



BOOK REVIEW

The Surprising Science of Meetings

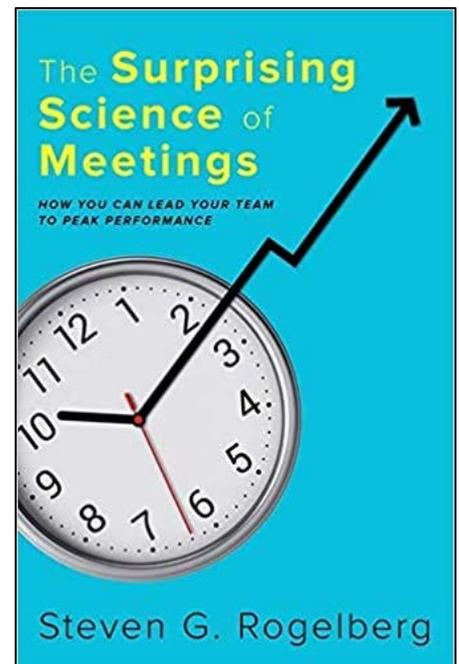
by Steven Rogelberg

review submitted by Crystal Morphis

Think the science behind meetings is boring? Think again! Dr. Steven Rogelberg's book *The Surprising Science of Meetings* is a must read for all who spend way too much time in unproductive meetings with no clear purpose or result. There are 55 million meetings a day in the US at a cost of about \$1.4 trillion. Some 47% of people say that too many meetings are a drain on the workplace. In the book, Dr. Rogelberg states that meetings done wrong have tremendous costs, disengagement, and 'meeting recovery syndrome' and meetings done right are major opportunities for inclusion, innovation, engagement, and ROI.

The Surprising Science of Meetings has suggestions to help solve the problems of bad meetings, wasted time in meetings, and unnecessary meetings. The key take-aways at the end of each chapter are clear, concise, and easy to incorporate in your day-to-day work. Most apply to all meetings, whether in-person or remote. A few of the take-aways:

- Half of all meetings start late because we are coming from another meeting. Calendar programs default to scheduling meetings on the hour and half-hour, so try meeting times that end at ten minutes before the hour and start at an odd time like eight minutes after the hour so people can take a rest break and get to the next meeting on time.
- The person who most often says a meeting is a success is the person who talks the most, who is usually the person leading the meeting. Structure the agenda for a high level of engagement.
- Meetings are more efficient with fewer people, so carefully consider who really needs to attend.
- Start well (organized agenda, most important matters first, assign topics to people, list desired results) and end well (next steps).
- Consider other meeting structures like huddles, standing, walking, etc.
- Silence in meetings can be a powerful brainstorming tool, allowing people to form ideas and counteract groupthink.



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Dr. Rogelberg is a professor of organizational science, management and psychology at UNC Charlotte. His book is a recommended read by the *Washington Post*. You may have heard him interviewed on the Freakonomics podcast or more recently on *Business North Carolina's* podcast. He also led an engaging workshop on meeting science at the 2020 Women's Economic Development Network Forum.

Since meetings today are in the virtual world, Dr. Rogelberg recently posted a video offering 10 tips to make remote meetings better. Click [HERE](#) to watch the 4-minute video clip. The remote meeting is consistently rated as poorly run, not engaging, and ineffective. Ironically, research also suggests that remote meetings are generally preferred by individuals because the anonymity allows for extensive multi-tasking – clearly not a desired outcome.

So, while travel is cancelled and in-office time has increased, read *The Surprising Science of Meetings* to rethink how your meetings can be opportunities for inclusion, innovation, and engagement.

Learn more about meeting science here: <https://www.stevenrogelberg.com/>.