

**Strategies to make meetings in Momonono more
effective**

Submitted to my Manager at Momonono

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Abstract

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Letter of Transmittal

I. Introduction

I would like to preface that for the sake of privacy, the company I worked for will be called Momonono.

In Momonono, the typical weekly meetings include 1-on-1, standup, and design meetings. These meetings happen all the time, and there are typically problems associated with them which results in wasted time that could be used elsewhere.

A. Background information on 1-on-1 meetings

In Momonono, 1-on-1s are weekly meetings between an employee and their superiors. Most of the time this is a meeting between the employee and their manager.

Goals

- Career goals: Discussion of what the employee wants to do in their career so their manager can support them. For example, if the employee wants to be a manager instead of a software engineer, the manager can give them more manager-related tasks.
- Problems and solutions - Discuss the problems of the week, and how the employee can fix them the next time they happen.
- Supporting the employee - Ensure the employee has resources and support from the manager to complete their tasks. For example, contacts of stakeholders for the employee's task.
- Recognition of employee's achievements - The manager may not know the achievements the employee made that week. Knowing these achievements will let the employee be on track for a promotion.

Overall, 1-on-1s are individualized meetings to have the employee's needs met where the manager is able to know problems and achievements that the manager isn't aware of, as well as have the

manager provide career guidance and support to the employee so that they can meet their career goals.

B. Background information on standup meetings

Standups in Momonono are daily meetings at the start of the workday where team members provide a brief overview of what they did yesterday as well as any blockers (anything that prevents or slows down an assigned task) they face.

Goals

- Blockers - Team members can identify a blocker, and receive advice from team members on how to address it which allows tasks to be solved faster. For example, a team member facing issues with a technical issue can receive guidance from a senior member of the team.
- Visibility - Team members sharing what they did, allows other team members to have a bigger picture of what is happening in the whole as a whole. This ensures that team members are aware of the impact, as well as the goals and problems of the project.
- Accountability - The external accountability of having a standup each day, allows team members to actually do work, especially with the rise of remote work and no one supervising you.

Overall, standups are a great daily meeting to address blockers, be aware of the bigger scope of the project, and what everyone on the team is working on. However, there is a huge issue with overtime meetings and the relatability of other team member's work which lead to a lot of wasted time that can be allocated elsewhere.

C. Background information on design meetings

Design meetings are meetings where members discuss the design of a system. This typically happens once a month, with usually 15 people in the meeting that typically lasts 1 and a half hours.

Goals

- System requirements - Define and clarify system requirements and provides metrics that the system has to abide by. For example, a system could guarantee a 10% user retention rate which the team building the system have to ensure.
- Discussion - Discussing the best design for the system, and discussing the cost and benefit of each approach, ensures the system has the best design possible.
- Deadlines and resources - Timelines for the system can be put in place and estimates for the budget and resources required can be decided.

Overall, system design meetings are crucial to have in order to decide the best design of a system along with its requirements. However, a comfortable environment is necessary where disagreements are resolved, and participants feel comfortable contributing to the meeting.

D. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to try to maximize the effectiveness of the meetings in Momonono. This is done by maximizing the effectiveness of the goals while minimizing the problems associated with these meetings. Hopefully, this will make it so that meetings run more effectively and so the team can work more effectively, and a myriad of other positive effects will follow such as promotions, higher performance metrics, better team collaboration, etc.

E. Description of audience

The audience is my manager at Momonono. They are in charge of most of the meetings here, so they are in a position to takes action for these meetings.

F. Brief description of data sources

The data will be collected from the following sources:

- An online survey to be filled by team members that ask questions related to 1-on-1, standup, and design meetings.
- Review of secondary sources such as academic articles that involve problems are solutions to these types of meetings.

II. Data section

To find the current problems in Momonono, a survey was given out to team members to see what they thought of current meetings. In each section we will discuss each of 1-on-1, standups, and design meetings and talk about the problems from the survey results, and the solutions from secondary sources.

A. Analysis of survey results related to 1-on-1 meetings

From the survey results, we determine that the mean score of the effectiveness of 1-on-1 meetings is 6.75. From the survey, these are the main problems associated with 1-on-1 meetings in Momonono.

