

perpendicular angel design

organizing and simplifying, one illumination at a time

AN EVENT APART DC: I JUST HAD THE BEST MEETING BY KEVIN M. HOFFMAN

We've all had crappy meetings and we've all had good meetings. How do you get more of the former than the latter? Kevin Hoffman's put a lot of thought into it (and written a book).

(pdf backup)



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Next up is [@kevinmhoffman](#) with "I just had the worst/best meeting"
- how to make meetings suck less [#AEADC](#)

2:02 PM - Aug 1, 2018



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Many of us dread being stuck in meetings — and maybe being stuck in a seat listening to someone talk about being stuck in meetings.

But we can design meetings to be better [#AEADC](#)

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Meetings are the purest form of interaction design that you can practice. If interaction design is mediating the interaction between human beings, meetings are a pure form. They're the difference between work shipping and being shelved, success and failure.

[#AEADC](#)

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Video of a reenactment of a meeting January 26, 1986 between mechanical engineers over whether O-rings would be damaged too much at 53F. On January 27, the Challenger was lost.

That was one of the worst meetings - lives were literally on the line.

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We want to be heard, have a clear plan, align on our ideas.

How do meetings go wrong?

4 ways to think about meetings and why they go bad, and how they can be made better.[#AEADC](#)

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4 lenses to look at how meetings are performing:

How do we learn them

How do we design them

What do we believe about them

How do we look at our biases#AEADC

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Cardi B - a musical artist on Saturday Night Live who has a whole sketch about her.

Mortiiis sings Delf Metal music. He's unique in the world.

Spotify doesn't care about context, it thinks now you want to listen to both, at the same time. You did it before! #AEADC

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It's very difficult not to "be Spotify" when it comes to meetings. "How can I recreate the thing that went well? How can I avoid this nightmare?" We bias our expectations of meetings based on past successes, not the outcomes we want, decisions, and agenda to get them. #AEADC

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Operating a larger set of goals: I want to become a musician that makes music, so I have principles, programs, and sequences to do it. “Be” Goals align with principles. “Do” goals align with programs and “Motor control goals” align to sequences we do. [#AEADC](#)

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“Be” goals for meetings are outcomes
“Do goals” are what meetings contain, decisions
“Motor control goals” are agendas, how we do meetings.

Agendas, without intent, are not enough.

ODA are all required. [#AEADC](#)

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Meetings are easy scapegoats. We blame them for taking away time we'd rather spend making things. We blame them for code switching between contexts 5-7 times a day. [#AEADC](#)

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Capital One is 55,000 people across the US alone. That means there are a *looooooot* of meetings. 2,000 product managers, 100 designers, and 8,000 engineers. [#AEADC](#)

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Meetings are tools.

As a UX Designer, and I creating the best meeting we could have?

How do we design meetings? [#AEADC](#)

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5 constraints:

Physical and virtual space

Level of clarity

Length of time we spend

How brains work

The context and culture of the team [#AEADC](#)

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When we design, we manage constraints toward an intent.

Kanban boards: we've become a pile of cards. Our value is measured by how many cards we can move to the Done column.

OTOH it allows us to make decisions about what we'll do next, how much effort, # of people#aeadc

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Most of the places we meet are not good environments for decision making. Trello and Jira are designed to help us make decisions. But if they're not on the walls that's not so useful. @leisa Reichelt (at Atlassian) prefers to use walls over Jira in meetings#AEADC

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Most of the places we meet are not good environments for decision making. Trello and Jira are designed to help us make decisions. But if they're not on the walls that's not so useful. @leisa Reichelt (at Atlassian) prefers to use walls over Jira in meetings#AEADC



Leisa Reichelt

@leisa

That statement is missing some context. More here.

disambiguity.com/what-walls-are...

3:57 PM - Aug 1, 2018 · Sydney, New South Wales



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What if we don't have walls? What if they're remote meetings?

All those videoconference tools provide us the attempt to recreate the physical space of being in the same space.

This is skeuomorphism.

Realttimeboard, boardthing, mural, can be white spaces remotely#AEADC

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Level of clarity:

Let's talk brainstorming. Plenty of studies show that brainstorming can result in fewer ideas, fewer good ideas, ideas that don't take risks.

Burstiness is a brainstorming form that does work. #AEADC

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In a bursty conversation, you welcome interrupts, and there are conditions that create burstiness. Case study of the daily show: ted.com/talks/worklife...

They think about outcomes: write a certain number of jokes.

#AEADC

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WorkLife with ADAM GRANT

The Daily Show's secret to creativity

Group brainstorming is usually where creativity goes to die. But at The Daily Show with Trevor Noah, they have it down to a science. Adam
ted.com

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Meetings are limited by time. Think about how companies treat time in meetings.

Some companies the meeting starts on time and end on time and if the meeting doesn't generate answers oh well.

Some companies have meetings that run until they're done. They value consensus#AEADC

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If consensus is necessary, then you stay in the room until you reach it. That's not free. The cost is time. #AEADC

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Brains: everything @lara_hogan told us about brains still apply. But we can pull people into their frontal cortex. @danmall talked about Project Aristotle. Psychological safety is critical, but that requires being vulnerable. #AEADC

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Organizational culture is the biggest constraint in meetings. Do people interrupt based on status, job titles, or worse, gender? That's evidence of the company culture. You can make small changes in meetings to hack that culture. #AEADC

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One way to create safety in meeting: it takes time. But just by adding compliments, positive feedback in the conversation, it can build a positive culture and more effective meetings#AEADC

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One simple hack for 1 on 1 meetings:

The traditional approach is 30 minutes weekly, 2 hours per month, 10 minutes per party, 10 minutes of synthesis. Great job of taking up 2 hours of time. Doesn't allow anyone to get anywhere.

