



The Art & Science of Building Good Meeting Habits

For SCAGPO by Liz Guthridge

May 14, 2015

Goals

1. Share some little-known truths that can make meetings miserable
 - Brain
 - Habits
2. Provide you with knowledge—and tools—to improve your meetings so they are more:
 - Valuable for you and your participants
 - Action-oriented
 - Enjoyable
3. Share and learn from each other as well as answer your questions

Topics

🕒 What?

- Why meetings can be so hard

Check-ins

🕒 So what?

- How to improve meetings by:
 - Playing to brain's strengths
 - Following the meeting life cycle
 - Before
 - During
 - After

Q&A

Exercises



🕒 Now what?

What's going on?—Back story

Coach/Consultant/Facilitator

With training in:

- Applied neuroscience
 - Behavior design, including habits
 - Lean communications
- ... also parliamentary procedure!*



Liz Guthridge

Ground rules

- 🕒 Turn cell phones off or on vibrate
- 🕒 Participate by:
 - Taking part in check-ins and exercises
 - Asking questions
 - Committing to at least one new thing
- 🕒 Enjoy the experience





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My philosophy about meetings

Life is too short to spend it in bad meetings.

To make meetings valuable:

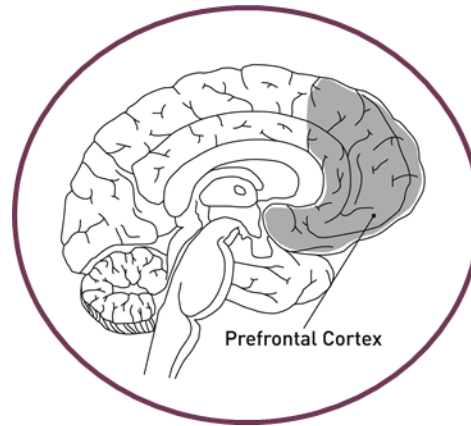
- 🕒 Honor our brain
- 🕒 Plan meetings holistically—the meeting life cycle
- 🕒 Use everyone's time wisely and get things done

Use RONR as a last resort!

What's going on?—Scientific research

The brain:

