

Making Meetings Matter

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At GGI, one of the most common questions we are asked is:

How can we release staff time from meetings in our organisation whilst making the governance more effective?

To help organisation address this challenge, we have developed and pioneered a programme of work we call Making Meetings Matter based on a lean methodology grounded in our deep understanding of effective and efficient governance.

Our methodology is tried and tested and has had a significant material impact at a range of NHS Trusts, returning significant amounts of clinical and executive time whilst at the same time actually improving assurance grip!



**Save over 1000 hours of executive time.
Develop clearer more effective governance.
Improve your standing with the regulator.**

Our lean methodology helps organisations make their governance more efficient and effective, freeing up hundreds of hours of unnecessary meeting time.

Recent research published in the Harvard Business Review suggests that:

70%

of meetings keep employees from doing productive work

92%

of employees consider meetings costly and unproductive

20%

reduced meetings to have an impact on employee engagement¹

1. <https://hbr.org/2022/03/dear-manager-youre-holding-too-many-meetings>

For more information, please get in touch via contact@good-governance.org.uk or call Christopher Smith, Director of Development, GGI on 07732 681126.

Typically delivered in three phases, we take the thinking from lean system management and applying it to good governance:

1. Discovery. Firstly, we carry out an in-depth audit of the many assurance meetings a trust will have. In our experience to date, we have never found less than 80 such regular meetings and the highest number we have found exceeded 300 – the results always surprise the organisation concerned. From the audit, we:

- Evaluate the opportunity cost in terms of staff time of each meeting and overall. Usually the amount concerned is several million pounds worth of time over a single year!
- Develop a 'purpose slide' for each existing group so that the rationale and reporting for all existing groups is understood. This also often illustrates where there is duplication of effort across your various meetings.

2. Redesign. There is no standard template we can drag and drop into an organisation, so we use the lean systems approach and work closely with you to redesign the assurance structure. This part of the process needs to also secure buy-in to the changes needed and can't be 'done to' an organisation as it is about learning and development.

Lean systems approaches start with what the 'customer' wants and needs – in this case what the board and the regulator want and need from their assurance system. It is not unusual for the board not to have seriously considered this.

A well-designed assurance structure has as few tiers as possible, minimal handover points, forethought about the value each assurance level should bring, and clear accountability. We use various tools to ensure we are designing a system of high integrity and quality, as well as taking cost out, and ensure that there is a proper governance line of sight. For the newly agreed structure we develop a purpose slide and 'Plain English ToRs' for each group. We would expect to remove at least 20% of meetings or meeting time from an organisation. We also cost the savings – time to be returned to managing and clinical work.

3. Implementation. You will appreciate that this is a significant but valuable piece of organisational development and that it is your culture and collective efforts that will make this succeed and release time back to services. This means changing hearts and minds, and confronting the tyranny of habit. Using the Lawson and Price 'Influence Model' and PDSA, we support the trust over three monthly cycles of business to improve their processes. This is accompanied with training, awareness raising (so that all staff understand and use the new system) and measurement to ensure that the twin virtues of better but fewer meetings is achieved. Ultimately, this results in better, more reliable assurance that consumes less managerial and clinical time.

Impact

At one previous trust that we worked with we managed to reduce the total number of management groups by 137, achieving the following efficiencies for the trust:

A more understandable structure, better aligned to executive responsibilities

1384 hours of executive time released

In excess of 500 fewer meetings to be attended per year by execs

336 hours of non-executive time released

168 fewer meetings for non-executive directors to attend