

**Francis Wade:** [00:00:00] The Task Management and Time Blocking Podcast, episode 36. Once again, you find yourself caught in a bad meeting. As you glance at your watch, you're hoping it'll end quickly. Put you out of your misery. Why? Little of value is being accomplished in this meeting. But how can you make sure this problem goes away?

**Francis Wade:** If you're in an organization, saying no may give you some individual or personal relief, but it does not solve the underlying issue. In fact you're not sure anything will, will tune into this episode to hear from me and my special guest, Ben Kirk, as we tackle this wicked problem together. I'm Francis Wade and welcome to the task management and Time blocking podcast.

**Francis Wade:** And welcome back. As you can see, [00:01:00] we're joined on the stage by Ben Kirk, who is our special guest. But before I introduce Ben, let me do a couple of things. One is to welcome you if you're new to the program and don't know what the heck you've dropped into. I'll do an explanation.

**Francis Wade:** Then we'll tell a quick story and then I'll introduce Ben. So if you've never listened to our podcast, you may not know that it's very different from other kinds of podcasts where people are interviewed and book reports are given and topics such as what are your favorite colors and your favorite Uh, your favorite TV show, uh, the topic of discussion here on this podcast, we're all about solving a problem and Ben and I have come up with a problem.

**Francis Wade:** It relates to meetings and we're going to do our best to tackle the thorniest aspects of it. Believing that as we discuss it, you'll gain some insights as we bring our knowledge and our experience to bear. So most of the show is really about defining the problem and diagnosing it. [00:02:00] Einstein said that if he had an hour to solve a problem, he'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and five minutes thinking about solutions.

**Francis Wade:** So we're gonna do that. And as we do, so we'll be looking to generate some insights that are unique, brand new serendipitous, kind of a bit like being in a jazz, a jazz combo, if you could imagine that. And as we do that, each insight, I'll make a note of it and put a little bell in that rings, you'll hear a bell and If perchance we get to the end of the episode and we've not discovered any new insights, I'll play a buzzer, which means that time run ran out.

**Francis Wade:** We had a good time, but we didn't have any new insights. So our objective is to come up with some new thinking. And let me tell a story about someone just to set the stage. Then I'll introduce Ben. So the story is

about Christopher. Christopher has lots of good ideas. He keeps trying to preserve time each [00:03:00] week to work on them.

**Francis Wade:** But guess what? He's a popular guy. Therefore, he keeps getting called into meetings by others. You know, it's the kind of business where they schedule his meetings into his calendar using Outlook, um, or, or Google Calendar. But, you know, they put the meetings in his calendar and the kind of thing is, he can't really say no to them.

**Francis Wade:** They value his input. And his willingness to share, but he can't continue very few of them. Um, he can't continue that way because very few of them are very well, well run. Most of them are run badly. So he ends up counting on the minutes as he sits in these meetings, several times per day, as the discussions drag on.

**Francis Wade:** And those moments, all you can think about is a list of valuable tasks. He could be working on instead, things that he thinks will really move the needle. Fortunately, he ran into the CEO one day in the parking lot. and suggested that there must be a better way to save [00:04:00] hundreds of hours each week that people are spending collectively in the company in bad meetings.

**Francis Wade:** She got excited and asked him to write a memo with some practical suggestions. But guess what? He's in a bind. A lot of well meaning people are calling these meetings with the best of intentions. But he hasn't really considered what a large scale change program would look like, something the CEO could implement.

**Francis Wade:** So Ben Kirk, Ben's mission is to demystify the science of success and cut through the BS, fluff and waffle of self help with clear actionable advice that will move the success needle for you. His mantra, do better, be better, win the day. Some of the philosophy of incremental self improvement, no excuses and a bias for action, Ben, welcome to the show.

**Ben Kirk:** Thank you [00:05:00] very much. Great to be here.

**Francis Wade:** Great. Let's just jump right in. What do you make of the Christopher story and Christopher's situation?

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah. Wow. I mean, who hasn't been in that situation before where you are just blocked up with meetings and you wonder how you're going to get

through. Any actual work done, particularly when these meetings, there's no, no decisions are made by the end of them.

**Ben Kirk:** So many times it's just people sitting around, maybe they're throwing ideas or having a, don't have to do their brief or their report. And there's no actionable takeaways. There's no next steps. There's no, what are we going to do? There's no chance to actually get some work done in those days. So yeah, let let's tackle this.

**Ben Kirk:** That's let's solve this problem.

**Francis Wade:** All right. Great. So as I mentioned before, the first part of our, our call is to diagnose the problem because there's not a single company I'm aware of that has its hand around the problem. So it tells, it tells us that it's, it might seem to lend itself to some easy [00:06:00] solutions, but there's some things going on here that are deeper than just behaviors, deeper than just putting in some rules, deeper than just social changes that need to happen and we want to get to the bottom of it.

**Francis Wade:** Um, and then as we do so, hopefully some answers will pop out. That'd be brand new. Okay. Yeah. So, um, uh, let's start by looking at what happens if the problem does never get solved. What happens if, if meetings continue to run amok in most companies?

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah. Well, look, if we can push this forward. Three years, five years, even push it forward for a whole year.

**Ben Kirk:** You've, you know, you start out the year, you think, what, what can we achieve this year? And then these. Issues with meetings are coming up, coming up further. What happens if next year is going to be exactly the same way? So, I mean, it's going to delay decisions. It's going to slow things down. What about innovation?

**Ben Kirk:** Uh, there's morale in the [00:07:00] company as well, right? Um, oh crikey, we've got another year coming up. If it's going to be repeated this year, I don't know if I can.

**Francis Wade:** Yeah, I would say also that any, company that has a, let's say a strategy or a plan of any kind, any company can destroy their best intentions by simply having lots of ineffective meetings because the meetings, are the glue to ensure that certain kinds of decisions are made and certain kinds of behaviors are initiated.

**Francis Wade:** And without them, you won't have that kind of movement, which means that you can kill any plan by simply having enough bad meetings. Is that, is that kind of ring true?

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah, I think that makes perfect sense. And then if you start deciding to cut away those meetings and you've got no backup plan, Milestone reports.

**Ben Kirk:** You've got no melding of minds. You've got no [00:08:00] sort of other, um, other outcomes that can be produced either, which is, I mean, being human, we do like to be around other people. We do like to bounce ideas of other people, but if people don't want to be there. It's just destroying the whole idea behind it. And yeah, the companies moving forward, uh, are going to get stuck if people aren't wanting to attend or they've already checked out even before they go in there.

**Ben Kirk:** So just that whole idea, I mean, it's, yeah, it's, it's the products, it's the innovation, it's the morale. Um, I mean, that's company growth slowing down. Maybe, maybe people are going to start jumping ship.

**Francis Wade:** Right. Right. Right. Because they feel as if they're wasting their life. Right.

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah.

**Francis Wade:** Um, yeah, there are, there are many cases of companies like for example, Kodak comes to mind because Kodak had the right idea about digital photography.

**Francis Wade:** In terms of the technology, they invented digital, um, picture taking, digital [00:09:00] camera, camera, cameras. They invented the digital camera, digital photography. Um, and they, the, the, the, the guy who was the main inventor stayed with them the whole time. Time that, you know, when it went out to business and film photography disappeared.