Is more
emotional,
less
rational



Tires
quickly

Is unique

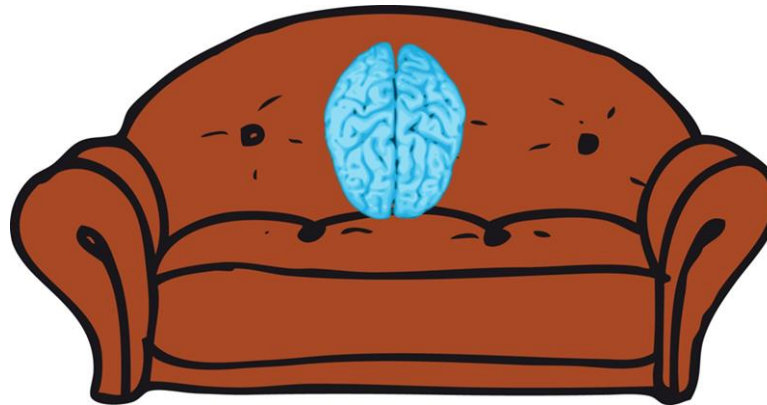
Is a
connection
machine

Hardwires
everything,
yet easy to
rewire

What's going on?—Scientific research

Our brain makes us humans
“mental couch potatoes”*

focus on
safety

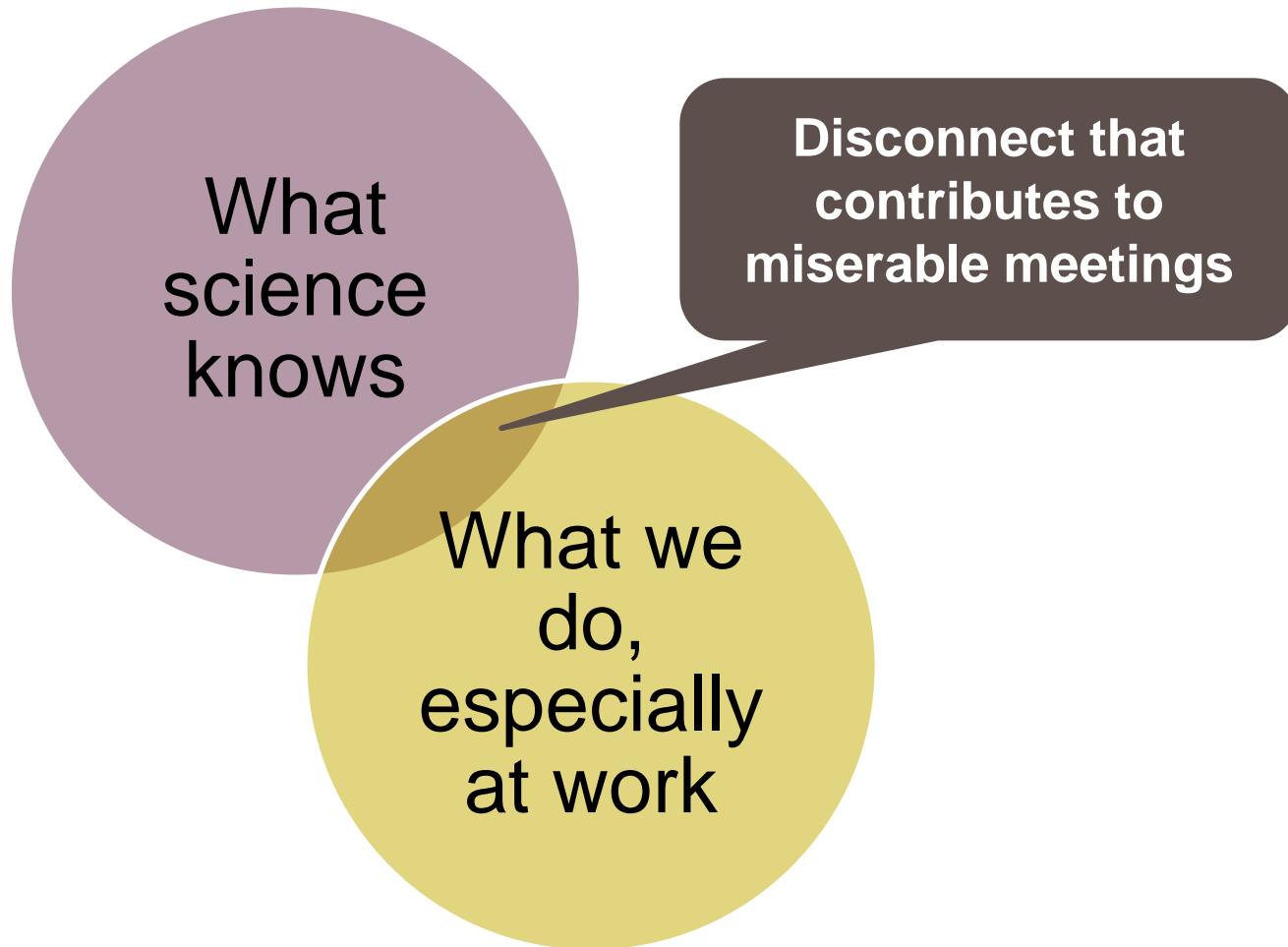


creatures of
habit

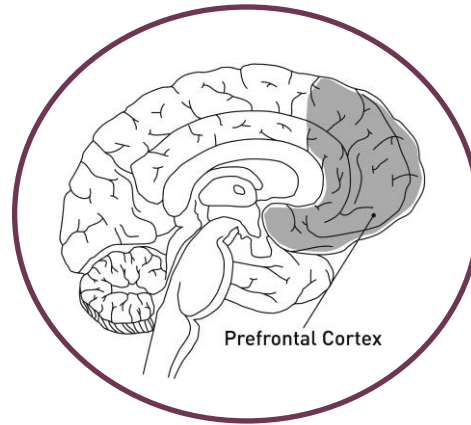
* Dr. Matthew Lieberman

