

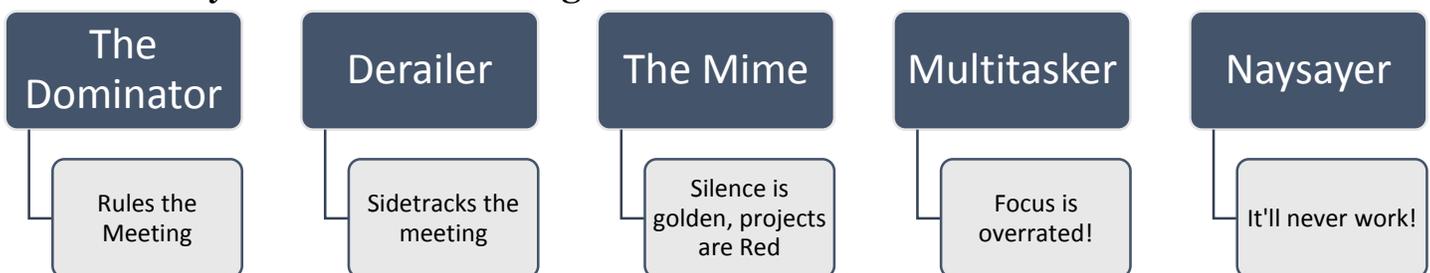


In the United States alone, there are approximately 11 million business meetings every day and ineffective or unnecessary meetings cost organizations \$37 billion every year.

These organizations need a hero . . . a Superhero to rescue them from the meeting Super Villains that lurk in the hallways, in meeting rooms, and on conference calls. These evil-doers use their superpowers to destroy collaboration and delay projects.

You can be the Superhero that thwarts these villains and brings value back to meetings. Within this guide, you'll discover the weapons and techniques to not only defeat the meeting Super Villains, you'll turn them into meeting heroes.

The villains you'll face in meetings are:





MEET THE MEETING SUPER VILLAINS

Destroyers of meeting value

The Dominator

Superpower: Prevent others from speaking and sharing important information

Behavior: Is impatient and may interrupt others. Dominates the meeting.

The Derailer

Superpower: Pulls focus away from the meeting topic or objective

Behavior: Goes off on tangents and sets the tone that perhaps this meeting isn't very important.

Alias: The Latecomer. This is the person who shows up after the meeting has already started. You may need to repeat what was missed, losing valuable time during the meeting.

The Mime

Superpower: Important information might not be shared and you may not achieve the meeting objective.

Behavior: May be passive/aggressive (doesn't say anything in the meeting, but makes comments outside of the meeting). Unwilling to share information. May appear shy or reserved.

Multitasker

Superpower: Sets the tone that your meeting is unimportant and may distract others.

Behavior: Pulls out their phone, computer, or does other work not related to the meeting. On conference calls, they may ask you to repeat questions.

Naysayer

Superpower: Could shut down meeting progress and cause meeting objectives to be missed.

Behavior: Passive/aggressive – may make personal attacks against other meeting attendees. Speaks of doom & gloom (“We tried that before. It’ll never work”). May raise risks - even those that are extremely unlikely.

Alias: The Over-Analyzer. They get the team stuck in analysis paralysis by discussing the unimportant details or trying to solve for unlikely exceptions to the process.



HOW DO WE DEFEAT THESE SUPER VILLAINS?

Remember your mantra: **Assume Positive Intent**

If we assume positive intent, we can reveal the hero inside of these villains. These meeting Super Villains are really just heroes that can't find the right way of expressing themselves. If needed, we can also use our weapons and call upon our sidekick, ELMO to help.

The Dominator

What the hero inside is trying to do: They want to move to action. They may have a lot of experience that they want to share to ensure success. They bring energy to the group and can help get the conversation started.

Effective weapons: Working Agreements (with agreements such as only one person speaks at a time and everyone contributes), ELMO, Parking Lot

How to make them a hero: Enlist their help. Prior to the meeting or during a break, tell them that they have a lot of experience and you're concerned that others might not contribute. Ask for their help in getting others to contribute.

The Derailer

What the hero inside is trying to do: They may bring awareness that they cannot contribute value to the topic or to the entire meeting. They want to add value, but

perhaps this isn't the right topic. Maybe they don't need to be invited to the meeting at all based on the topics and objectives.

