

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



8 Alternatives to Calling Another Team Meeting at Your Church

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You've been there, in that never-ending meeting where all you can think about is the fact that the next thing on your to-do list is yet another meeting!

You've thought it before, ***"There has got to be a better way of doing meetings at the church."***

A few years ago, I considered how much time our church was investing in meetings and how that regular rhythm was costing our team. Everywhere I looked I saw meetings happening around our organization, including meetings for:

- Weekly service reviews
- Kids ministry pre-game
- Admin team workflow check-ins
- Service planning
- Small group brainstorming
- Lead team discussions
- ...and the list goes on

While meetings can be an useful tool to push the mission of your church forward, **sloppy meetings can be a total waste of time for your team and for the church as a whole.** Some common problems that I've seen creep into churches with too many unfocused meetings are that:

- Rather than focusing on the critical issues, they become a time for people to wander from topic to topic.

- The wrong people are in the room for the issues at hand, while the right people are sitting through endless conversations that don't require their input.

- The inspiration of your team can be tapped out as people sit in useless meetings on a regular basis.

- Meetings can be never-ending, meaning that the people who can last the longest get their way in the organization.

Every meeting should be a time and place where decisions are made. There needs to be inherent tension as people are presented with options to choose from. **The worst type of meeting is informational where no decisions are made, and people are simply brought up to date on what's happening in the church.** Avoid meetings that are purely informational.

Effective church leaders look to root out useless "information sharing only" meetings and find other ways to keep the team aware of what's happening at the church. As such, you need alternative strategies to keep your people aligned. Here are eight meeting alternatives for your team:

Regular Email Rhythms

Write a regular email that is fun and helpful, and your team will read it. I promise. Pack the email with information that they will actually want to read.

Send it regularly enough and it will cut out the need to pull your team together to keep them informed. Make sure each email follows the V.I.P. approach:

- Vision // Remind people why you are doing what you do as a church.
- Information // Make your emails the primary way your team receives the data they need about the ministry. If it is helpful, they will open it!
- Personal // Don't write your emails like you are addressing a mass of anonymous people; write them as if they are being sent directly to a friend.

Project Management Software

There are many tools that teams can use to track tasks, goals, and projects. Project management software provides a great way for teams to stay up to date without needing to gather everyone together. This type of software is not free, but it is an easy-to-use tool and scales well over time as the demands of your team increase.

In many ways, the weekend is one big, continuous project at your church. Many churches have found [Planning Center](#) to be vitally important for communication and collaboration for the organization of weekend services.

Other examples of project management software include:

- [Basecamp](#) // This software with a collaboration focus is available for \$99 per month.
- [Sweet Process](#) // Based on a checklist approach to interaction, this software is \$115 per month.



Send a Voice Memo

Another way to connect on an even more personal level is to send a voice memo. You can email the memos to people so they will hear directly from you. Most phones have a standard voice recorder app, which makes it easy for you to record something for your team.

Bonus Idea: You could also use an automated phone service like [Phonevite](#) to send the voice memo to large groups of people in your community. (Think of including every team leader in your church!)

5 to 10 Minute “Standing” Meetings

I know some churches have found great success with regular quick team meetings designed to briefly share information with each other. The goal of these meetings is to focus on the highlights of what is happening and to identify “sticking points” that need to be followed up on in certain areas. These meetings are typically held at the same time every week and they are often actual “standing meetings” where participants stand in order to encourage the conversation to move along.

Outlines of quick standing meetings for your team:

- 1 to 2 minutes // Quick “high fives” for areas where team members are succeeding.
- 3 to 6 minutes // Each team member answers, “What is the one thing I need to get traction on this week to move the mission forward?”
- 7 to 10 minutes // Each team member has the chance to answer, “What information do I need to help make progress on a project this week?”

Private Facebook Group

Almost everyone is on Facebook; rather than fighting it, use it! Invite people to a private Facebook group where you can post photos, provide updates about what’s coming up, and have discussions about what’s happening in your church. It’s also a great way to celebrate “wins” and share upcoming events.

3 tips for using a Facebook group to communicate with your team:

- Make sure that everyone turns on the “show all” setting for group posts so they will see everything posted in the group.
- Assign someone (other than the supervisor/group admin) to curate and encourage conversation.
- Develop 2 to 3 regular check-in points that people are encouraged to post about, such as:
 - Monday Wins // What happened over the weekend that you want to celebrate?
 - Wacky Wednesday // What is something funny that people have seen online this week?
 - Thursday “Pre-Game” Need to Know // What does everyone need to know before the weekend?

Open Project Documents

Something as simple as a shared [Google Doc](#) can also be a great place to track with your team. The spreadsheet feature allows you to set notifications, so if the information is changed in a range of cells, you’ll receive sent an email. This is a great strategy when multiple people are contributing disparate pieces of a project.

Types of open documents your church could use include:

- Agendas // Allow people to guide the conversation about any upcoming meetings that your team might still have to attend.
- Brainstorming // Ask a question and then have people submit their ideas online to a single document.
- Process Review // Considering changing the way something is done at your church? Draw up a flow chart online and have your team comment on it!

Instant Messaging

For quick check-ins with your team, use an instant messaging service like [Slack](#). These platforms allow you to receive quick updates and provide the shortest feedback loop possible. I’ve met a number of teams that swear by instant messaging’s capacity to dramatically reduce their dependence on emails or meetings.

4 tips for encouraging wide adoption of instant messaging with your team:

- Training // Don’t just tell people you’re using it; take the time during a team meeting to train people to use the tool and walk them through its features.
- On the Phone // Encourage your team to install the app on their phone and make sure the notifications are turned on.
- Reward Participation // Notice who is leveraging the tool well and make sure you publicly praise them.
- Find Boundaries // Push conversations to the instant messaging platform to show people how it will make their lives easier!



Weekly Performance Check-Ins

I’ve been using a weekly check-in rhythm with my team that asks them three questions:

- What are your goals for next week at work?
- How did you do with the goals you set for this past week?
- What can I do to help you?

These three questions frame a weekly conversation with my team where they are able to give consistent feedback on how they are doing. They also provide a level of accountability for me as a supervisor to stay connected to where my team is at and where it is going. This process has a way of focusing our teams on performance and next steps. We use a tool named [15Five](#); however, you could also use this strategy by sending regular emails and/or forms to your team.

How are you reducing needless meetings at your church?

We need fewer meetings that waste our people's time and more communication and collaboration focused on making decisions and moving the church forward. What are some other methods you have found helpful in reducing needless meetings at your church? Share these strategies in the comments below.

More resources to help structure the meetings at your church:

- [5 Healthy Meeting Habits in High-Performance Church Teams](#)
- [8 Ways Meetings are Killing the Mission of Your Church](#) (Great discussion starter about the purpose of meetings in your church!)
- [11 Ideas for Adding Fun to Boring Church Team Meetings](#)

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