social

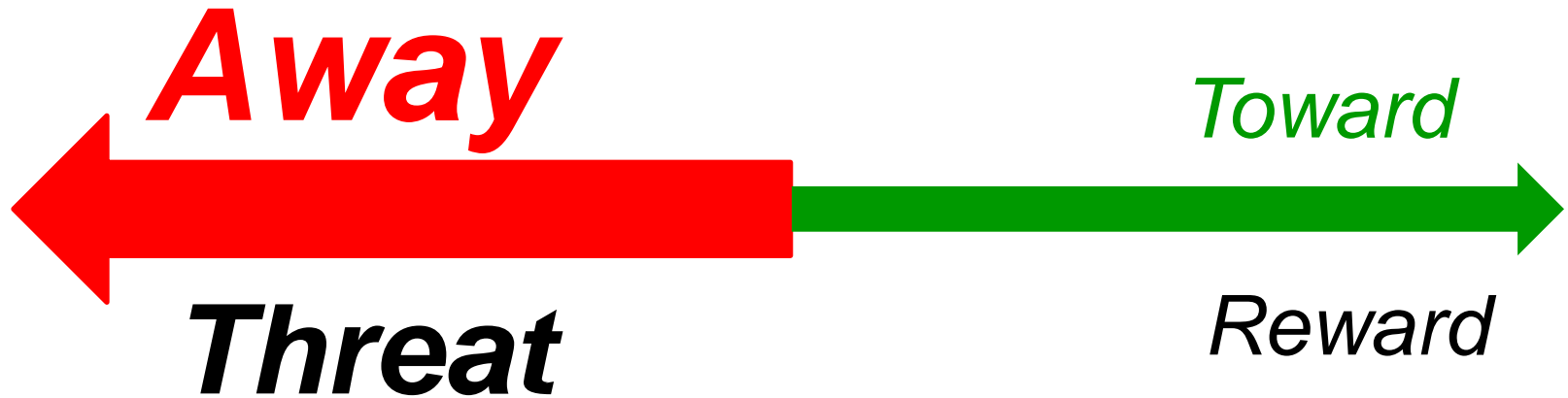
What's going on?—Implications



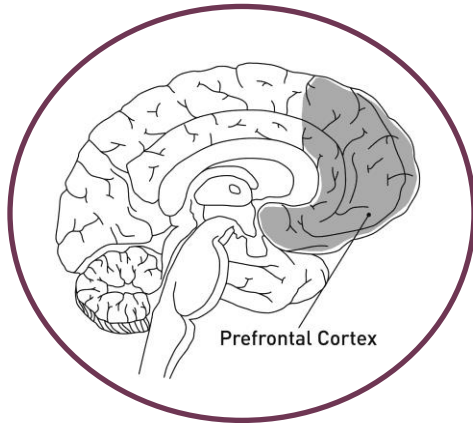
What's going on: focus on safety



**Scanning 5x
every second**



What's going on—focus on social



SCARF
model



David Rock, 2009



What's going on—2 networks

Need to use both to their advantage and yours

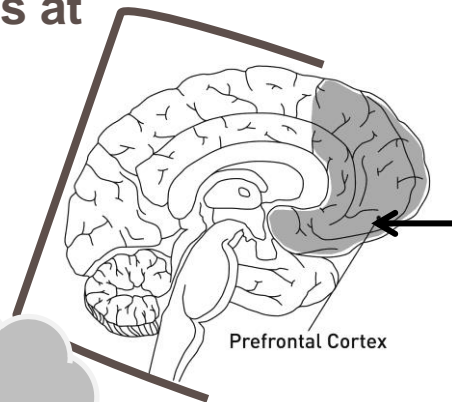
Milky Way Brain:

