

Meaningless meetings: the best way to get nothing done

Level: Intermediate (B1–B2)

Time: Approximately 90 minutes

Business topics: Productivity, meetings, corporate culture

Business language: Useful business vocabulary, phrasal verbs and prepositions, language for participating in meetings

Activities: Discussing meeting policy, key words, understanding the text, business language, discussion, participating in a meeting

Groups: Whole class, pairs, small groups

Overview: This article discusses how several large companies are re-evaluating their meeting policies and drastically trying to free up more time for 'actual' work.

1. Warmer

- Ask students to discuss the questions in pairs or small groups. Elicit main ideas that arise from the discussion from the whole class.
- Ask students to skim the article and identify the main idea. Encourage them to do this before looking at the options and only choosing the best option after reading the whole text.

Key: 2

2. Key words

Students write the words from the box next to the definitions. Elicit answers from the whole class.

Key:

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. resolution | 7. recurring |
| 2. enthusiastic | 8. trigger, trigger(ed) |
| 3. ban, banned | 9. multitask, multitasking |
| 4. equate | 10. reappraise |
| 5. bluff, bluffing | 11. rigour |
| 6. pointless | |

As an extension you can focus on the different forms of these words. For example:

Noun	Verb	Adjective
resolution	resolve	resolvable
enthusiasm	enthusiase	enthusiastic
ban	ban	
equivalent	equate	equivalent
bluff	bluff	
cull	cull	
recurrence	recur	recurring
trigger	trigger	triggering
multitasking	multitask	
reappraisal	reappraise	
rigour	rigorous	

3. Understanding the article

- Ask students to scan the article individually to complete this activity and then to compare their answers. Remind them that they don't need to read the whole article each time but that they should rather look over it very quickly to locate the relevant information and then read carefully.

Key:

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Paragraph 5 | 6. Paragraph 3 |
| 2. Paragraph 8 | 7. Paragraph 6 |
| 3. Paragraph 2 | 8. Paragraph 3 |
| 4. Paragraph 6 | 9. Paragraph 4 |
| 5. Paragraph 2 | 10. Paragraph 7 |

4. Business language

- Ask students to try to complete the activity in pairs and scan the article to look for the answers. Check answers with the whole class. Then draw students' attention to the phrasal verb or phrase that determines the preposition used (in brackets below).

Key:

- on to (log on to a computer/system)
- on (insist on doing something)
- of (be tired of + noun)
- up with (catch up with work)
- down (cut down opportunities)
- on (focus on + noun)
- by (be surprised by something)
- from (learn from someone)

- b. Ask students to complete the activity in pairs and then check answers with the whole class.

Key:

- | | |
|------|------|
| a. 4 | e. 5 |
| b. 8 | f. 3 |
| c. 1 | g. 6 |
| d. 7 | h. 2 |

- c. Ask students to work individually first to modify the sentences. Then have them work in pairs or small groups to share their ideas. Encourage students to ask follow-up questions and find out more about each other.

5. Discussion

- a. Put the students in pairs or small groups and ask them to discuss the questions. When students have covered all the questions, bring the whole class back together so that they can share their answers and any interesting information that arose from their discussions. Make note of good examples of vocabulary and language on the board, as well as incorrect usage that needs to be corrected. Ask the class to identify which is which and help you with corrections.

6. Wider business theme – participating in a meeting

- a. Students first discuss the questions in pairs and agree on the criteria that they would like to introduce. Ask them to make notes to use in the meeting.
- b. Have students prepare for the meeting by completing the first column. Explain that this refers to the points that they want to discuss in the meeting (the agenda points).
- c. Go over useful language with the class and elicit any other phrases that might be useful for participating in a meeting. Regroup students so that they are in groups of six or eight and ask them to have their meetings.

Ask students to use the table to take minutes in the second and third columns.

At the end, ask students to reflect on how productive their meeting was and how it could have gone better.