**Francis Wade:** And I imagine that he was in lots of meetings, right? And he never made the decisions that they needed to make to capitalize on. What they had invented and I imagine he sat there in these meetings, scratching his head and tearing, tearing his, I couldn't do that, but you could tear your hair out. You know, why is it that we're having all these meetings and we're talking about this, but nothing is happening.

**Francis Wade:** And as it, you know, as it came to crunch time in around 2003, So they, they had a record year in the year 2000. There was more film sold that year than ever before in the [00:10:00] history of mankind. And three and four years later, they were starting to show the signs of being in trouble. And they weren't making the decisions that they needed to make to come out of regular film and go into digital technology.

**Francis Wade:** And as a result by, was it 2010 or 11, They were almost bankrupt and they had, um, they were being supplanted by the iPhone and, and all smartphones. And eventually they destroyed some, I think it was some 20 billion in value and 70, 000 people lost their jobs. I mean, I read these awful numbers about. These terrible things that happen.

**Francis Wade:** And I wonder, you know, is it the result of not having these effective meetings and feeling as if probably this has always worked for us? Um, yeah. And when someone challenges the status [00:11:00] quo in an unstructured way, if you don't have a good meeting, then that person never gets heard, right?

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah, yeah. I know.

**Ben Kirk:** I think that was quite, quite the point there about effective meetings. So it's quite possible that they were just having their standard meetings, going around the table, doing the standard presentation, doing the standard reports, the standard briefings, and maybe they weren't opening it up for people to be open minded for innovation to give this guy, this inventor a chance to really, uh, explain his invention.

**Ben Kirk:** Maybe they were just doing the standard thing over and over and over again, which is this sort of story that, that we hear about meetings. We seem like, hang on, we did the same meeting two weeks ago. We were covered over the same things, uh, and maybe that's what happened to Kodak. I mean, I guess we can only suppose, but, uh, clearly they didn't take on, uh, any additional market knowledge or, or, or look at innovation or look where [00:12:00] the market was moving.

**Ben Kirk:** And, um, yeah, they seriously lost that, uh, lost that opportunity. Yeah.

**Francis Wade:** Yeah. Yeah. Well, for sure, we know they didn't make the decisions, right. They needed to make. That's a given because they went out of business. Same with Blockbuster and, um, Blackberry and, you know, all the

companies that we, we think of as, I saw this, these awful numbers around Yahoo, all the companies tried to buy them and they said, Oh no, we're better than that.

**Francis Wade:** And, and Google offered itself for sale to Yahoo for like 4 million, 5 million, some ridiculous number. Yeah. The numbers they were condensing is one graphic. It just, it just looked awful. And you know, for a company like that to, to, to make these four decisions, they made that were terrible. You've got to think, That there were some series of meetings because nobody makes these decisions in a corporation on their own, [00:13:00] so they had to meet.

**Francis Wade:** So something happened or did not happen. And it had to happen or not happen in a meeting setting. So there could have been some lead up, but for sure, we know critical decisions weren't made and those decisions had to be made or not made in meetings. And that destroyed. 6 billion, I think of value in Yahoo.

**Francis Wade:** Again, some crazy, crazy, crazy number, but for all these failures, I've got to think that there's, bad decisions, which came from a sequence of bad meetings. Contributed to it. That's just, if you look at the way organizations work or am I exaggerating, what do you think?

**Ben Kirk:** No, I think, I think that that's exactly right. I think so many organizations get into this BAU, you know, just, this is a standard thing that we do. We do these meetings for an hour. We do them every Monday at 10 [00:14:00] o'clock. Uh, these are the standard people that always come into these meetings and they get into this sort of BAU system.

**Ben Kirk:** And I think that when, when we get locked into it and Hey, I'm all about routines, I'm all about habits, I think they're really important. I'm all about SOPs. I think we need to have these things to, uh, to, to leverage from, but these sort of meetings are going to need to have something else incorporated to try to break them out of this standard decision making mold, or as the case may well be non decision making mold.

**Ben Kirk:** Um, And I think, yeah, going into this BAU, sometimes they need to have something scheduled in that's going to shake stuff up and maybe, you know, maybe it's, it's, it's taken that three hour meeting down to one hour or it's taken that one hour meeting down to 15 minutes and just saying, Hey, let's, let's just kind of some really quick conclusions here.

**Ben Kirk:** And see what comes out of it. Maybe they need to work at making jazz a bit more and, and bouncing ideas around the room a bit more, having that innovation, finding those sort of killer questions that might be [00:15:00] able to have them think about things from another angle or another perspective. But if people are in this routine of a standard meeting and a standard format and a standard agenda and the standard speakers, then they're never going to get that chance for new types of decisions or making better decisions or innovation.

**Francis Wade:** Yeah. I wonder also how many wars were started because of some really bad meetings or how many conflicts there are in the world, because there was a really, really. Stupid, you know, again, as you said, routine meeting where one person did all the talking and he or she just talked himself into a conflict that was unnecessary.

**Francis Wade:** And before you knew it, the tanks were rolling and Oh, you know, this is, this is what, this is what happens when meetings aren't done. Well, human beings don't work well together. Um, and the manifestation of it is these bad meetings. [00:16:00] Okay, so when people realize that meetings need to be improved and there's something, there's something basic going on, you know, there's some, the building block of making decisions isn't working well, which would say is a meeting.

**Francis Wade:** What do people typically do to try to solve the problem? What are some of the things that. Folks try do to avoid get themselves out of trouble.

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah, I think some people will go down the line initially of making sure there's a really fixed agenda. I think a lot of people say, okay, here is the agenda that we need to go through.

**Ben Kirk:** Our last meeting, we went off on a tangent and we, someone, Spoke more than they're allocated five minutes and they did 10 minutes and that through the whole meeting out of whack. And then our, our one hour meeting, uh, um, we got to 55 minutes. We had to round things up. We hadn't made any, any, any decisions yet.

**Ben Kirk:** So let's make sure we have a, have an, an agenda. And it needs to be fixed [00:17:00] and we can only speak for five minutes. That is one potential solution. But I mean, I mean, I think we can find there's probably a lot of problems in that as well in itself. Right. Um, but I think that's one way that people will, will try to square right square away their meetings and, uh, make them

**Francis Wade:** really rigid outcomes.

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah.

**Francis Wade:** Okay. Super military, huh?

**Ben Kirk:** Well, yeah, I mean, I would, I would even doubt that, uh, that military meetings would even be run the, some of the ways we see these fixed agendas. Um, well, I think there's always got to be this element that you've got to have of, of adaptability and, and, um, be ready for the, um, starting to be thrown at you sideways, but, uh, yeah, these sort of super fixed agendas I've been part of where things are counted down to the minute of how long we have to speak, uh, and.

**Ben Kirk:** There's certainly going to be a lot of, a lot of problems there, but it's, I think it's the first point of call people make. So let's, let's lock this down.

**Francis Wade:** And then there are some folks who, who say that I have too many meetings, so let me just [00:18:00] avoid them. So they just say no to all their meetings. Um, which means that the decisions are made without them.

**Francis Wade:** Right.

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah. I mean, and what if they are actually a decision maker who needed to be there or that sort of affected their particular department or, Or something like that. But, uh, yeah, and, and I mean, just avoiding meetings, that's part of, I mean, that can start talking to someone's ego. And I mean, what's that gonna say about, about morale as well is that, Hey, this guy reckons he's too, he's too good for us to, he is too busy for us to avoid meetings.