Works on billions of things at any one time; always on

Making connections

Having ah-ha moments

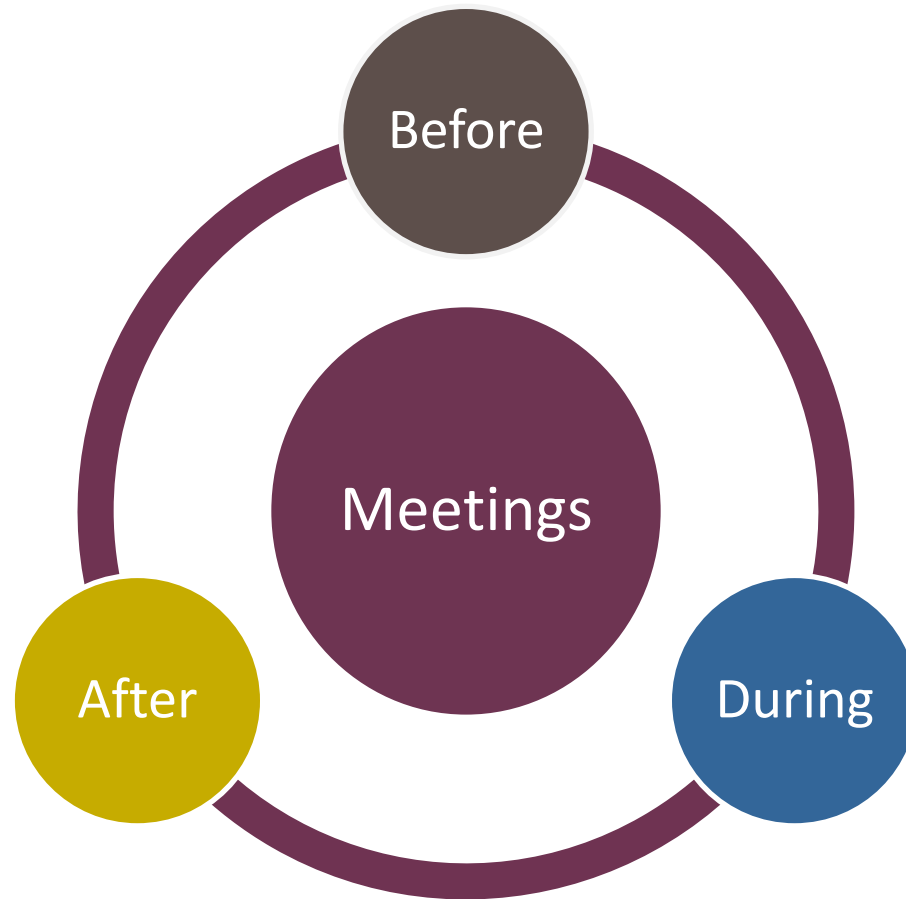
Doing habits

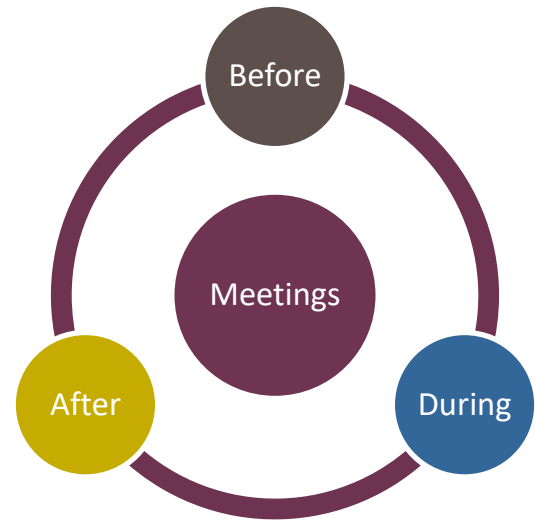


Prefrontal Cortex:
Works on 1 thing at a time

So what? Implications for meetings

Follow a meeting life cycle





BEFORE MEETINGS

Before meetings

Consider

- ☺ Meeting purpose
 - Check-in
 - Build connections
 - Provide something of value
- ☺ What to accomplish
 - Must do
 - Nice to do
- ☺ How you will
 - Build agenda
 - Attract and keep attention
 - Manage environment

Before meetings

Agenda tips

- ⌚ Weigh light vs. heavy
 - Light: Info sent in advance as background
 - Heavy: Discussion items and others that benefit from group
- ⌚ Assign time slots
 - Key items earlier than later
- ⌚ Assign people roles
- ⌚ Include time for
 - Discussion
 - Recap

Sample agenda

Date/Time:

Location or Call In #:

Type of Meeting: *(Planning, check-in, problem-solving, brainstorming, education, staff meeting or other)*

Participants:

Desired Outcomes: 1. 2. 3.			For Information	For Discussion	For Brainstorming	For Decision
Time	Agenda Item	Individuals Responsible				
	Confirm agenda	• All		X		X
	Next steps: Actions, timing, responsibilities.	• All	X	X	X	X
	Adjourn and confirm next meeting time of: _____	• All				X

Before meetings



- 🕒 Use electronic meeting invites to make it easier for people to show up on time
- 🕒 Try for more shorter meetings than marathon sessions
- 🕒 Always consider how to do:



Simple



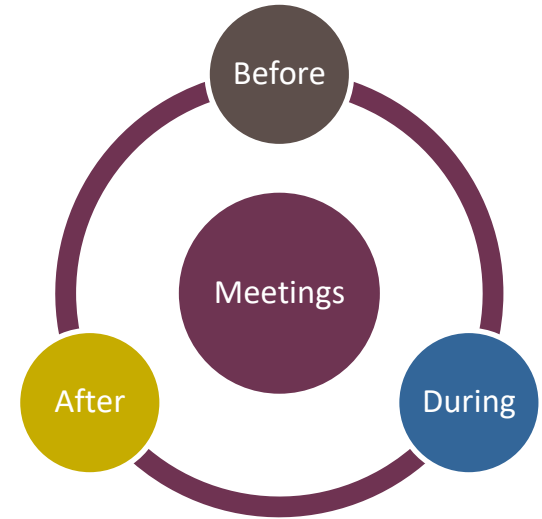
Social



Fun

Discussion

**COMMENTS, QUESTIONS,
OBSERVATIONS?**



DURING THE MEETING

During meetings

Consider:

