

Calendar Hygiene Tips

As we enter 2023 it's a great time to start the year by clearing your calendar, identifying meetings that you might not need to hold, and making time to carve out blocks of time to focus. It's also helpful to use certain tips and tricks to keep that calendar running smoothly, especially if you're trying to juggle many aspects of your working day, and you know some unexpected changes might pop up along the way.



Review your meetings

We all get into the habit of scheduling recurring standing meetings. Those 1:1s with our managers are important. But what about other meetings which we need only occasionally? The start of the year is a great time to review our meeting schedules and prioritise accordingly. Discuss with your colleague(s) whether those standing meetings are necessary. Do they need to be weekly, or could they be every other week, or at all?

Further still, sometimes meetings have several attendees from the same team. Do all members of the team need to join, or could there be one point person who attends and keeps their team updated?

When scheduling meetings

When planning your meetings, it can be tempting to arbitrarily set them for 30/60 minutes. Why not schedule meetings for 20/50 minutes instead? Even better, if you'd usually schedule a meeting for 30 minutes, but you know you can accomplish the task in 15 minutes, set it for 15 minutes instead. Then, hold yourself and your meeting partner to it. You could use those extra 15 minutes to catch up on emails, organise notes from the meeting, or even grab a quick coffee. After all, your time is precious. Every minute counts.

Use the Pomodoro Technique and block time on your calendar

It's important that in a busy day you still have time to do your work. Why not block out chunks of time in your calendar where others cannot book meetings with you? In doing so you give yourself time to focus.

You can also use the Pomodoro Technique during this time. This productivity method is a great way in which we can break down large arduous tasks, or even a series of tasks, into small intervals. The method stipulates that you work for 25 minutes, take a short break, and so on. The recommendation is that you hold four of these cycles before taking a longer break. The outcome is that you become extremely focussed during those 25-minute sprints, treat yourself to a small break, and eventually, complete your task.

But remember, set gaps between meetings

When scheduling meetings it's easy to find yourself setting back-to-back meetings, without any gaps between. You'll thank yourself later if you create small gaps in your schedule to transition between meetings. Unexpected commitments can pop up, urgent emails may need to be answered, you may desperately need a coffee break. Give yourself some wiggle room otherwise you could find yourself running behind on important tasks.

Scheduling meetings across time zones

Be mindful when scheduling meetings for attendees across various time zones. Do so during core working hours and be sure to send follow up notes for those who are unable to attend.

No meetings on a Friday

Remember this OSB request? The Friday 'rule' was recommended to allow all employees schedule time for planning for the next week. It may sound like a small task but setting aside time to plan can help save you time in your schedule later. Ask yourself, should this be a meeting or an email?