**Ben Kirk:** And that may not necess necessarily be their mindset. They are just absolutely overworked and they can't get that project to be, uh, released on time if they keep gonna all these meetings. So they're just gonna cut away from them. But, uh, right, that's not, that's not gonna work either.

**Francis Wade:** So it's almost as if we're, we're, we're seeing that.

**Francis Wade:** The simplistic kind of answers don't really work, you know, the, the do away with them, make them rigid, [00:19:00] um, uh, leaving, leaving meetings already doesn't work because same problem as not showing up being in a meeting, you know, what, by your checking your mail and you're, you're playing with your,

**Ben Kirk:** Well, that's, that's a huge thing, this work from home and, and, and all the digital meetings, right, is that I bet you most people are multitasking while they're doing meetings, unless they're having a conversation like we are back and forth, back and forth, um, while you're waiting for five or six other people to speak, most people are going to be checking their phone or checking their emails or doing something else, jump off camera and go do the dishes while they're at home or something.

**Ben Kirk:** Right. Um, so. That's just talking that that's huge disengagement.

**Francis Wade:** Right, right, right. And it takes away from the likelihood that the meeting will be effective in accomplishing its goal. And maybe that's, maybe that's the twin targets that we want. [00:20:00] We want effectiveness and we want. Efficiency in the sense that the meeting should take the exact number of minutes that is required and kind of like no more or no less, what does that, what does that kind of, it's kind of sounding to me like that's maybe a sweet spot, the right object, the right accomplishment.

**Francis Wade:** In exactly the right time,

**Ben Kirk:** right accomplishment in the right time, the right amount of engagement, I guess that that'll go into it. Was it, was it Parkinson's law where it was the, the task that you're doing is going to take as long as the time you allocate to it?

**Francis Wade:** Right. I think meetings are the same way. Why doesn't a one hour meeting take an hour? Because we're lucky. No, because there's Parkinson's law that people, people are watching the clock and they're realizing [00:21:00] I don't want to be here for more than the hour. So the last how many minutes they arrive at all these decisions and you know, it's a, it's a, it's a, As a sense in which I think people come into meetings and if you, if you don't have the right kind of mindset coming in, which is shortest time as possible, effective in producing the results we need to produce, which means that's why it has to do the work before to define the result that we want.

**Francis Wade:** Um, Right. People in the room that if the right blend isn't there, then we'll end up with having these bad meetings and ruining world peace and profits and innovation as a result of it. Right. It's like, that's the, that's the equation. It's like a delicate, it's just delicate creation, human creation. That is not very robust. It's sort of, there's a million [00:22:00] ways to mess it up and if you don't pay attention to all these different things, then you're all of a sudden

you're in a three hour meeting. Or all of a sudden there's twice as many people who are there, who should be there, you know, and that's really

**Ben Kirk:** easy to do with these online meetings, isn't it?

**Ben Kirk:** These online meetings where, you know, it might only take five people, but Hey, you know what? We've got a really, really big room when we're doing an online meeting. Let's just invite everybody.

**Ben Kirk:** I'm sure that is what happens as well. So why am I cc'd on this email? It's like, why, why am I getting an invite to this, to this meeting?

**Ben Kirk:** And I know some, some meeting invite, uh, say, okay, these people don't have to attend, but these people it's mandatory to attend. I've certainly seen some, some invites like that, but, uh, yeah, they're just invite, they can just invite more and more people now,

**Francis Wade:** right. Right. And they just get added on and, and, you know, that's [00:23:00] another way to, to, to, and some people think, I remember when, you know, when I used to work in corporate world, there were some people who used to bring their, as many people as they could to the meeting, because that was like a show of force, you know, that was their backup or their security blankie or something, you know, whatever it was.

**Francis Wade:** Right. But yeah, from this department. What are they doing in the meeting? I don't know. There's, they're sort of here to show support. They're here to do what? What kind of meeting is this? Again, you're back to, but you don't, we don't produce the outcomes. And I, the sense I have is that companies suffer the, suffer the, they suffer the mal-effects of bad meetings.

**Francis Wade:** But they don't know what to do about it. Sorry. They don't, they, they have an idea what to do about it, but they don't, they don't implement it in a way that has it work. So I really wonder if they're asking the question,

**Ben Kirk:** but [00:24:00] yeah, yeah, I actually wanted to ask the question, do we need to have this meeting for one hour?

**Ben Kirk:** Do we even need to have this meeting? I wonder if even asking that question.

**Francis Wade:** Yeah. You remember the stories of Steve Jobs looking around the room and then saying, you don't need to be here. You don't need to be here.

You don't need to be here. What's your name again? You don't need to be here. And he would just, it sounds bad.

**Francis Wade:** Like he would decimate the room and you'd be left with three people having the meeting as opposed to the 12 that showed up.

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah.

**Francis Wade:** But, but in a way he was like carving away the noise from the signal. Right. He was carving away all the ways in which it could go wrong to try to make it go right.

**Francis Wade:** Um, and he was also about,

**Ben Kirk:** about, um, productivity as well. And I mean, these people can certainly be out, out there working. Um, I mean, and that's how he developed his computers. He cut away [00:25:00] all the stuff that didn't require to be there. That's the way they built their operating system. That's the way they did the iPhones.

**Ben Kirk:** Uh, it was always about. Saying no to things, cutting things away and getting just to those core elements. And yeah, those, those stories about, about his meetings were absurd classics. You didn't need to be here. You didn't need to be here at you go, go back to work or find something new to do. Be innovative somewhere else.

**Ben Kirk:** Uh, I just need to have these people here. So, and Hey, where else?

**Francis Wade:** Like Christopher, don't be constrained to this, because this is not, this is not the best use of your time. You're a highly paid professional and you're a bright person and sitting around listening while we dot the I's and cross the T's of what a matter in which you're peripherally involved.

**Francis Wade:** But yeah, but you know, that's also

**Ben Kirk:** sounds like respect. He has respect for their time as well. So some people might say, Oh, he was this guy and he, you know, he told us to go and wouldn't let us be part of the meetings was not actually, he was being respectful because he didn't want you to waste your [00:26:00] time sitting here, not getting opportunity to say something, not getting an opportunity to, to deliver value, go deliver value elsewhere.

**Ben Kirk:** I think that was respect. And I think people can be better with their meetings and respecting other people's time. I think that's a big part of this.

**Francis Wade:** Interesting way of looking at it, which is that it's a matter of respect because, you know, if you have 10 people in a meeting for six, for six, for 10 people in an hour meeting, That's 600 minutes.

**Francis Wade:** 6, 10? Yeah. 600 minutes of, of, I was going to say respectful time, but 600 minutes of respect that you now need to preserve. And if you can get the 600 down to 300, You're moving it in the right direction. That's right. It's called respect minutes. I don't know, but it, but it seems, I tell you what I like about the metric is that [00:27:00] makes you pay attention all of a sudden.

**Francis Wade:** So the idea of respect, which seems to be like an ethos that he brought to the table and the idea of every minute and the total number of minutes, 600 minutes of possible respect or disrespect.

**Ben Kirk:** And you know, it brings another meaning to watching the clock.

**Francis Wade:** Say that again.

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah. Oh, it's, it's kind of like it was a new meaning to it, to watching the clock as well, rather than just watch a clock of the time ticking away.