- 🕒 Meeting goals

 - Focus on vital few, not trivial many

- 🕒 Mindset

- 🕒 Process

Mindset

- 🕒 Be a facilitator/gracious host
 - Make people feel welcome
 - Work to put them in a “toward” reward state
 - Respect time
 - Start, stop and breaks
 - Encourage a variety of voices
 - Make most of the room
- 🕒 Assume positive intent of everyone
 - Use best of their abilities
 - Act in everyone’s best interest
- 🕒 Embrace improv

Improv

- 🕒 Adopt improv, not follow scripts
 - Be in the moment
 - Focus on here and now
 - Say “yes, and...”
 - Give every idea a chance; avoid “No, but...”
 - Follow the follower
 - Encourage others to step forward and speak
 - Listen and ask questions
 - Look for offers

Improv: From No, but... to Yes, and...

Directions

Exercise

Pair off in 2's

- Person with earlier birthday leads
 - Suggests 5 things to do
- Other person responds:
 - "No, but..." to all statements

Switch roles

- Person with later birthday leads
 - Suggests something to do
- Other person responds:
 - "Yes, and" and builds on idea
 - Continue back and forth

Listening

We only hear what we want to hear

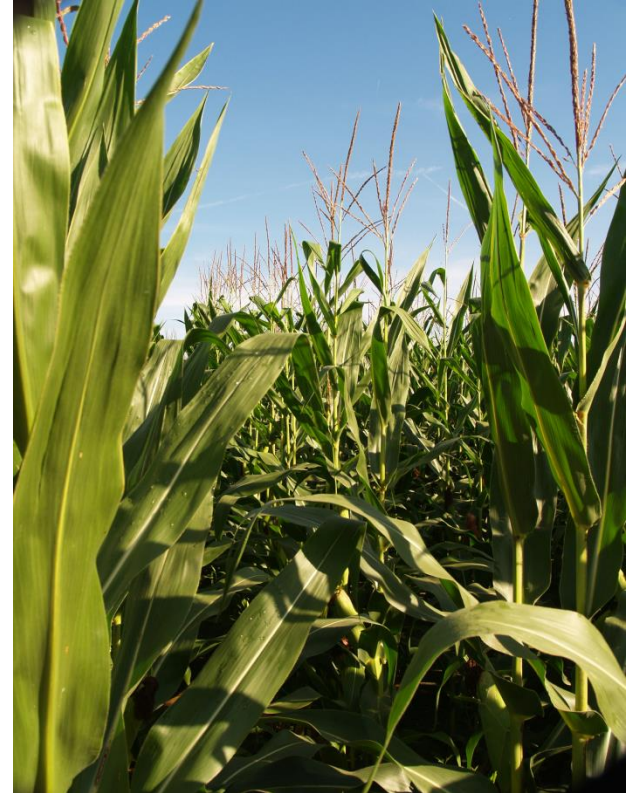
- ***Unless*** we consciously choose a certain way to listen.
- Our default is a combo of:
 - What we sense and
 - What our brain predicts based on our memories



-- Jeff Hawkins, Founder of Palm and Redwood Center for Theoretical Neuroscience

7 things to listen for

1. Understanding
2. Language
3. Connections
4. Patterns
5. Energy
6. What's not being said
7. Potential



Asking questions

Ask a variety of questions



🗣️ Open-ended

- What's your top priority?
- How are you defining success?
- What's your timing?

🗣️ Scale questions: "1" to "10"

- How important is this issue to you on a scale of 1 to 10?

🗣️ Thinking questions

- How long have you been thinking about this?
- How often do you think about this?
- How motivated are you to resolving this?