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Revised approach:

30 minutes monthly and 90 minutes monthly. That's 2 hours per month. One meeting is traditional, the other is a working session that shows progress. Plus everyone gets time back every other week. [#AEADC](#)

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How we bring our beliefs into a meeting:

Joe's aunt took a cruise - it has lots of parties, she relaxes, she loves it. Would recommend.

Bill was on the same cruise - it was for the Backstreet Boys. Bill is hunting the Backstreet Boys. He said it sucked. [#AEADC](#)

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Which experience was real? They're both real. And there were 2000 other real experiences on the cruise. Reality comes from our intent, whatever intent we have based on what we believe to be true. [#AEADC](#)

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Agile is a system of ceremonies. If we overindex what we believe on the ceremonies we won't reach our outcomes. But those ceremonies constantly monitor our outcomes.

1. Sprint planning
2. Scrum
3. Retrospective

Repeat [#AEADC](#)

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In retrospectives we
List wins
List problems
List changes
Post and discuss.

But there's a problem: we think someone is going to blame us for something going wrong. We fear being evaluated negatively.

Surfacing mistakes = good
Attaching to people = hard#AEADC

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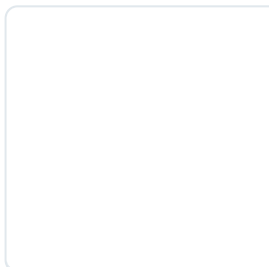


Etsy uses blameless retrospectives:

1. Actions taken
2. Outcomes observed
3. Results expected
4. Assumptions made
5. Differences between 2 and 3.

codeascraft.com/2012/05/22/bla...#AEADC

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Blameless PostMortems and a Just Culture

Last week, Owen Thomas wrote a flattering article over at Business Insider on how we handle errors and mistakes at Etsy. I thought I might give some codeascraft.com



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We're all biased.

Inclusive design also applies to meeting. The more we bias our own assumptions, the less inclusive those meetings feel.

Kevin is “verbally inclined”.

Some people prefer drawing.

Some people don't understand visual thinking, but understand code#AEADC

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“How am I presenting this content? Visually or verbally?”

If visuals that are meant to be read and heard, you're creating cognitive dissonance and trip your brains.

Don't read the slides in the meeting. Speak different words.

If sketching, point and ask questions#AEADC

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“What if I am not in charge of the meetings?”

Jeff Veen @veen - was a web designer, was not in charge. He later founded Adaptive Path, where he was in charge. Later he founded Measure Maps (aka Google Analytics), then Typekit. #AEADC

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When [@veen](#) meets with investors, those are high-stakes meetings that he has limited control on.

He carried a whiteboard marker into every meeting. Whenever it got out of hand, he'd start sketching. He's helping everyone in the room understand better. [#AEADC](#)

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You'll never be in charge of a meeting, but you do have an option to bring a whiteboard marker to help you make better understanding and have better results in the meetings [#AEADC](#)

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Being present through the death of a loved one changed [@kevinmhoffman](#)'s relationship with time.

People don't want to be in meetings. They want the outcomes of the meetings. They want to make things real toward a change. [#AEADC](#)

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Think about outcomes first, then think about decisions to support the outcomes, then think about the agenda.

Think about the constraints of the meeting.

Change what you believe about the meeting, or figure out how to defy a belief.

Manage your own biases#AEADC

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With meetings, we tend to remember the extremes - really good or really bad - but the context is always going to change, so you're never going to have that meeting again. Change your beliefs, change the design, and understand decisions. Make them better meetings. #AEADC

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Question and Answer period:



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If you're managing someone who needs your opinion before they make a lot of decisions, that's a high-touch approach. Some of your staff want that in 1 on 1s. #AEADC

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If someone says “that’s a terrible idea” stop and say “OK, why do you feel that way?” Bring the conversation back to evidence and data. [#AEADC](#)

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If you’re in meetings with 100 people or so, how do you help yourself in that kind of meeting making decisions? It’s a scale problem - break them into pieces and make them self-regulating pieces. Lots of small conversations of 7-8 and then have them report out. [#AEADC](#)

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How do you keep meetings out of the weeds? If they routinely get into the weeds, like design critiques “why is that thing that color?” Ask “What is the intended goal of this design? What did you do to support that? Now stick with that goal.” [#AEADC](#)

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Retrospectives: If they're called postmortems you know you're killing things. Etsy is explicit that "this is a no-risk meeting". Saying explicitly "You're not going to get blamed for this thing, we want to learn about assumptions" can help. Also psychological safety.

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Understanding what gives people on the team motivation? Give them that work, and they're more likely to be vulnerable in a difficult conversation, because they're motivated. [#AEADC](#)

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How do you make radical changes in organizations when people don't like changes? What else is in your toolbox to change people? An organization is an organism, it develops habits it believes are self-sustaining. Think about habit loops, keeping stimulus and reward. [#AEADC](#)

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The trick to habit loops is thinking about the amount of time you have to do something before it'll stick. You have to draw more in meetings a number of times to see if it's going to work. (21 days straight for personal habits, like going to the gym.) #AEADC

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