions?
- Have I set the time in such a way that we cannot fall into endless discussions?
- Have I formulated the goals of the meeting clearly enough?
- Do the invited know what decisions and results are expected?



Therefore, no more invitations should go out or be accepted where this is not clearly evident.

 **CHALLENGE** → How do we manage to consistently ask ourselves these questions and it is completely OK if someone cancels a meeting if they cannot contribute anything substantial to the clearly formulated expectations? Or after a decision that affects him, leaves the meeting because the following topics are not relevant to him?

 **What do you think?** How do you do it? What rules do you have in your company?

Like we prepare, the results of the meeting fall



For the preparation we have a template that shows openly the meeting relevance for all participants. Why open? Because everyone can contribute their share to the meeting.

*It is not up to the moderator to prepare the content.*

At a meeting there are always some interests represented and results expected. We therefore need a template with the following sections:

- So-called tensions or discussion points.
- The expected decisions that are to be made by whom.
- The really demanded persons who have to be present to be "quorate".
- The goals of the meeting, we want to reach xyz so that abc can happen.
- Relevant information that should touch the heart and be mentioned in the meeting and concern everyone.

It seems important to us to free the moderator or facilitator from the content. He alone is responsible for boxing through the expected results in the given time without blah, blah... He adheres to strict rules and focuses purely on the process. We also want to learn together, so with a little help from the outside we start to get used to the unfamiliar process and gradually another team member takes on the role of facilitator again and again. In the third book of the #WorkSmart series on our [crativ website](#) you will find two examples of possible processes described in detail. Then it is "up to you" to define your ideal process in your context, test it and tune it continuously until it fits.

What does the moderator have to do with the preparation now? That's it! It's no longer the boss who says that I have to do our team meeting now and is braining the agenda out of his head... No, only those agenda items are included that are really considered relevant by the people in the corresponding meeting in order to get ahead in their work... That needs a lot of trust and shows very clearly whether a boss is also willing to let go and support as a coach. By the way, managers gradually become leaders.



## TOOL RECOMMENDATION

A generally open OneNote on which you can work together.

Planner for the administration of all tasks.

The expected decisions can also be parked in Planner and sorted thematically.

Another good basis is the Confluence Wiki in combination with Jira.

**CHALLENGE** → How do we take the step away from the boring Weekly to the self-organized ceremony? How do we gradually become facilitators who are able to lead a group from a process perspective to a common outcome? How do we build the necessary trust and transparency?

**What do you think?** How do you do it? What do recurring meetings look like in your team? What can we learn from you?

Without moderation we lose ourselves!

The moderation is about proceeding according to fixed rules during the meeting and strictly adhering to them. If the expected essence is already clear in the preparation, then only clarifying and target-oriented interactions are necessary. Who needs to clarify what? What decisions need to be made? Who takes over which tasks? Which tasks require re-prioritisation? These questions will be asked by the moderator or facilitator and will be answered according to a fixed schedule within the agreed time - or faster. The "writer" visually records what is relevant. He has an electronic device and his work is visible for all to see. This allows a possible approval during the meeting. The postprocessing is therefore no longer necessary!



Tasks automatically go into a transparent board where everyone can see who is working on what and in what status the work is. Decisions are recorded so that a search allows to find them, and they are not lost in any meeting notes then in the catacombs. The facilitator is neutral. He wears the process hat and does not interfere in the content of the meeting.

### TOOL RECOMMENDATION

OneNote which also allows sketches and multimedia content up to voice recordings.

Pdf Extract of the approved meeting notes.

Planner for the management of all tasks.

Decisions can also be stored in Planner and sorted thematically.

If a company already uses Confluence Wiki and Jira, everything that is needed is already there.

For the meeting process we recommend creating a "cheat-sheet" for the facilitator. Each meeting is moderated by a different team member, so we all learn to apply our new meeting culture together.

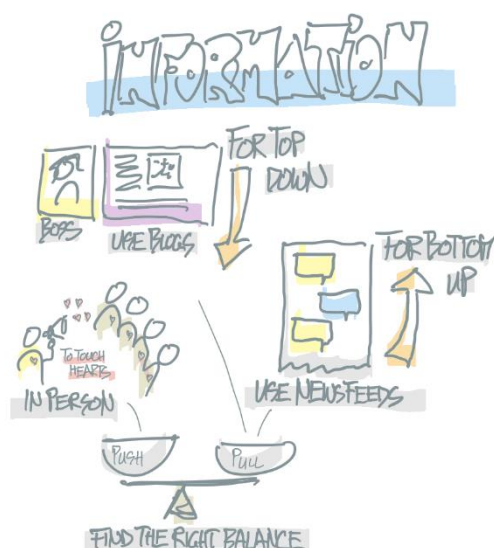


**CHALLENGE** → How do we manage to exercise collective discipline in a team in order to multiply our time together? How do we deal with unpleasant issues when we are no longer able to discuss them but have to propose concrete proposals for their solution?