Asking questions

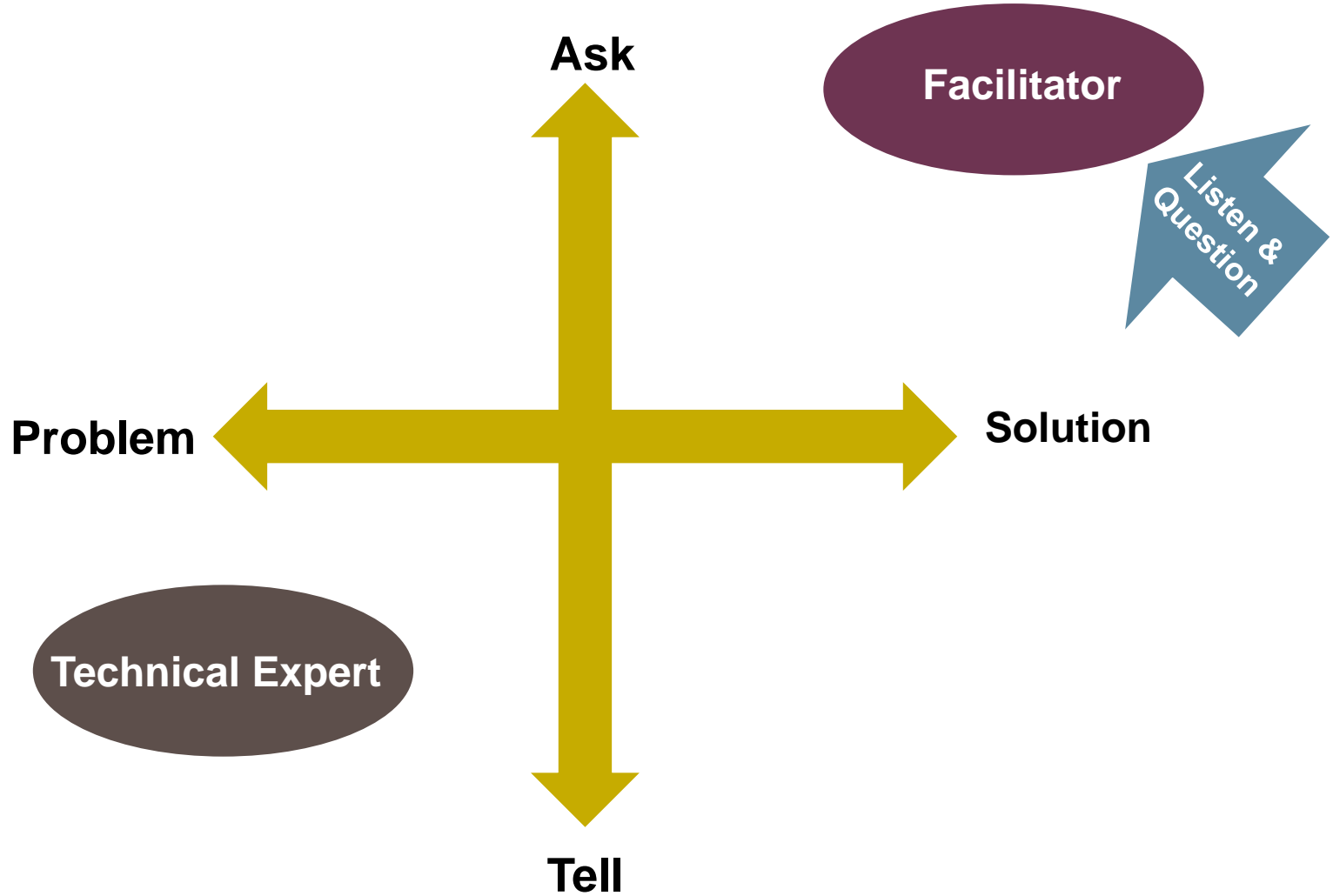
Directions

Exercise

Pair off in different group of 2's

- Person with most pets leads and asks:
 - What's one of your work challenges these days?
 - What priority is this issue for you right now, top 5, three or top one, or something else?
 - How clear are you about this issue?
- Switch roles; other person asks:
 - What's one thing you want to get done in the second half of the year, either work or personal?
 - On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is this to you?
 - How committed are you to getting this done?

Listening & questioning



Ask-Tell Quadrants adapted from Dr. David Rock

During meetings

🕒 Process tools and tips

- Adopt regular ground rules
 - Focus attention on how you work together
 - Put power for policing into the group
- Watch clock/agenda
 - Spend time on vital few, not trivial many
 - Use a parking lot/bicycle path for off-topic issues
- Take notes
 - Record actions agreed to
 - Rotate responsibility

Sample ground rules

- 🕒 Show respect with your words and body language (No eye rolling around the table!)
- 🕒 Say “ditto” if you agree (Don’t feel a need to repeat the same points.)
- 🕒 Practice ELMO (Enough, Let’s Move On) to stay out of the muck
- 🕒 We’re in Las Vegas (“What’s said here, stays here” when discussing confidential issues, especially around people.)