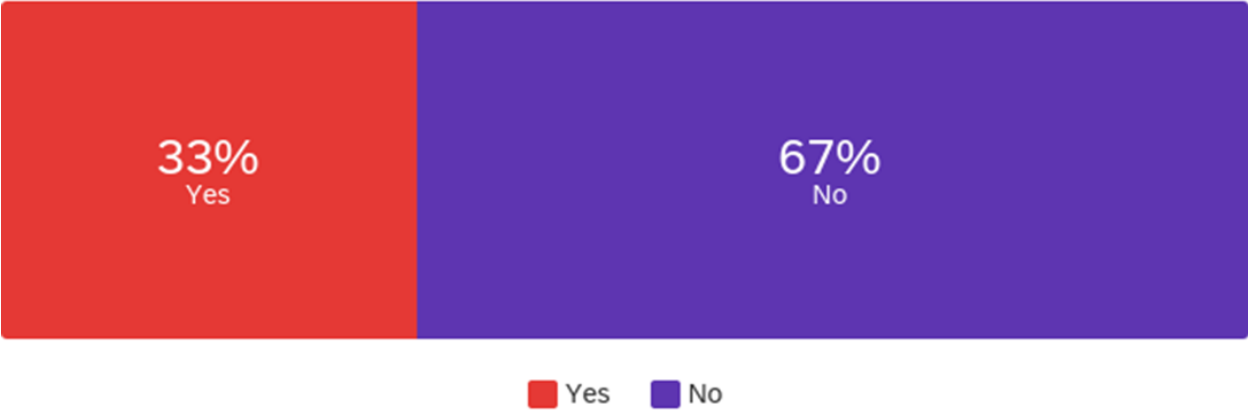
Q3 - On a scale 1-10, how effective do you think current 1-on-1 meetings are?



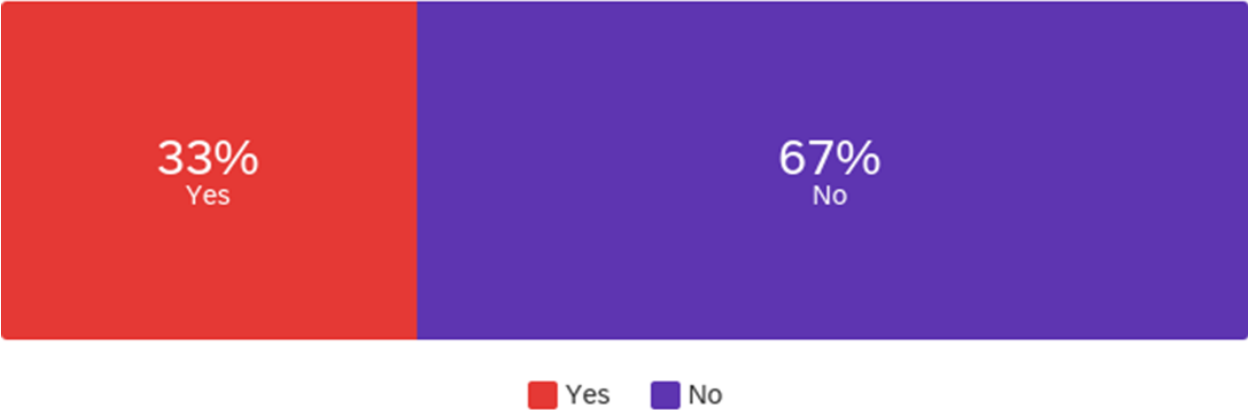
Q22 - Do you talk about the problems you face the past week, and receive feedback...



Q12 - Are your career goals discussed (i.e. promotions, stuff you want to work on...



Q30 - Do you feel comfortable sharing the problems you encountered during the wee...



Q31 - Do you feel prepared for the 1-on-1?



Appendix I: 1-on-1 survey results

- a. Problems of 1-on-1 meetings

1. Power imbalance - 67% of participants answered "No" when asked if they feel comfortable sharing the problems they encountered during the week. If the manager is too dominant or employee is intimidated by the manager, the employee may feel uncomfortable sharing their problems with the manager.
2. Lack of preparation - 33% of team members answered "No" when asked if they feel prepared for 1-on-1s. If the manager or employee doesn't prepare the meeting will be unproductive. For example, if the employee doesn't have a list of their achievements available before the meeting, they may find it hard to convey all their achievements of the week.
3. Career goals - 67% answered no when asked if career goals are discussed. If career goals are discussed, the manager can support team members on their career goals, and progress their careers.

