

## Less Can Be More: How Ruthless Calendaring Will Make Your Work More Productive

Here are two words that you do not expect to read in a single phrase: “ruthless” and “calendaring.” But, I hope that by the end of this post, I will have made them make sense together for 2014.

Recently, I spent an hour with the managers and publishing team leaders in my area to discuss our schedules. By virtue of working in a company, meetings are necessary. At least that’s what we think most of the time. What I have found is that some of our meetings have a less than necessary reason for existence. In order to order my life better, here is some major planning for 2014. Here’s is why I plan to do it and what I hope to accomplish.

**1. Curb the pop-in-the-office meetings.** I am incredibly guilty of this behavior and it causes everyone in our company to have permission to do the same. I hope to stop just popping into other offices unannounced. My leaders are gracious and don’t act as if they mind it. But I think it makes for too many spur-of-the-moment decisions and just eats up time. A better schedule will help us be more intentional with our conversations.

**2. Establish the major conversations.** In my calendaring for the next year, I am establishing the major conversations that will take place each week and/or month with others. For my core leadership, we will meet each week. For a group of my peers where I lead a “matrix” meeting across our adult ministry work, we will meet once a month. Without a doubt, there will be emergencies that arise that will require a meeting, but a pre-planned conversation will help us know when the conversations can be most fruitful.

**3. Schedule conversations.** A great part of leadership is relationship. I don’t want my relationships with our team to feel contrived but I know that the vast majority of our interactions simply revolve around our assigned work. The only way for me to spend any personal time where we talk about life, faith, family, and the things we enjoy is to schedule those conversations. It will take the form of walking to a coffee shop, going to lunch, or a planned break from the up-tempo pace of our work life.

**4. Show patience.** When it comes to work, I can be a hard-charging personality. I don’t know that I have this natural inclination or if it is a learned behavior. I guess it does not matter... it is who I very likely am at work. By holding to my scheduled meetings and conversations, it will help me practice patience. Rather than giving in to the impulse to rush around and force conversations and decisions, I hope that my calendaring will allow me to settle down. At least a little bit.

**5. Establish a reason for every meeting.** My coworkers know that I hate two things about meetings: when they are long and when we leave without a reason for having met. By doing this planning ahead of time, I hope to also establish a reason for every meeting to occur. It means that each meeting will not only a reason but also a plan for discussion and/or delegation.

**6. Own your calendar by refusing to let others own it.** We all work off of Google Calendar where others can search for an open spot on your schedule and send an invitation. I've decided that just because I have "white space" does not give others permission to own it. It is okay to say "no" to a meeting or delay it to another time.

I will likely have a mixture of success and failure in all of these areas. I'll let you know how it goes along the way.

*So... what are you doing to make this year more productive in your work?*

Read more from Philip [here](#).