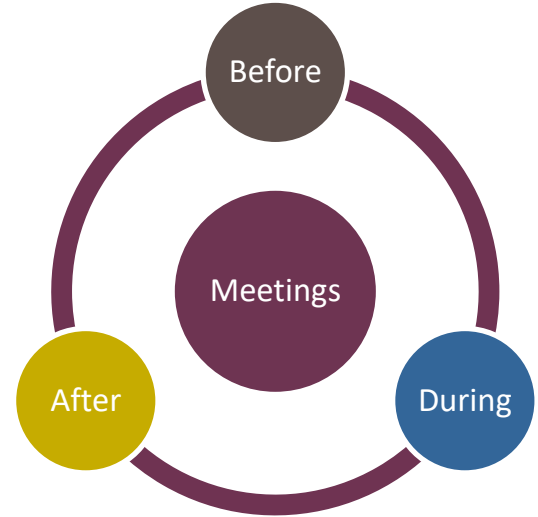
During meetings



- 🕒 Encourage people to sit in different places each time
 - Change your perspective; change your perceptions
- 🕒 Consider “check-ins” and “clear the space” to help focus
- 🕒 Take breaks:
 - 10-15 minute breaks after 90-120 minutes
 - 5 minute breaks when you need to regroup or relieve tension

Discussion

**COMMENTS, QUESTIONS,
OBSERVATIONS?**



AFTER MEETINGS

After meetings

🕒 Tips for meeting notes/minutes

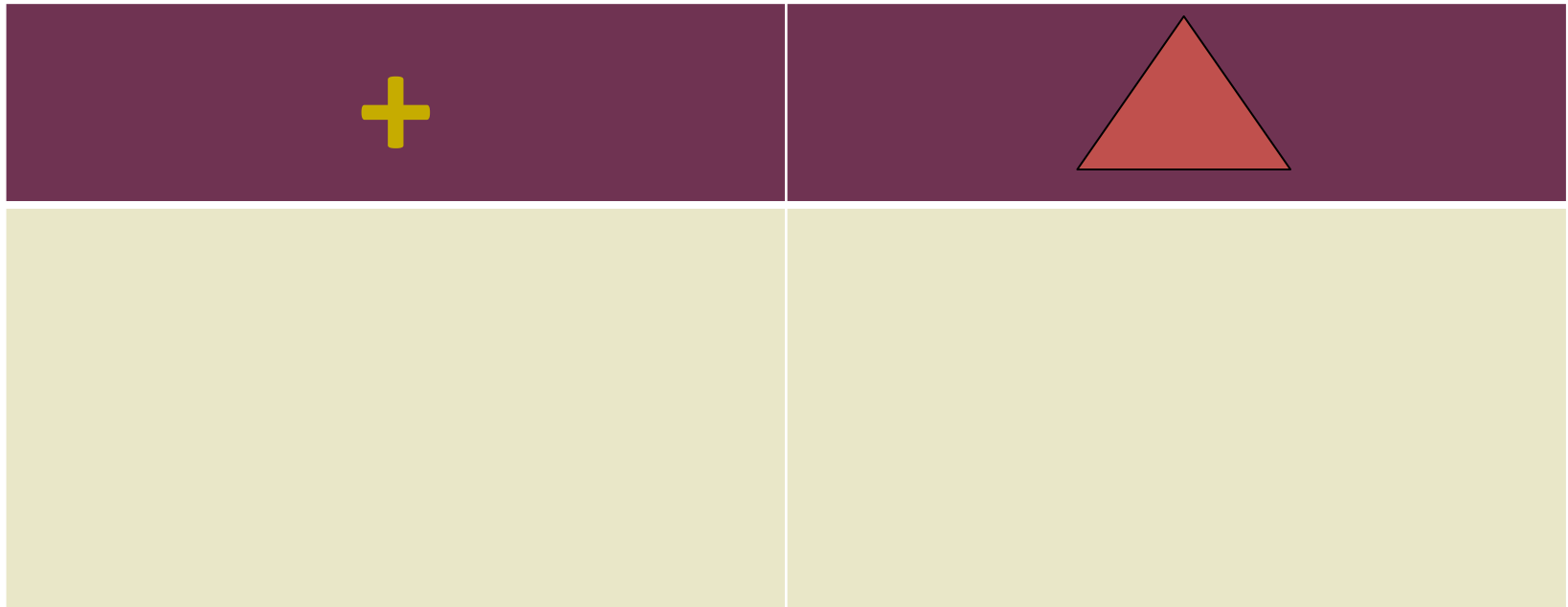
- Date, time of meeting, location
- Attendance
- Status of notes from previous meeting
- Action items, not discussion unless important to note for future reference
- Reports
- Adjournment

Make available to those who can use them

After-meeting tips

- ① Do follow-up with those who:
 - Missed the meeting
 - Are/could be affected by meeting results
 - Have stake/interest in key issues
 - Have issue(s) on the horizon
- ① Start developing agenda for next meeting and distributing it
- ① Use meeting effectiveness tools

Meeting effectiveness tool



Other questions to ask:

- Was the meeting a good use of time?
- How can we improve our meeting experience?
- Would I recommend this meeting to friends, not enemies?