b. Solution of 1-on-1 meetings based on secondary research

- Agenda - To solve problem (2) Lack of preparation and (3) Career goals, a time management coach Elizabeth Saunders, says "In an ideal world, you and your colleague would collaborate on an agenda ahead of time". It's recommended to "jot down a list of bullet points that you'd like to discuss". In Momonono, this could include progress on promotions, problems with co-workers, technical problems, how the manager can support the team member.
- Tone - To solve problem (1) Power imbalance. It is recommended to be fully present by turning off your phone, and computer (Knight 2016). This can give the impression of that the person you are talking to is more important than your phone or computer. Starting the meeting in a positive note, and ending the meeting by expressing gratitude is also essential to begin and leave the meeting on a positive note (Knight 2016).

B. Analysis of survey results related to standup meetings

In general, standups in tech companies in Momonono are viewed negatively. One developer in a standup study said the following:

“No one in the team really wants to be at the status meeting. We are mostly programmers and testers, so our job is not administration. Most people think it is a little unnecessary use of time. I think three or even two days a week would be fine.” (Stray 2014)

Q6 - On a scale 1-10, how effective do you think current standup meetings are?



Q8 - How many days out of the work week have standups gone overtime?



Q11 - Do you find you other people's standup's have nothing to do with your assign...



Yes No

Q25 - If you have a blocker, do you find it gets resolved in the standup meeting?



Yes No

Q32 - Do you find your blocker gets followed up after the meeting?



Q33 - Do you find other members of the team take too long during their standup?



Appendix II: Standup survey results

From the survey results, we determine that the mean score of the effectiveness of 1-on-1 meetings is 6.33. From the survey, these are the main problems associated with 1-on-1 meetings in Momonono.

- a. Problems of standup meetings
 1. Over time meetings - From the surveys, standups go overtime 4.77 days out of the work week. In Momonono, standups are typically 15 minutes, and are typically run overtime because there are 7 people on the team, and addressing blockers which takes a couple of extra minutes. Because of this standups are typically run overtime.

2. Follow-ups - 25% of team members answered "No" when asked if blockers get followed up. This may be because of a lack of accountability and documentation.
3. Relatability - 80% of team members answered "No" when asked if other people's standups are related to their tasks. Typically members of the team are working on entirely different projects. One member of the team may not need to listen to what another member of the team is doing because it's completely unrelated to their project.
4. Conciseness - 67% of participants answered "Yes" when asked if other team members take too long during their standup. This makes meetings typically go overtime. This time can be allocated elsewhere.

b. Solution of standup meetings based on secondary research

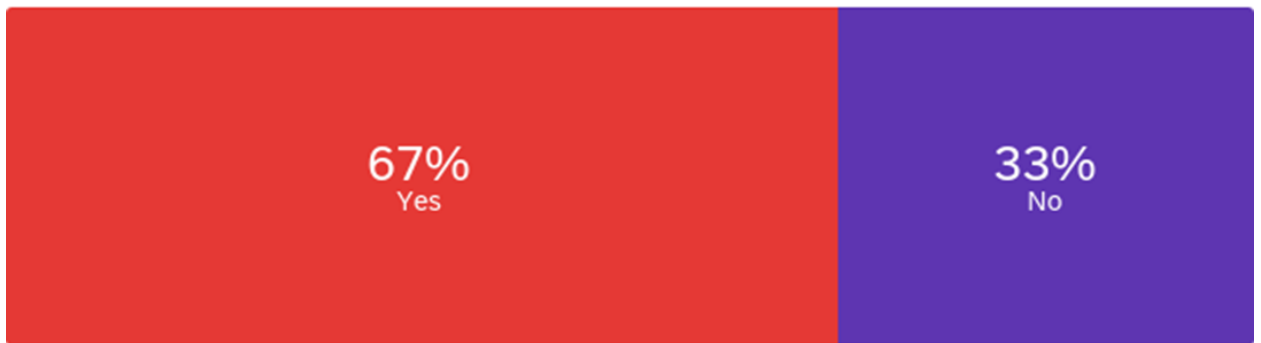
- Scrum master - At the moment, the scrum master (person in charge of standup) is only the manager and doesn't get rotated. Research suggests that doing this can reduce the meetings on average from "25 to 19 minutes" (Stray 2014). This will also have the added benefit of where "Being a Scrum Master helps you see the big picture." which supports Goal (2) Visibility.
- Fewer meetings - Having fewer meetings will solve problem (3) Relatability since team members don't go to meetings listening to standups unrelated to them.
- Timer - To solve problem (4) Conciseness, a timer for each team member to talk about their standup so they don't take too much time will ensure team members are aware of how much time they are taking. A recommended suggestion is that a timer for the meeting as a whole also solves the problem (1) Overtimed meetings as it allows team members to know the allocated time for the meeting has passed (Stray 2014).
- Accountability - To solve problem (2) Follow-ups, documenting which team member is gonna follow up with a blocker will keep them accountable. Putting this documentation as a task can be a further incentive so that the team member's follow-up is documented and can be used as evidence for promotion opportunities.

