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Time Management



Meeting Madness

By Dr. Don Wetmore, President, The Productivity Institute

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Willy was feeling stressed. He should finish correcting the travel report for his boss, but he has to set it aside because he has to go to the meeting.

It's now 2:05 p.m. Sarah, Alan, and Willy are in the conference room ready to meet. They're always on time for the meeting, well just a few minutes late. Martha, Chuck, Fred, and Tom are not there yet. (They're always late for everything except for their flights at the airport.) They feel that few people truly understand their unique set of responsibilities. Sarah, Alan, and Willy appreciate their time together to get caught up on the office gossip while waiting for the others to arrive.

2:17 p.m. and Tom has arrived. Sarah leaves for "just a minute" to check her voicemail. Willy leaves to go to the bathroom. Martha arrives, and sees that everyone is not there yet and returns to her desk to check her email.

At 2:28 p.m. Willy is back and Chuck and Fred drift in. Fred wants to know why we are always running out of coffee filters. Chuck suggests that a meeting be set up to appoint a committee to look into and discuss the matter. Alan leaves to round up Sarah and Martha.

2:33 p.m., Alan returns with Sarah and Martha but Tom is in the hallway talking with Jan. Jan just got out of a horrible meeting and wanted to share with Alan. Jan senses that she may be wasting a lot of her time in meetings. Alan points out that they are important and "how would it look if you weren't there?", he asks. "True.", replies Jan.

Chuck says, "Let's get started. Alan will join us in a minute. Sarah, bring us up to date on the status of getting our new telephone extension numbers."

"Oh, I didn't know you wanted me to talk about that today. I, uh, really don't have too much on that." remarked Sarah as she turned away from her crossword puzzle.

"Why do we need new telephone extension numbers anyway?" asked Willy.

"We decided that last month although if you have some input on this, we should like to hear it." Chuck explained. "Weren't you here at the last meeting?"

"Willy's never here." scolded Martha.

"Am so.", defended Willy.

It's 2:42. Alan sticks his head in the door. "Sorry. Something just came up. I'll have to skip the meeting."

"But Alan, you were going to review the sales figures." implored Chuck.

"I know", added Alan, "but I've got to go to another meeting. It's very important."

For the next ten minutes the group discusses Alan's apparent lack of focus and how he is really hurting the team.

Around 2:53 p.m., a new discussion begins and the group agrees that they all have "too much to do", that this is unfair, and that something has to be done about it.

At 2:59 p.m., a new group is milling about in the hallway. It is their time to meet in the conference room. Kate runs that

meeting. It is very important because they have reserved two full hours for their meeting. She pokes her head in the meeting room. "You guys almost done? We have to have our meeting."

Chuck replies, "Oh, ok, thanks. I have another meeting to go to myself. We'll be done in just a minute. We just have to set the date for our next meeting."

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