**What do you think?** How do you do it? How do you moderate your ceremonies? How do you document your decisions and how do you distribute your tasks?

When the information relevant to me finds me by itself!

The exchange of information takes place either "top-down", "bottom-up" or verbally "in person". Where "in person" refers to information that triggers emotions and touches the heart. This is the information that is relevant and also has part to play in a meeting. Everything else can be distributed quite well according to the "pull principle". "Top-Down" is passed over the hierarchy from top to



bottom, the boss informs about a success as an example. "Bottom-up", on the other hand, comes from the people, is based on contribution and can be compared with WhatsApp channels or Insta and Facebook feeds. This can take place openly for everyone, thematically, in a team or project. The "pull principle" is actually quite simple. I subscribe to what interests me and get informed about news. Whether I then consume the information is up to me. Experience shows that the relevant information somehow always finds its way to me, since it is often addressed several times by colleagues whom I follow...


How many meetings take place just to share information? Let's face it, every week; I've done this and that this week and next week I'll do this and that...


our numbers have been unchanged since last week... our KPI's... blah, blah, blah... we've slowly seen that, haven't we? Often it is only for the boss, so that he keeps the overview and because he doesn't know how else to do it. And because we've always done it this way and then we put it down quite nicely in our mail folder structure. Each for himself as proof, if he should be affronted... Is that what we want?

### **TOOL RECOMMENDATION**

Blogs are quite suitable for "top-down" communication. There are also specific news channels about communication sites in SharePoint, for example. Yammer is also a variant. Actually, all tools that support group communication, are transparent and traceable. It is important that no distribution into the mailboxes takes place, but only a notification that can be configured by everyone and who other teams can subscribe to them, because why should we hide what we do in the same company?

Microsoft Teams, on the other hand, is suitable for the whole collaboration, there is no "bottom-up" or "top-down" there, the joint work is in the center. Of course, a channel can contain pure information from above, but much more important is the open dialogue across different devices, the mobility and the flexible linking of the shared tools in one place.

 **CHALLENGE** → How do we distribute information so that it is accessible to all equally and in one place? How can teams and spontaneous groups quickly and easily enter in an asynchronous but persistent dialogue? When do we prefer to convey information in person in our team?

 **What do you think?** How do you do it? How do you ensure the open exchange of information? What experiences have you had with the "pull principle"?

## Collaboration only takes place together

If we work together, agreements are always necessary about why, how and what. We have to be clear about our common vision as a team. What we stand for and how we work together.

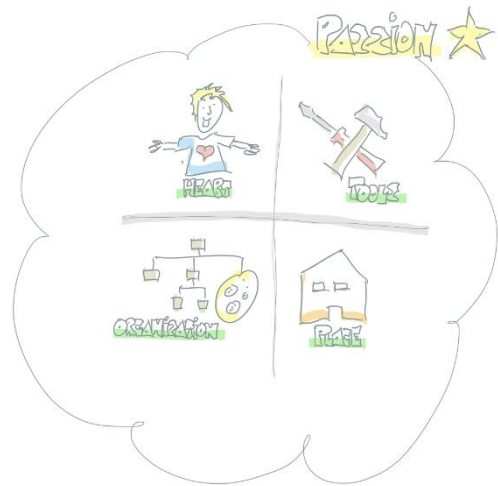
For example, we only attend meetings where we can contribute to the outcome. We provide information according to the "pull principle", "bottom-up" via channel XY and "top-down" via page AB. Everyone follows the channels that are relevant to them and thus always stays up to date. Everybody is responsible to stay tuned on what's going on. We conduct our meetings YZ according to our jointly defined procedures. The meeting notes are openly accessible, the tasks and decisions in our Plan EF transparent for all. We help each other. If I can relieve my colleague of something in order to help him, then we do this. We learn together, collectively, and reflect quarterly. We always remain committed to our values GHIJ. We approach each other and address unpleasant things, which we solve together... etc.



A manifesto has always be drawn up as a team. Never "top-down"! Having this act externally accompanied from a neutral external perspective makes sense. It is important that everyone can commit to it and that reflection is firmly institutionalised according to the "Recursive Learning" principle. The Team Manifesto is therefore never static, but always adapts to the team dynamics.

And so we come back to the basic elements of cooperation. Tools, people, place and organisation. Surrounded by the passion for which our team burns. It doesn't help to say we want fewer meetings and expect someone from outside can give us a recipe and that's it.

We need to work together on this at all levels. And we must get involved in something new, because the tools are there, you can simply adapt something to the room, but a lot of dedication is required for the people and the organization among the people, because collaboration can only be lived together, and constantly adapted to the team dynamics.



In this sense, let's start doing it... Step by step.

Cheers  
Ruggero

Visit our website [crativ.ch](https://crativ.ch) and be inspired. If necessary, we start an experiment and let ourselves be surprised how your team reinvents itself, what do you think?



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