**Ben Kirk:** We can be watching the clock of the amount of minutes that without. That was saving in the meeting or, or the amount of respect minutes, or actually some other sort of metrics that we can be, be tracking rather than just that board, look at the clock and watching time slowly tick away and wondering, what am I doing here?

**Francis Wade:** Right, right. Because I, you know, it's funny you say that because [00:28:00] when we're caught in those meetings, I think the feeling can be one of. Disrespect when you're on the receiving end, like, like Christopher in those meetings, or, you know, when we've been in those meetings, the word disrespect seems to ring true for me in terms of how I felt when I see the, the, the, the, the thing going south, it's like something, some way in which, some way in which my.

**Francis Wade:** My 60 minutes of those 600 are not being respected. Maybe it should be zero or maybe it should be 45 of my minutes or 30 of my minutes. That's right. Somewhere in there, it becomes a feeling on the giving end of I'm

being, my time is not being respected. You know, you know, you've been to meetings where it's always start late and you're, you just kind of, you know, [00:29:00] inside your, like your gears are grinding, right?

**Francis Wade:** And it's spending five, five minutes

**Ben Kirk:** for people to attend the meeting, to actually come in there, get settled. And, oh, I forgot my coffee and going back out, grabbing the coffee and coming back in. And although that those delayed meeting starts as well, right. That's, that's a whole nother part of it. And then of course, other people that normally on time start coming later as well, like, oh, the meetings actually don't start till five past five past.

**Ben Kirk:** And then he gets it, he gets pushed. But I think you're the guy as well.

**Francis Wade:** Yeah. You're the guy who shows up on time and the meeting convener is the last one to show up.

**Ben Kirk:** You know, that's like

**Francis Wade:** the ultimate disrespect. It's right at the beginning of the meeting. Cause you know, you, you busted your butt to be there on time and he or she just, just, just.

**Francis Wade:** starts the meeting on a disrespectful note.

**Ben Kirk:** It can, it can say, it can certainly go that way. [00:30:00] I was just thinking before though, is that some, some meetings, uh, uh, you know, maybe that could be termed something different as well. When we've got a meeting, that's more like a briefing. So, so sometimes we have people that, you know, there's an important announcement to be made or, or, or something needs to be, needs to be shared, not discussed to be shared.

**Ben Kirk:** But it needs to be a closed room. So, okay. We need to get. These 20, these 20 key people in here, because we've got something coming up that we need to share with you guys behind closed doors. And so that's, that's sort of like a briefing or a sharing point where there's, there's not a lot of interaction.

**Ben Kirk:** People in there, they're now listening. You're being told something. We don't need to get a decision here because I'm literally telling you, this is what's occurred and this is what needs to occur, or this is going to be launched.

Coming up, we're going to IPO or, uh, you know, John from accounting just got, um, got found, uh, for, for pilfering millions.

**Ben Kirk:** This is now a closed room discussion. We don't need to make any [00:31:00] decisions, but we are now briefing you on what's occurred, but maybe those, those, those meetings could be called that before you go in. To say, you know, that sounds

**Francis Wade:** like a WhatsApp text though, man. Yeah. Well, you know, on, on the extreme end to bring all those people physically together into, into meeting, you know, it, it's gotta be big, like, like CEO being hired.

**Francis Wade:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Ben Kirk:** Otherwise there's, there's an email, isn't there? I mean, some things you don't necessarily want to want to put in writing. I'm just trying to think about why are there sometimes meetings that you just go there, they feel like a briefing of, of, you know, uh, um, something that could have just been sent in an email.

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah, because that's, you know, some of that's the one way conversation, right? Send, send the briefing out in an email or something. Um, but there are, there are on the extreme side, yes, cases where there may want to be some sort of meeting, but I think that should be retermed [00:32:00] as a briefing or return to something like that.

**Ben Kirk:** So people don't go in there expecting that, uh, uh, okay, we're going to have a chance to make, make some conclusions, make some decisions. No, we're going to be, we're going to sit here and we're going to get a briefing for 30 minutes and. That's what it is.

**Francis Wade:** And that's all it is. And it can't happen. It can't happen by text message because of the nature of the issue.

**Francis Wade:** Yeah. You know, that goes to the outcome. It shouldn't happen every week either. Right, right, right, right. It goes to the outcome, right. Which is when the person has thought through the outcome, then they don't have a regular meeting for an hour when 15 minutes would suffice because they're, they're, they're, they're thinking about the outcome.

**Francis Wade:** What they want to accomplish and to combine what we've said before, which I'm going to say is our first insight, which is one about disrespect

is that every minute I extract from you is, is, [00:33:00] and I don't do, if I don't do it, well, is a minute of disrespect. So every minute I need to match the purpose of the meeting.

**Francis Wade:** And then the number of minutes to be the minimum so that I'm accomplishing the result with the least, or with the maximum respect, let's call it that. The most respect, respecting your time is like, is like the main. And when I don't respect your time. I fall into the disrespect bucket. It goes, it's either one or the other.

**Francis Wade:** It's not, there's no middle ground. And I think most, maybe this is why the problem hasn't been really solved yet is because people don't see meetings as a matter of respect. They see it as a matter of time.

**Francis Wade:** I remember, I remember someone cancelling, cancelling a meeting, cancelling meetings [00:34:00] with that, that, that, uh, she had with me. And I think when I discussed it with her, she said, well, you know, I assume that you just have other things to do and that this is, this frees up your time to cancel the meeting. And I said,

not

**Francis Wade:** quite.

**Francis Wade:** And I explained to her that let's say the meeting came at her own early lunchtime. I'm actually delaying my lunch. Every time, which means I can't go out with my colleagues. I can't do, you know, I usually have lunch with my wife. I can't do that. And I'm not doing that. In order to be ready for this meeting.

**Francis Wade:** So when you, when you cancel the meeting, it's not just that I have free time, especially at the last minute, you're canceling it. It's that I've put away other things so that I could focus on this. Yeah. So it's actually costing me something that you're not [00:35:00] seeing because you're not. This as a matter of respect.

**Ben Kirk:** And I think that's, I mean, that's one of the key questions that a meeting convener needs to be asking themselves. And I mean, it comes out of that outcome. Part of it as well is that, do we need to have a meeting to, to achieve this? Uh, clearly this person has been canceling that meeting with you. They've realized that.

**Ben Kirk:** Well, maybe I could have just sent an email or maybe we could have just had a chat around the, um, the water cooler or something. We didn't need to actually have a scheduled meeting. Maybe they realized that and, and that's why they canceled it. Okay, great. Thanks for canceling it. Um, I can see there's a positive to that, but, uh, we really should have come to that.

**Ben Kirk:** Um, realization point when we convene the meeting and sent that invite two days earlier or a week earlier or something like that as well. So we need to really get outcome focused from our meetings and we need to think about as part of the framing for being outcome focused. We need to think about [00:36:00] the respect part of it is, am I respecting these people's time?

**Ben Kirk:** Am I going to make them have to work an hour longer tonight because of this meeting that they're not going to be going home and having dinner with their family?

**Francis Wade:** Right. And the lack of that kind of consideration, that level of empathy, maybe leads, leads people to like not show up to meetings. So I've been, I remember I was a member of a board of a, of a, an organization and for a year, I was the only person that showed up to all the meetings.

**Francis Wade:** I had this feeling like I was the idiot, right? I was the dumb, dumb show up when I'm sick and everything show up, show up. And after I show up, the meeting gets canceled because not enough people are there. Oh, we don't have a quorum. So I jumped off of that board. I jumped off of that board and said, no, the level of the level of [00:37:00] incompetence.

