MODULE OVERVIEW

Meetings worth having: Prepare first

Adaptive module | ~20 min

Knowledge workers spend more than twenty hours a week in meetings, and participants themselves judge nearly half of these meetings unnecessary. This module tackles the problem at its root: a three-question test to decide whether the meeting is needed, an invitation list limited to those who add value (including the right to decline), and a plan that gets everyone on board before the meeting starts.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

01 Decide whether a meeting is needed using the three-question test and the phrase “successful if…”.

02 Word the goal with an action verb (decide, resolve, choose between options), not a vague “update”.

03 Build a small invitation list around the value people bring, and exercise your right to decline.

04 Plan how the meeting will run: send the agenda 24 hours ahead, keep time deliberately tight, assign roles, and treat remote participants fairly.

WHO IT’S FOR

Anyone who wants useful meetings, whether they organize them, contribute to them, or choose to decline them.

- **Prerequisite:** none

HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

1 **Self-assessment**: on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.

2 **Expert video**: 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.

3 **Practice scenarios**: the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.

4 **Dated commitment**: one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.

5 **Memo to download**: key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- Rule on meeting size (8 people max) – Google, “How Google Works” (Eric Schmidt & Jonathan Rosenberg)
- 2-pizza rule – Amazon (Jeff Bezos)
- 3-question test (is the meeting needed?) – Afthonios method
- Parkinson’s law – C. Northcote Parkinson (1955)

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Harvard Business Review – “Stop the Meeting Madness” (2017): senior executives spend nearly 23 hours a week in meetings, compared with less than 10 hours in the 1960s
- Google – “How Google Works” (Eric Schmidt & Jonathan Rosenberg): meetings limited to 8 people at most, agenda sent 24 hours in advance
- Amazon (Jeff Bezos) – “2-pizza” rule: a meeting group should be small enough for 2 pizzas to feed
- C. Northcote Parkinson – Parkinson’s law (The Economist, 1955): work expands to fill all the time available

Module created by Afthonios.com.

Content reviewed on 13 October 2026