C. Analysis of survey results related to design meetings

Q7 - On a scale 1-10, how effective do you think current design meetings are?

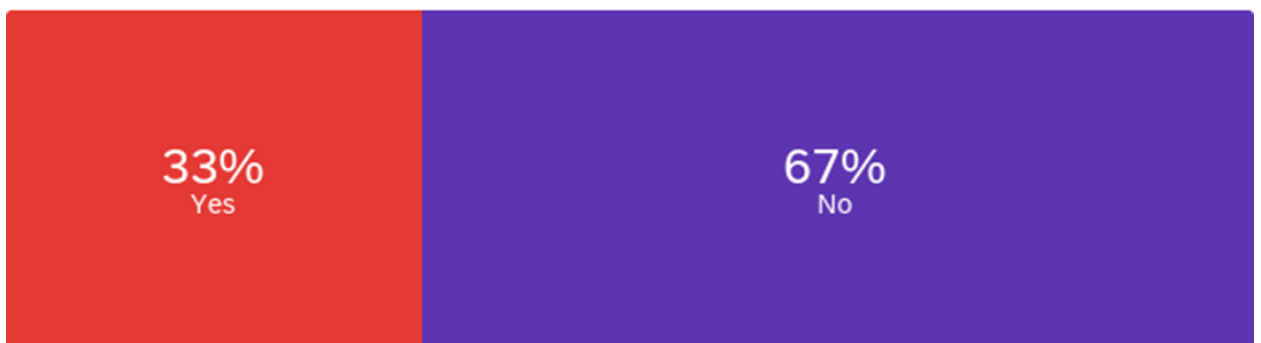


Q10 - Do you feel comfortable in expressing your ideas in the design meeting?



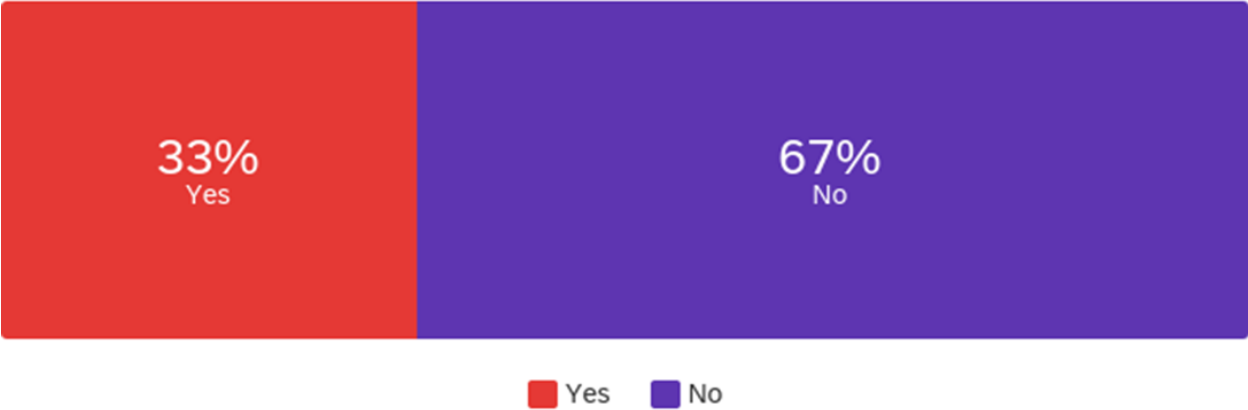
Yes No

Q26 - Do you have enough information on what the design meeting is about before i...



Yes No

Q27 - Do you feel you have to be in this meeting?



