

Lynne Cunningham's  
Book Review

*I just read a great book that I think should be added to your Leadership Library.*

<b>Book</b>	<b><i>Death by Meeting: A leadership fable about solving the most painful problem in business</i></b>
<b>Author</b>	Patrick Lencioni
<b>Pillar of Excellence</b>	All – this is a leadership book
<b>Publisher's Book Description</b>	The business meeting—a necessary evil or a vital and invigorating component of running an organization? According to management consultant Lencioni ( <i>The Five Temptations of a CEO</i> ), meetings should fit the latter description, but more often than not, he says, they don't. In this fable, Lencioni offers practical advice on how to revitalize your business by energizing your business meetings.
<b>LC Review</b>	An outstanding book that every leader who chairs or participates in meetings needs to read. The fable is easy-to-read and the model is simple to follow. It's practical advice for a common business challenge – too many, non-productive meetings.
<b>Page</b>	<b><i>Lynne suggests that you pay special attention to some of these features in the book.</i></b>
<b>viii</b>	If we hate meetings, can we be making good decisions and successfully leading our organizations? The hard truth is, bad meetings almost always lead to bad decisions, which is the best recipe for mediocrity.
<b>Fable</b>	<i>Two-thirds of the book is a Blanchard-style fable about a company under attack because of their non-productive meetings.</i>
<b>223+</b>	The first question that needs to be asked and answered: What is the real problem? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meetings are boring</li> <li>2. Meetings are ineffective</li> </ol> Why?? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings are boring because they lack drama.</li> <li>• Meetings are ineffective because they lack contextual structure.</li> </ul> To make our meetings more effective, we need to have multiple types of meetings, and clearly distinguish between the various purposes, formats, and timing of those meetings.
<b>228</b>	The key to injecting drama into a meeting lies in setting up the plot from the outset. Participants need to be jolted a little during the first ten minutes of a meeting, so that they understand and appreciate what is at stake.

## The Four Meetings:

1. **The Daily Check-In** – the purpose is to help team members avoid confusion about how priorities are translated into action on a regular basis.
2. **The Weekly Tactical**
  - The Lightning Round – this is a quick, around-the-table reporting session in which everyone indicates their two or three priorities for the week.
  - Progress Review – this is the routine reporting of critical information or metrics: revenue, expenses, customer satisfaction, inventory, etc.
  - Real-Time Agenda – once the lightning round and progress review are complete (usually no more than 15 minutes), it is time to talk about the agenda. The agenda for a weekly tactical should not be set before the meeting, but only after the lightning round and regular reporting have taken place. The agenda should be based on what everyone is actually working on and how the company is performing against its goals, not based on the leader's best guess forty-eight hours prior to the meeting.
  - Inevitable Challenges
    - Temptation to set an agenda ahead of time
    - Too much detail during the lightning round
    - Discussions about long-term strategic issues
3. **The Monthly Strategic** – this is where executives wrestle with, analyze, debate and decide upon critical issues (but only a few) that will affect the business in fundamental ways.
  - Inevitable Challenges
    - Failure to schedule enough time
    - Putting too many items on the agenda
    - Failure to do research and preparation ahead of time
    - Fear of conflict
4. **Quarterly Off-Site Review**
  - Comprehensive Strategy Review
    - Team Review
    - Personnel Review
    - Competitive and Industry Review
  - Inevitable Challenges
    - The tendency to overburden and over-structure the meetings
    - Too much boondoggle
    - Inviting outsiders to attend

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### The Four Meetings

Meeting Type	Time Required	Purpose and Format	Keys to Success
Daily Check-in	5 minutes	Share daily schedules and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't sit down</li> <li>• Keep it administrative</li> <li>• Don't cancel even when some people can't be there</li> </ul>
Weekly Tactical	45 – 90 minutes	Review weekly activities and metrics, and resolve tactical obstacles and issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't set agenda until after initial reporting</li> <li>• Postpone strategic discussions</li> </ul>
Monthly Strategic (or ad hoc strategic)	2 – 4 hours	Discuss, analyze, brainstorm, and decide upon critical issues affecting long-term success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit to one or two topics</li> <li>• Prepare and do research</li> <li>• Engage in good conflict</li> </ul>
Quarterly off-site review	1 – 2 days	Review strategy, industry trends, competitive landscape, key personnel, team development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get out of the office</li> <li>• Focus on work; limit social activities</li> <li>• Don't overstructure or overburden the schedule</li> </ul>

<b>Overall rating</b>	Outstanding	
<b>Publisher and Year Published</b>	Jossey-Bass	2004
<b>Price</b>	\$24.95	Discounted on <a href="http://www.amazon.com">www.amazon.com</a>
<b>Recommended by</b>	Mike Ueltzen	