**Francis Wade:** Yes. And this respect was just so high that I couldn't wait to get off. I couldn't wait to rid myself of it. And it was just because all great people, all well meaning people, nice people, funny, you know, all no problem with when they're in person, but yeah, something, something had. Something allowed them to ruin the meeting and not be responsible for its impact.

**Francis Wade:** Something, some way in which they held the meeting, the mental, the mental model of the meeting was maybe for them. Oh, you know, I, other people would pick up the slack, you know, there's other ways we let ourselves off with these things. Sure. Other people will show up and other people will play their part, or they don't really need me.

**Francis Wade:** Or, um, [00:38:00] um, I, you know, I, I, I, I think it's better for me to save an hour over here and I'll go do this instead. Yeah. I need to make, you know, I need to take care of my business before I take care. You know,

there's, there's all these column excuses or rationales that people come up with that allow the behavior to persist because it's, it's like the way they've constructed their.

**Francis Wade:** They are 60 minute attendance at the meeting or the way the convener has 600 minutes of respect. It's not, it's not 600 meetings of hours, minutes of respect. It's an hour of out of my schedule.

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah. I was just thinking of something there as well. When it comes to those board meetings, I mean, cause you know, often it's, it's, you, you know, a lot, certainly in my town, you know, a lot of people that are on the same, same sort of boards.

**Ben Kirk:** I've had the situation where We're now going to make, make the board meeting or make the meeting. I've caught, I've caught up with one of the guys for a coffee the next [00:39:00] day. He's downloaded to me. What happened in that meeting in about five minutes, about 10 minutes. Oh, we've got a couple of open action items.

**Ben Kirk:** Okay, cool. Um, let's, let's discuss that. One of them's on my plate. One of them's on your plate. Discuss it being done. We've, we've had a coffee meetings, you know, debriefed in five minutes. We've made some, some decisions. It's like, well then what, why am I going to continue to go to these board meetings if we're able to get a decision like that over coffee?

**Ben Kirk:** The next day. So yes, quite possible that these people in this, in this, in this board meeting or they were, we're thinking the same sort of thing as well. It's like, well, we're, we're not really going to come to anything. And we all know that the business gets made on the, on the, on the side anyway, or, or over a coffee or something like that.

**Ben Kirk:** Uh, this is just that, you know, attendance of once a month, you need to be going to this particular meeting or, and that's going back to the whole BAU thing of just like, this is what we have to, this is what we do. This is what we do. It's once a month. We have this meeting. It goes for an hour. We have this agenda and we go around the table like this.[00:40:00]

**Francis Wade:** And, and everyone, and, and, and everyone is mutually unconscious about the, the, you know, about the impact on, on the other folks who are, because this is a social, it's a social event. It's a social, it's a social commitment, right? It's, it's, it's, it's always, it's always a social commitment involving other people.

**Francis Wade:** So that's the nature of a meeting by definition. This is not a solo activity. It has to be done with other people. We

**Ben Kirk:** behave like that,

**Francis Wade:** right?

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah, yeah, we, we need that. We need those, those third party views. We, we can't just continue to try to make decisions and go things on, on our own. Cause we've only got our perspective.

**Ben Kirk:** We need to have these other people's perspective, the third person view, someone who's had a bit of a different life that might be able to bring, um, Some other ideas or even just from the side of that. Okay, they're there from the finance department They're gonna have some other what is it and looking at this crazy this crazy idea that I've got [00:41:00] Marketing might have something else out might have something else product development may have may have something else so but in general as a as a Human species we require to have other people around us But we're killing that We're killing that by these meetings.

**Ben Kirk:** Right,

**Francis Wade:** right, right. We, we destroy, we destroy the, the possibility of that, uh, by doing what we're doing at scale.

**Ben Kirk:** At, and, and, and at scale. And that goes back a little bit when we're talking about the metrics there with those, those counting the minutes and are they respectful minutes or disrespectful minutes, but there's a lot of other ways that we can have metrics in meetings.

**Ben Kirk:** That can track how effective that meeting is. And I mean, and of course we can take that to the nth degree and be too rigid, like the two rigid agendas, but being super rigid on our, um, on our meeting metric tracking, but I mean, there's, there's sides of side things, but we can, we can track how many decisions were made during the [00:42:00] meeting, what was the value.

**Ben Kirk:** of those decisions that were made during the meeting. Um, so, you know, there's a whole lot of other areas that we can start to incorporate into there as well with the metrics. Um, and yeah, I, I do like the, um, the disrespect metric as well. Maybe we need like a big scoreboard in all that meeting rooms. We need this large scoreboard that's got, um, uh, respectful minutes.

**Ben Kirk:** It's, it's, it's got, uh, um, Time saved by cutting this meeting 10 minutes shorter. This is the time saved or, uh, over time, maybe at the beginning of the year, our meetings were three, three hours long. By the end of the year, we've got our meetings down to one hour long and we've saved this amount of, of, of meeting minutes and hours and time, et cetera.

**Ben Kirk:** Big like school.

**Francis Wade:** And maybe that's, maybe that's a, uh, a reason why this problem keeps going on and on and on, because we, we don't, we're not trying to be more respectful [00:43:00] as time goes on. We're not, we're not trying to maximize respect and minimize disrespect. Now, we don't have it in our mind.

**Ben Kirk:** We're not trying to improve our matings full stop. No, we're just trying to put up with

**Francis Wade:** them. We're just trying to survive them, right? Yeah, trying to survive them. Because if we, if we were, you know, think of, think of, think of the, the, the statistics that we collect in sports. When we're serious about improving things, we have analytics.

**Francis Wade:** Like you see, you know, you're a cricket, cricket person, you know. You know, you know, the sport, people go crazy and quick in sports that cricket and baseball where there's lots of statistics and they play the game of measurement as almost as hard as they play on the field, because they know that making these small adjustments.

**Francis Wade:** producers results. Yeah. So we have no problem in those worlds of measuring a heck of a [00:44:00] lot of stuff. But when it comes to meetings, I've never seen a company boast that we are spending 25 percent less time in meetings this year than last. And we're maintaining the same level of communication and the same level of results.

**Ben Kirk:** No, I've not seen that anywhere. I mean, the odd, the odd Peter trucker, uh, quote was a day for can't be measured. It can't be managed. I mean, we're talking about managing meetings, right? Uh, and yeah, that, that, that would be an ideal measurement for companies to, to. To see how efficient they've been coming from these meetings, particularly if they've got, you know, an all staff meeting with 800 staff or, or something like that as well.

**Ben Kirk:** Right. But just through the course of the year, if they can, if they can just measure, just measure the outcomes, just measure the, the efficiencies, um,

that would be interesting. And may maybe there are companies out out there that are doing it. I haven't been a part of them and I, and I haven't seen it.[00:45:00]

**Francis Wade:** I've never seen a study and I've never seen anyone. I've never seen it in advertising that says that we're a great company. Every year we spend 5 percent less time in meetings and we produce the same results. Even though we're doing, I've never seen, I've never even heard of an intention. Well, this is shocking.

**Francis Wade:** Let alone, uh, you know, let alone a result. I've never seen a company announce that this year we are going to. Yeah.