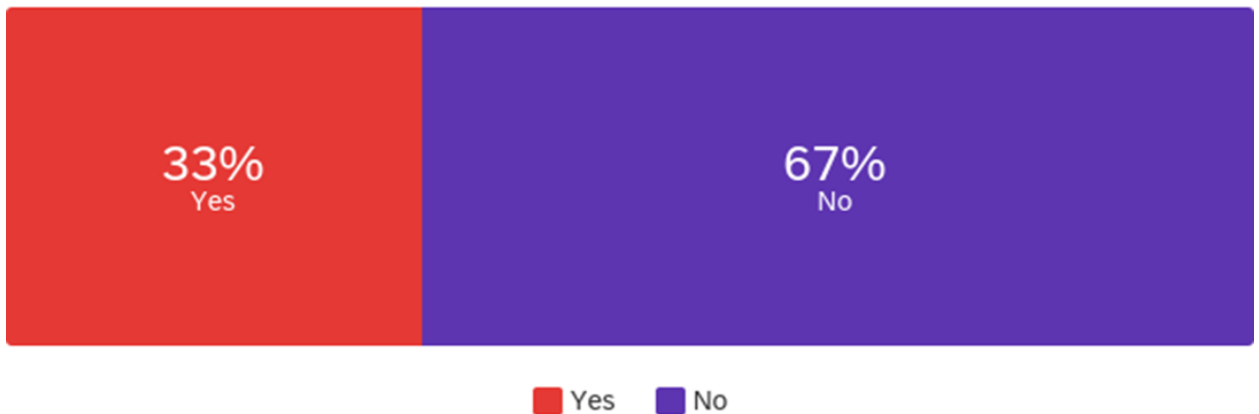
Q29 - Do these design meetings typically run overtime?



Q34 - Do you find disagreements in design approaches get resolved in the meeting?



Q35 - Do you feel there is an ample amount of moderation in the meeting?



Appendix III: Design meeting survey results

From the survey results, we determine that the mean score of the effectiveness of design meetings is 6.33. From the survey, these are the main problems associated in design meetings in Momonono.

- a. Problems of design meetings
 1. Environment - 33% of team members responded "No" when asked if they feel comfortable expressing their ideas in design meetings. This could be improved. If so, more ideas can be discussed and the best design for the system can be planned.

2. Disagreements - 50% of team members responded "No" when asked if conflicts in design approaches get resolved in the design meeting. If team members have differing opinions and aren't willing to be open-minded to each other's perspectives, it can impede progress.
3. Overcrowded - 67% of members responded "No" when asked if they felt they have to be in the meeting. In Momonono, usually, around 15 members participate in a design meeting, these people range from principal architects to technical writers. Perhaps a technical writer doesn't have to be in the meeting as it's very irrelevant to their job.

b. Solution of design meetings based on secondary research

- Meeting owner - To solve problems (1) Environment and (2) Disagreements, a meeting owner is recommended by renowned tech CEO coach Regina Gerbeaux. Having a meeting owner will ensure that meeting participants don't dominate the conversation and that everyone's opinions are asked for. It also ensures that we can focus the conversation so that disagreements are focused on the actual outcome (Gerbeaux 2022).
- Participants - Having fewer people who are essential to the meeting may be more conducive than having more people most of whom can't contribute in a meaningful level. This solves the problem (3) as fewer people will be in the meeting, allowing for a more focused meeting discussion.

III. Conclusion

A. Summary of findings

To conclude, the report aimed to evaluate current meeting practices in 1-on-1s, standup, and design meetings, and provide solutions to these problems. Survey results conducted among team members rated on average 1-on-1's to be 6.75, standups 6.33, and design meetings 6.33. These ratings are quite moderate and a lot can be done to get them higher.

Survey results in particular showed common problems among these 3 meetings. Including overcrowded, and meetings being overtimed.

B. Recommendations

For 1-on-1s, a pre-planned agenda, and improving more warming tone is conducive to making the meeting be productive as well as give feedback in a compassionate manner.

For standups, having a timer, and accountability are easy to implement to ensure team members get the help from blockers and so that meetings don't run late. Although, rotating scrum masters is a good idea, other people in the team may feel intimidated doing it.

For design meetings, having a meeting owner is essential to avoid conflicts and make more introverted people a part of the discussion. This will make it so that the best system design possible is created out of the meeting as well as save time.

Overall, the most impactful focus should be on meetings that occur the most frequently, and feasibility of these changes. Standups happen everyday compared to 1-on-1s that happen once a week and design meetings that typically happen once a month so they should be focused more.

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