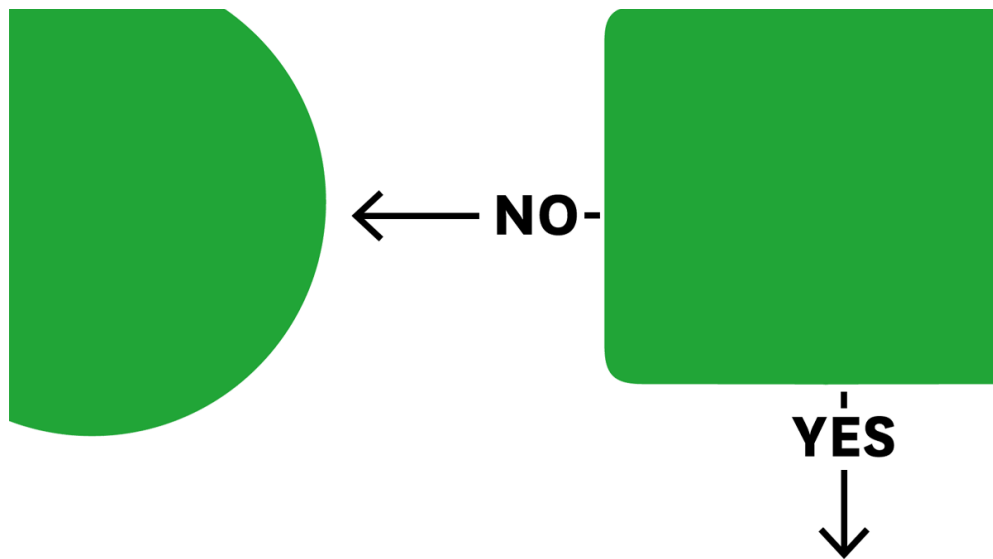




## Meeting Management



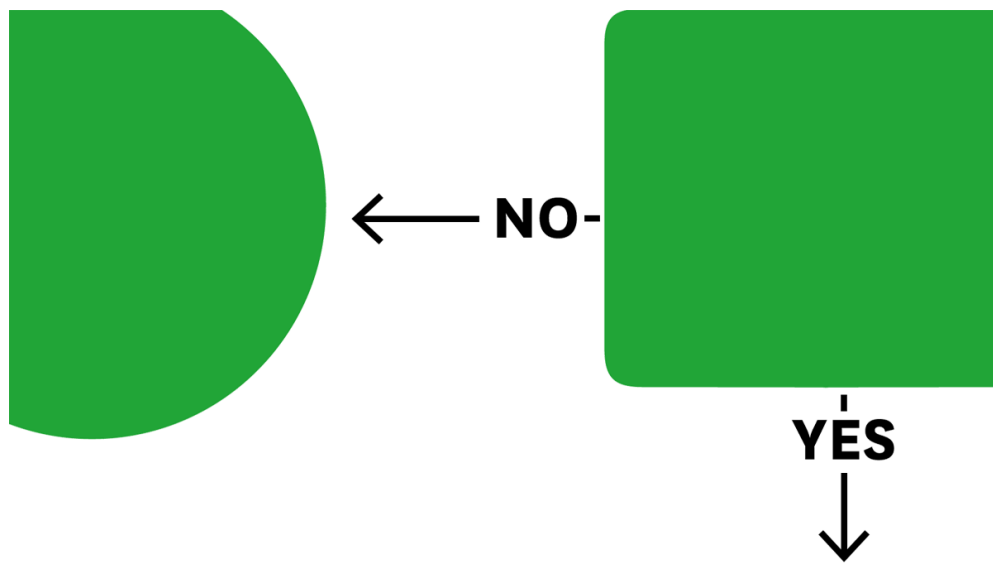
# Do You Really Need to Hold That Meeting?

A simple tool to help you decide. **by Elizabeth Grace Saunders**

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Published on HBR.org / March 20, 2015 / Reprint [H01YA4](#)



**“Let’s schedule a meeting” has become the** universal default response to most business issues. Not sure what to do on a project? Let’s schedule a meeting. Have a few ideas to share? Let’s schedule a meeting. Struggling with taking action? Let’s schedule a meeting.

Although scheduling a meeting *can* be the right solution in many instances, it’s not always the best answer. I’ve come up with a decision tree to help you quickly determine if a meeting makes the most sense.

Save or print out this decision tree to make deciding whether or not to hold a meeting as quick and easy as possible. As you go through it, here's what you should consider at each step:

**Have I thought through this situation?** When you don't have clarity about what you're doing on a project, it's tempting to schedule a meeting to give you the feeling of progress. But unless the meeting's intent is to structure the project, at this point, scheduling a meeting is an inefficient use of your time — and your colleagues'. Instead, set aside some time with yourself to do some strategic thinking. During that time you can evaluate the scope of the project, the current status, the potential milestones, and lay out a plan of action for making meaningful progress. Once you've completed your own strategic thinking prep work, then you can move onto the next step of considering whether to hold a meeting.

**Do I need outside input to make progress?** You may be in the situation where you know what needs to be done, and you simply need to do the work. If you find yourself in this place, don't schedule a meeting; update your to-do list and take action instead. However, if after clarifying what needs to be done to the best of your ability, you need outside input to answer questions or give feedback before you feel comfortable jumping into action, continue on.

**Does moving forward require a real-time conversation?** If you need some answers to questions, but they don't require a two-way conversation, e-mail can be an excellent option in lieu of a meeting. This is particularly true when you're looking for feedback on your written plans or documents. It's much more efficient for everyone involved if you send over items that they can look at on their own (while you're not awkwardly watching them read during an in-person meeting) and then shoot you back feedback. If you feel your

situation does require a real-time conversation, then examine different communication channels.

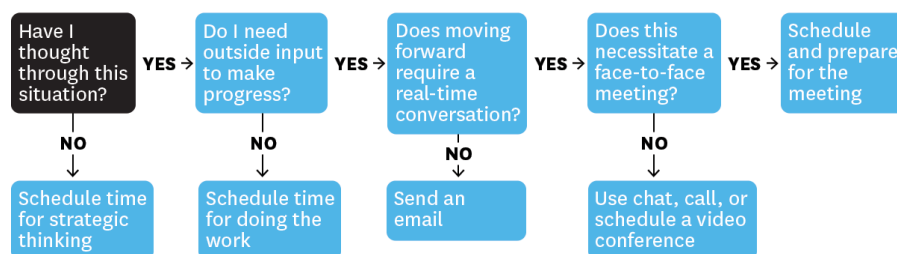
**Does this necessitate a face-to-face meeting?** When you need two-way communication but don't necessarily need to see the person, you have a variety of options. An online chat can help you answer questions quickly, or for more in-depth conversations, scheduling a phone call or video conference can work well. This not only saves you transition time of going to and from a meeting place, but you will more easily be able to get stuff done if someone is late, instead of having to sit and wait for them to show up.

If in the end, you decide that you need face-to-face, in-person communication, then schedule a meeting, and think through in advance how you can make it as efficient and effective as possible. That means considering your intent for the meeting, establishing your desired outcomes, and preparing any materials that you should review or send out in advance.

With the right decision-making process, you can radically reduce the number of meetings you attend and increase the amount of work that gets done.

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#### SHOULD I HOLD A MEETING?



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*This article was originally published online on March 20, 2015.*

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