**Ben Kirk:** Because I'm sure that wouldn't that make a great LinkedIn post? I mean, you see a lot of things that are getting boasted, boasted about a LinkedIn, right. And, and, and the way that, that, that those messages are shaped and, uh, Um, you know, or maybe it's the humble brag or, or, or the boasts.

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah. Wouldn't that be great to start seeing some LinkedIn posts was like, we have cut down, uh, cut down our meeting time. We've increased efficiency, something like that. Boasting about that. Um, that, that'd be a platform that would be able to [00:46:00] see it. That's what was there.

**Francis Wade:** Cause we, we know how to measure stuff when we care.

**Francis Wade:** Right. Cause in sports, we really care a lot. So we measure everything. Right. In, in disciplines like finance. We care a lot about where that money ends up going. So we measure everything, right? Yeah. Even, even in continuous improvement, TQM, you know, just in time, lean, whatever you call it, six Sigma in that world, it became important to measure certain things because there was a direct link to the bottom line between quality

and

**Francis Wade:** measured in different ways, process quality, different kinds of quality and the bottom line.

**Francis Wade:** So all of a sudden it became important to measure them. So in our lifetime. There were no measurements when we were born. And today they measure everything in that world. It became important. Yeah. So

**Ben Kirk:** why don't we come back to that world as well? Um, so, I mean, we have the, the agile method, right? And they started to have different types of meetings.

**Ben Kirk:** The agile started bringing in that, [00:47:00] that standup meeting. And I'm sure there's, there's, there's, there's listeners out there. Thinking like, hang on a sec. We've got this agile methodology. We're working in the it development space or, or, you know, software development or something like that was that we work in agile.

**Ben Kirk:** Okay, great. That is one solution that we're starting to see that works very well for specific industries. And specific levels that you are within that industry as well. So they're not exactly frontline, but that's definitely incorporating in sort of the, the frontline of the development side. So yes, there, there are things like agile, um, stand up meetings, uh, scrum, that sort of stuff, which has been very effective.

**Ben Kirk:** What can we take out of that? And I'm certainly no expert in that, but what can we take out of that, that we can start applying to these other. More, what can I say, um, slow plotting executive meeting. I mean, and that's kind of what I got in my head here. I've got executive meetings in my head, really.  
[00:48:00]

**Francis Wade:** Sure, sure.

**Francis Wade:** But, but, but it's true, you know, it's true across the board and probably maybe the worst ones are the ones. Lower down where there's less rigor and there's less impatience. There's more, more forgiving. There's less feedback. There's, you know, there's way more minutes at stake. The further down you go in an organization, you get meetings of 30, 40 and 50 people that just go on forever.

**Francis Wade:** And you know, the amount of respect minutes. Um, and just the amount of time

**Ben Kirk:** of money, so the, the amount of money spent on those meetings, if you've got 50 people going to a meeting for an hour, and let's just say the hourly rate is around 20 an hour. So now we've got that meeting is now a thousand dollars.

**Ben Kirk:** And 20 an hour isn't, isn't a lot if you're in a professional space. I mean, that could be as high as a hundred dollars an hour. So now all of a sudden

we're talking about a [00:49:00] 5, 000 meeting with just 50 people there. If that convener was to think, Hey, is this meeting going to be worth 5, 000? Are the outcomes we're going to get here?

**Ben Kirk:** Is it going to be worth, worth that 5, 000? But that's only 50 people a meeting. What happens if you're calling, uh, 500 meeting? With the average, um, average salary of 50 an hour,

**Francis Wade:** we see this is, this is interesting, right? Because that's, that metric has been around forever and I've never been in a meeting where it was used in real time.

**Francis Wade:** I've heard of companies that put a, you know, a clock on the wall and translate the minutes into hours. I've heard of it, but I've never heard a firsthand account where someone says, Oh yeah, I belong to a company. And in every meeting, there's a calculator on the wall that adds up the dollars and cents of the time that's being spent in real time.

**Francis Wade:** Or our job is to get that [00:50:00] number, keep that number as low as possible. I've never heard, and we're talking basic, this is, this is not, this is not rocket science. Tell me if I'm wrong, Ben, but that's not rocket science to do that. But have you heard of any companies that actually do it as opposed to in theory

**Ben Kirk:** could do it?

**Ben Kirk:** No, I haven't, but I'm getting some great, I'm getting some great business ideas here. I'm thinking about making, making digital scoreboards like a basketball scoreboard or something that we can start shipping to companies. And we just have to plug in the data. Average, uh, wage of this sort of segment of this department here.

**Ben Kirk:** Okay. Input that in, uh, uh, press, press start and maybe, maybe you've got some buttons on the scoreboard, which when you come to a decision, you press the button and being, it goes up there. Okay. Team team has got one, one point on the board or something. Um, I've just, yeah.

**Francis Wade:** Okay. Yeah. I've got to think that, that, that we're not the first to think of this.

**Francis Wade:** Like, I mean, we're bright guys. Right. But this is not, [00:51:00] this is not that revolutionary. It's just, this discussion has been had

**Ben Kirk:** before I'm sure. Yeah.

**Francis Wade:** But how come no one's doing it?

**Francis Wade:** This is the, this is the, this is maybe the crux of this whole thing is that we're talking about common problems exist everywhere. We're talking about cheap solutions. None of these is expensive. We're talking about, um, technology that's already existing, been, been around forever. And yet, and we're talking about an issue that everyone says they hate.

**Francis Wade:** No one wants to be in those meetings that Christopher has been in from our story. But there's some, and I have a, I have a hypothesis. Um, it's no, we're still not in solutions yet, but this is kind of like, why is that? So why is that proposed idea? Why hasn't it gotten off the, [00:52:00] off the, off the, um, design, the design board or off the drawing board?

**Francis Wade:** I wonder if it's because dollars and cents aren't enough in the moment to move someone's behavior. That, that everyone is wasting money. So in these meetings, so they're wasting their, their fair share also. So they don't, there's no immediate impact on them. And, and when we said the business about the disrespect and the disrespect, so what if there were maybe not real time, because that's, you know, you've seen these debates, presidential debates, they do that, they give each person a dial.

**Francis Wade:** And yes, as each debater makes a point, they turn it up or they turn it down. So I imagine that's too much for a meeting in which you are participating. You know, you don't want to disrespect it, but at the very least, right at the very end of the meeting, [00:53:00] before you walk out of the door. You could give feedback, but again, I've not been in a company, not a single, I've never heard of it.

**Francis Wade:** Even where companies give you take out your smartphone and we all have them right. And you give immediate, it take you two minutes.

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah.

**Francis Wade:** Disrespect, respect. And you give the person, if not real time, then one minute later, feedback on the quality of what you just went through from in these, the thing about the respect is it gives an emotional tie in that maybe the dollars doesn't give you, it tells you because nobody wants to be known as that guy who disrespects other people's time.

**Francis Wade:** Nobody wants that. That's right. He prefers to be that guy who is. Meeting time because everybody does that or that guy who wastes money because everybody does that, but yeah, to be the one who disrespects people. And disrespect your time is I, [00:54:00] that's more painful. So maybe that's maybe if it became a matter of that, in addition to the dollars and cents and in addition to the time, but maybe that, that needs to be the missing element that makes your personal, as opposed to just kind of, at this point, the dollars and cents and the time are kind of true, but theoretical.

**Francis Wade:** So you need them, but maybe they've not been enough. To change behavior. What do you think? I don't know.

