

Unnecessary meetings costing UK business more than GBP191bn a year

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New research reveals office workers are spending more than 10 hours each week on meetings, with almost an entire working day spent on unnecessary meetings

26 February – UK office workers are spending almost an entire working day every week attending and preparing for unnecessary meetings, according to new research from meeting governance technology firm eShare (<http://www.eshare.net/>) out today.

The average office worker spends 10 hours 42 minutes every week, preparing for and attending 4.4 meetings, with 2.6 of those deemed unnecessary. With the average meeting revealed to have 6.8 attendees, this equates to annual staff costs for unnecessary meetings per business of £35,395.36, based on ONS average earnings data

(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/annualsurveyofhours>)
With 5.4 million businesses in the UK, this means the total staff cost per year of unnecessary meetings is more than £191bn.

“Even as an approximate figure, £191bn is an astonishing amount to be wasted in staff costs, time and resource that could clearly be much better spent elsewhere,” said Alister Esam, CEO, eShare. “The template for smarter meetings must start at the top – board level meetings must be efficient, essential and better managed, so that meetings elsewhere can follow that lead.”

The research also revealed that 70% of office workers believe there are too many meetings in a working week, with 24% saying that often the same results could be achieved with a few quick emails. 81% say meetings need a 21st century makeover, with 83% saying the meeting process has not changed since they first entered the workplace. It is this lack of modernisation that has resulted in such meeting inefficiency, according to eShare CEO, Alister Esam:

“We’ve all been in meetings that took scores of emails to confirm, that have a paper agenda, where people can’t recall exactly what the previous actions were and with meeting materials that have been amended at the last minute – these problems could all be addressed by a more digital approach. It’s a waste of money and resource and is hugely frustrating for all concerned. Addressing such inefficiencies could be the biggest single boost to productivity in UK business, whilst also improving areas such as governance and transparency, especially at board level.”

79% of respondents say they could get much more work done with fewer inefficient meetings, and 45% believe that meetings prevent them from actually getting on with their job. The lack of digitisation around business meetings was highlighted by 52% saying they still receive a printed agenda and materials for most meetings, despite the ubiquity of smartphones and tablets. 59% say that after most meetings they just throw away the agenda and printed materials.

“Whether it’s board meetings in a major corporation, SME all-company meetings or departmental catch-ups, meetings are an essential element of business,” said Alister Esam. “Yet most of us would agree that many meetings are inefficient and ineffective, and can be managed far better than they are

currently. Throwing meeting materials away for example, is potentially a major security concern, and all aspects of meetings need to be dragged into the 21st century. The benefits of doing so will be felt in boardrooms all over the UK.”

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About the research

An online survey of 1,000 employees within UK companies was undertaken by TLF (<http://www.tlfresearch.co.uk/>) Research in September 2017.

Office for National Statistics Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings: 2017 provisional and 2016 revised results

(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/annualsurveyofhours>) published 26 October 2017. Data was extrapolated in the following way:

- For each meeting, people spend on average one hour eight minutes preparing and one hour 19 minutes attending. This works out as two hours 27 minutes spent on each meeting in total.
- The average worker attends 4.4 meetings each week, with 2.6 of those deemed unnecessary.
- This means that each employee six hours 22 minutes are spent on unnecessary meetings.
- Based on the ONS median gross weekly earnings of £550, each working day an employee earns £110.
- Based on a seven-hour day, this means an hourly salary of £15.71, which equates to a cost per meeting (of two hours 27 minutes) per employee of £38.50.
- With the average meeting having 6.8 attendees, the staff cost of a meeting is therefore £261.80.
- With 2.6 meetings each week deemed unnecessary, this means that £680.68 is spent on staff time in unnecessary meetings, every week. Across a year (x 52), the cost is £35,395.36.
- With 5.4 million businesses in the UK, the total staff cost to UK business from unnecessary meetings is £191,134,944,000.

For further information visit www.eshare.net

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