Meeting effectiveness tool

What's going well	What could be going better
What we're correcting	What's on the horizon

Meeting effectiveness tools

Software as a Service

Examples:

- Google docs
- Doodle
- Google+ hangouts
- Basecamp
- Evernote

Photo by Kevin Dooley



After meetings



- 🕒 Rotate roles as much as possible to:
 - Share responsibilities
 - Build ownership
 - Gather different points of view
- 🕒 Do formal and informal process checks about **meeting** formats and other aspects

Discussion

**COMMENTS, QUESTIONS,
OBSERVATIONS?**

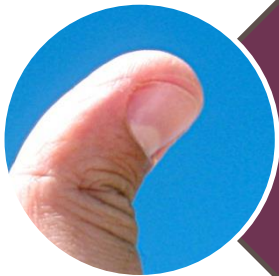
Now what?



Embrace the
science



Try 1-3 ideas



Experiment

Now what?

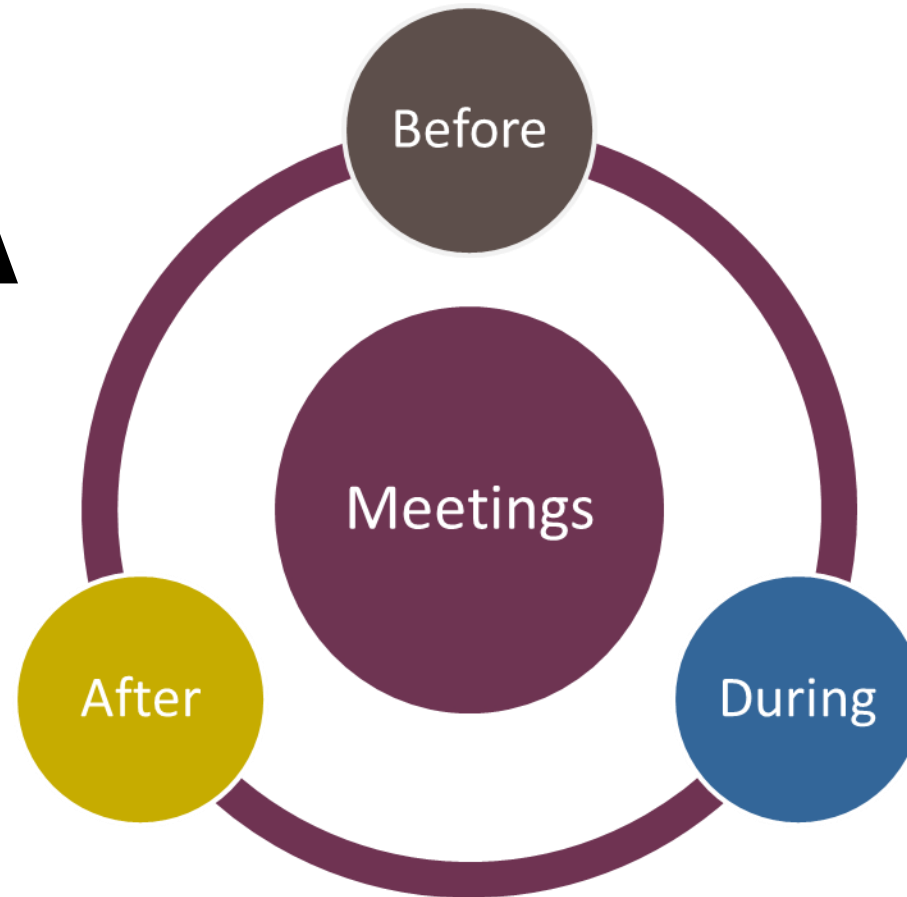
Directions

Exercise

- Write down at least one thing you want to try
- Share it with a different partner
- Ask each other the 3H questions:
 - How **helpful** do you think this will be for you?
 - How likely are you to make this **happen** at your next meeting?
 - **How** easy will it be for you to do?

Now what?

Q&A



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