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah. Yeah. I think that, um, you know, certain people will respond to certain things more than others. So some people will get really antsy about their time. Some people might be the bean counters that are really, really antsy about the money.

**Ben Kirk:** Uh, and, and some people that are probably over the top. Uh, I'm concerned about respect. I think that if we can hit in multiple different areas, what speaks to what speaks to what person and some people might just be completely happy that they're in there with a bunch of other people and people are talking and having fun.

**Ben Kirk:** They're like, well, I don't [00:55:00] even care. This is, this is my happy place. Um, but I think, I think disrespect cuts through a lot of that. And I think that comes through cause that is one of our general human needs. Right. Uh, or was that they. The hierarchy of needs. That's, that's certainly in there. So perhaps that is, uh, something that can be tracked, communicated, discussed, talked about.

**Ben Kirk:** And when you're saying about, about people responding on the phone, I'm not sure if you have them where you are, but there's, um, service stations here, uh, pet, um, gas stations, uh, as you walk. Yeah. Yeah. As you walk out, there's these, now there's these little, um, little tabletops or little, and they've got.

**Ben Kirk:** Little buzzers, not buzzers, little buttons on them. You've got the reds, you've got the oranges and the green. It's like, how do you rate your service today? And as you walk out the door, you just smash one of the buttons. Right. You got your green, you got your red, you got your yellow. Um, maybe it's a smiley face.

**Ben Kirk:** Maybe it's a frowny face, something like that. And as you walk out, you can just, [00:56:00] just hit that button as you, as you walk out. And that gives, uh, you know, some tracking and some feedback. Imagine having that. In your physical meeting rooms that whenever everyone walks out, they, they smack one of these buttons that it depends on how they felt about their, about the respect level in.

**Ben Kirk:** Well, no, and it's not actually so much about the respect level in the meeting because people can say, Oh, you didn't respect me in the way that we had that discussion. That's what we're talking about. We're talking about this. Of time of someone of someone's time. So yeah, we'll have something on there. Do you feel that your, uh, time was well spent or that the convener respected your time and it was well spent in this meeting and you've got the smiley face, the neutral face and the frowny face,

**Francis Wade:** right?

**Francis Wade:** Or maybe it's the face with the spit coming out of the ears. Right. I know we're into, we're into solutions now, which is about the right time for us to, which is good, right? But, but I like the idea of, of forcing a choice. [00:57:00] Between respect and disrespect, like you get, like at the beginning of a meeting, it's, it's 50, 50, 50 percent respect and 50 percent disrespect.

**Francis Wade:** And as the meeting goes along, as the, as the minutes are spent, you either increase disrespect at the expense of respect or vice versa. Yes. So there's no middle neutral kind of. ground because a minute that's not respected is not a neutral minute. It becomes a demerit. It becomes a disrespectful minute.

**Francis Wade:** So it's either one or the other, but there's no middle because otherwise people will gravitate towards this middle kind of vague mishmash, which is what happens today in most meetings. And it's kind of a, how was the meeting? Yeah, it's not, you're not [00:58:00] forcing people to make a hard choice that they actually may feel.

**Francis Wade:** But they wouldn't express because you put the question to them in that way. So I like the idea of it being one or the other, that 60 minutes, 30 minutes of what, 30 minutes of the other. And then maybe you might move the needle in the right direction and maybe it will go in the wrong direction. But at the very least you get a very clear feedback at the end that, Oh, I arrived 10 minutes late.

**Francis Wade:** So that's 10 minutes of disrespect. So I started off with that. Okay. I started off consuming my respect. I barely got it back to halfway. And that's why I ended up with a score that was just in the middle.

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah.

**Francis Wade:** So you can actually trace it back to some behavior, but I like the idea of it being either, or, but nothing else, but.

**Francis Wade:** Nothing else.

**Ben Kirk:** Yep. It's kinda like when you, when you do a, uh, a ranking, you [00:59:00] remove the, the, the, the seven out of 10 when you have a survey or something because everyone wants to go for the seven. It's either right. It's either the six or the eight. Uh, I was thinking about that though. Course the choice.

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah. Give, yeah. Yeah. Give us an answer either way. Um, we were talking a bit before about, yeah, 30 minutes and 60 minutes. I don't think we've really discussed why so many meetings are generally 60 minutes. They, they always seem to be that 60 minutes starting on the hour, finishing on the hour. Oh, look, as it does the default, it's

**Francis Wade:** probably, it's probably that, but, you know, I have, I have somewhere on the line, I set up my Google calendar, so it doesn't set up, it doesn't set up one hour meetings, it's sort of 55 minute meetings.

**Francis Wade:** And I don't remember why I did it that way. I read it somewhere that doing that does something, but it does, it actually does something, you know, when [01:00:00] I set the meeting up, because it forces me to think through, okay, how long do I need really? Is it less than an hour? It's never exactly an hour. Right. Um, the other thing, the other reason I, I'd like, I like your question is because it's, let's imagine that we, you and I start off, we, and we, the first quarter, we have one hour meetings and then we both agree that they're too long.

**Francis Wade:** Right. Yeah. And then we say, okay, we don't need that amount of time. How much time do we really need per, per. And we say, well, it's less than an hour, but not 50 minutes. Maybe, maybe 53 minutes. Okay. 53 minute meetings because we see ourselves on a, on an improvement path in which the difference between 55 and 53.

**Francis Wade:** means that we're moving towards 50. [01:01:00] So it gives us an idea of which way the needle is going. If it goes up to 54 next year, then we know that we're going in the wrong direction. But, but using these odd numbers can direct your attention towards, are you getting better or worse? I don't know. Yeah.

**Ben Kirk:** And certainly starting a meeting at an odd time as well.

**Ben Kirk:** Um, it was about, about a year ago that, um, I looked at the, at the coaching industry and I used to do one hour coaching sessions or one and a half hour coaching sessions. And. I had a look at those meetings and whilst I am educating during those calls, it was the last sort of 10, 15 minutes of these me of, of, of these coaching sessions that we're starting to get major breakthroughs or actually decisions were being made, going to be made about the next steps that they're going to take.

**Ben Kirk:** What are the next steps we're going to take this week? But because it was one hour, we were doing it every fortnight, or we were doing it once a month. So when people were taking the next [01:02:00] steps, they were only taking the next steps. Maybe it was got, or they took a quick couple of steps right before the meeting to make sure they got those tasks done before they had, uh, that, um, that coaching session with me.

**Ben Kirk:** And then maybe they'll do something in Australia after, but then there was like three weeks of, of nothing in between. I looked at that and I was like, well, hang on a sec. This hasn't been that effective. If all the magic happens in the last 10 minutes of my coaching sessions, I'm now going to make all my coaching sessions 15 minutes long.

**Ben Kirk:** So I changed my whole coaching business now to just do weekly coaching. 15 minute sessions. And yes, there's preparation prior to that. There's preparation where they fill in like a form and they answer some questions prior. We hit that meeting, we hit that meeting hot. It's gone straight away. Yes, we've got some nice hits in the beginning, but it's right.

**Ben Kirk:** I saw it in that form that you filled in that the obstacles that you had this, this and this obstacle. I saw that you didn't win the week here. And I saw that your health, sleep and fitness was a bit down, right? Let's talk about those things specifically. All right, let's put some routines in place, some habits in place.

**Ben Kirk:** We can do all that [01:03:00] in 15 minutes because we've got that first of all, pre preparation, but we've gone into it with the outset is that this 15 minutes is for us to look at the lessons from last week, take the learnings and work out how we're going to do better next week.

Right. Shaping that

**Ben Kirk:** one hour down to those, those 15 minutes.

**Ben Kirk:** I just did an 80, 20 on it. That's, that's all I did, but it's been incredibly effective. Now, how can we apply that sort of stuff to these standard hour meetings? It's that, this is having that question.

**Francis Wade:** You use, you use metrics, you came from a, a, a, a, a mindset of respect. It sounds like you went through an improvement cycle in order to, and you, you were, you were committed to, you had a commitment in mind, whether it's respect dollars or time or all three, it sounds like maybe that you wanted to, you wanted to craft a solution that gave you the same result, use less time and the person.

**Francis Wade:** Would feel [01:04:00] as if you are trying harder than you were before, because you said you started, you started off hot because you had to do some preparation. So you've heard, you've heard these stories of Amazon, how they spend the first 20 minutes of a meeting. Everybody quietly reading the meeting preparation notes.

**Francis Wade:** Interesting. So before. So, so there's no talking, they don't allow any conversation for the 20 minutes. Yeah. But they want to know that when they start the meeting on the 21st minute, that meeting starts hot, as you said.

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah, yeah. Because

**Francis Wade:** having the meeting start hot. strikes me as a kind of, uh, it's a proxy for what we had said was respect.

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah, I respect your time so

**Francis Wade:** much that I'm arranging it so that the 15 minutes starts off with us already moving. It don't take 15 minutes to How's the dog? You know, what's the weather like over there? We get all that, cut all of that [01:05:00] out. We do the preparation so that minutes one through 15 really count.

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah. And you know, we had that very clear outcome of what we're trying to do here in this meeting where we're trying to set up and make sure we improve upon the previous week. And we're adding new, new, new steps in place, or we're, you know, Focusing on taking those lessons forward and doing better the week after.

**Ben Kirk:** And that just the outcome that I use in my, in my coaching. Right. But if you've got specific outcomes in your meetings that you can certainly be implementing them in that way as well, and setting them up with that pre reading beforehand or setting them up with that form beforehand, or any of those sorts of things, using technology to support it is super, super important.

**Ben Kirk:** Um, but it is also though, we come into this with the idea. Of incremental improvement. We come into this with the ID idea of being better at our meetings. I did the 80 20 i, I had this idea of always wanting to improve, [01:06:00] I think. And I think that's good. So many people aren't having that mindset when they come into it.

**Ben Kirk:** They might, they're not thinking about trying to improve the meetings. They're not trying to think about being more efficient. They're not trying to think about having more respectful minutes, so they're not able to just distance themselves or think of it from that vent, that side of, um, the picture.

**Francis Wade:** It almost sounds as if you have that, you have that meeting as a sport, the way you, we are passionate about it.

**Francis Wade:** It's almost as if, you know how people get passionate about sports, about football, soccer, Australian rules, football, cricket, baseball, they get really passionate and they, they, they narrow down and they dive all the way down into the ways to make it better. Right. Right. Yeah. And you can have energy

**Ben Kirk:** for 15

**Francis Wade:** minutes.

**Ben Kirk:** If we make our meetings, yeah. If we make our meetings shorter, people can be more engaged in me, more energetic, that can actually enjoy being there, get themselves in the [01:07:00] right frame of mind, do the

**Francis Wade:** right homework. So that the first minute. Is a high quality minute as opposed to kind of, I mean, but that's, you know, our big, the big

thing that we want to leave or, or listeners with covering it to wrap up is that if, if, if there's no measurement going on, then you're not serious.

**Francis Wade:** It's like, if you're not actively trying to make things better and using measurements and numbers, So to do so, then guess what you're, you're not even in the game. You're not, you're not in the real game of, of improving your meetings. Now you, you may be in the game of complaining about how bad they are, but that's not what we're talking about.

**Francis Wade:** The game that you're describing is an improvement game. There's a certain ways in which humans engage in games that matter to them. Yeah. It's an outcome game and you're, you're always looking to measure the right things to change the way [01:08:00] you view it. So have every minute count to start hot, have continuous improvement.

**Francis Wade:** So that if you're not scoring more points, you're improving the disrespect to respect ratio, or you're taking less time or that big thing that tells you how many dollars you're spending per meeting is going down. So at the end of the year or the quarter or whatever, you're able to say, Hey, look, you know, Look what I'm doing.

**Francis Wade:** Okay. I'm actually moving the needle here. And, and so those things, those things aren't where you're headed in improving your meetings. Then arguably you're not improving your meetings. You're just talking about improving your meetings because nothing is really happening. I, unfortunately, that's 99 percent of the companies I've ever.

**Francis Wade:** They're not serious. They complain, but there's not serious effort. The way we try to put a ball through the uprights in American football or Australian football, I don't know.

**Ben Kirk:** That's right. I think just most people just aren't really [01:09:00] reflect, reflecting on it. They're, they're, they're making the complaints.

**Ben Kirk:** They're saying, this is too long. They're saying these are boring. They're saying this and that. But not enough people are really reflecting on it. Whether it's a daily or weekly basis on how can we actually be improving this? Uh, this is just the way it's always been done. This is the way it's always been done going back to Kodak, right?

**Ben Kirk:** This is the way it's always been done. This is why it's always going to be done. Uh, just. It's not going to change and no one's trying to change it. No

one's trying to reflect as a, Oh, maybe there's a better way we can do this. And I hopefully that, you know, through this discussion, people are now thinking, Oh, maybe, and if, if their bosses, if, if their senior managers or if their CEOs, uh, business owners are thinking, okay, well, maybe there are some ways that I can, I can, Improve my meetings.

**Ben Kirk:** I can be more efficient. How do I ask myself these questions when I'm setting a meeting? How can we track this? And so I think that's the most important [01:10:00] part of this is people are just doing this BAU thing. It is the way it is. It is a nine to five. We, we have four meetings every day and they're just accepting it.

**Ben Kirk:** And we should not accept mediocrity being stagnant, uh, and, and not improving. We should be always reflecting and always seeing what can we do to make this better?

**Francis Wade:** Right, Ben? Where can folks get ahold of you and learn more about the work that you do?

**Ben Kirk:** Yeah, thanks. So, uh, win the day.com au is my website.

**Ben Kirk:** There is that au at the end there for Australia. Of course. Uh, and we will have a special link in there as well, which will sort of be, just be a, a bit of a. landing page really for a free download of my ebook, a few templates, a few productivity templates, those sorts of things. But the most important thing is, Hey, Booker called me.

**Ben Kirk:** Let's have a chat. Let's say, let's talk about your schedule, your meetings, those, those sorts of things. Um, I don't charge for those calls. [01:11:00] Um, and it's just a way for me to sort of, you know, Get to know my, my people better as well. People that are in the same space as myself, mental space, uh, physical space as far as, you know, on, on, on this side of the world.

**Ben Kirk:** So you can book a call, we'll have a chat. It's not salesy or anything. I just want to get to know people and, uh, maybe we can even solve a, solve a few problems. So wintheday. com. au and

**Francis Wade:** LinkedIn. Don't don't miss out an opportunity to connect with Ben directly is really easy to contact and he'll respond.

**Francis Wade:** I can tell you from experience. So keep listening because I want to tell you about our next episode. Um, and, um, there's a bit more to come. Thanks, Ben. Thank you.