Effective weapons: Agenda (use the time box feature to keep them from sidetracking the meeting), Invitation (set expectations and objectives to make sure the meeting is valuable for them and they are the right person to attend), Parking Lot (offload issues not relevant to the current topic), Working Agreements (be on time), ELMO can help as well.

The Mime

What the hero inside is trying to do: They may care about relationships and don't want to interrupt others. They want to maintain harmony within the group. They also may be an introvert and are considering the issues before speaking up. They might also be influenced by The Dominator.

Effective weapons: Working Agreements (everyone contributes) and The Invitation (are they the right person to attend the meeting?). Send the agenda early to give them time to think and consider the topic.

How to make them a hero: Their body language and behavior may indicate that something is wrong within the group. Enlist their help to ensure that the group gets along and everyone feels like they can contribute. This may help defeat The Dominator.

Multitasker

What the hero inside is trying to do: Like the Derailer, the Multitasker may be indicating that they cannot contribute value to the topic or to the entire meeting. Perhaps the meeting had gotten off topic and you need to refocus the group. Maybe they don't need to be invited to the meeting at all based on the topics and objectives.

Effective weapons: Working agreements (no phones, laptops down, go outside if you have a critical call) and The Invitation (are they the right person to attend the meeting?). For conference calls, call on them with their name and full details about the topic or question.

Naysayer

What the hero inside is trying to do: Quality is their priority and they want the project to succeed. They raise risks and bring to light potential impediments. They may be an Indicator that the item currently under discussion is something that the team isn't ready to discuss.

Effective weapons: Agenda (time box), Risk Log, and Working Agreements (if you raise a risk, you must have a solution).

How to make them a hero: Having a working agreement requiring people to have a solution when they raise an issue or concern can turn them into a problem solving machine.

CONCLUSION

By assuming positive intent, you can find the good deep within these villains. Use your weapons wisely and bring value back to meetings. If you do this, people will want to attend your meetings and you will develop the reputation of being a Meeting Superhero.





YOUR WEAPONS

Batman has his utility belt to help him fight crime. Here are the weapons you can use to defeat the Meeting Super Villains.

The Agenda

Capabilities: The Agenda has two primary features: Topics and Time Boxes.

The Topics feature allows you to determine who the right people to invite are. Ask yourself “Who is critical to include to achieve the goal of this agenda topic?”. It will also allow invitees to verify that the meeting is relevant to them and that they are the right person to attend. If not, they are empowered to delegate to the right person. Prioritize the most critical topics at the beginning of the meeting. Each topic should have a goal and a time box (start and end time or duration).

Using the Time Box feature allows you to ensure that the meeting progresses through all topics and creates a sense of urgency. Only allowing a limited amount of time for each topic helps keep the meeting focused and allows attendees to better plan for when a topic relevant to them will be discussed. The Time Box is effective against The Derailer and The Naysayer.

The Invitation

Capabilities: The Invitation has two features: The Objective and The Distribution.

The Objective is the meeting goal that is to be achieved. Some agendas also include a purpose – a statement of why we are having this meeting. The Objective helps keep the meeting on track and valuable by allowing invitees to understand the goal. Like The Agenda, the Objective feature allows invitees to

verify that they are the right person to attend the meeting.

The Distribution is the list of invitees. Be sure that expectations are clear for each invitee. Caution: Keep this list as small as possible and limit it to those needed to achieve the meeting Objective. Failing to do so will allow The Derailer, The Mime, Multitasker and others to infiltrate the meeting.

Note: Before using The Invitation, check to make sure that it's the right tool. Is it really necessary to have a meeting or can the objective be met in some other way? Can you invite fewer people or are all the people on the invitation truly needed?

Working Agreements (also known as ground rules or norms)

Capabilities: Working Agreements are a list of practices to which the group agrees. It sets out how the group will work together. Working Agreements can help inhibit lateness, use of electronic devices, and other negative behaviors.

Note: For best results, Working Agreements should be developed with input from all attendees at the beginning of the meeting, be clearly visible to the group for the entire meeting, and must be agreed to by all meeting attendees.

Parking Lot and Risk Log

Capabilities: The Parking Lot is a repository for issues or topics not aligned to the current meeting topic or meeting Objective. Similarly, the Risk Log captures risks that come up during the meeting that cannot be immediately discussed or resolved. These two tools help keep the meeting focused by setting aside items not relevant to the conversation.

Note: For best results, the Parking Lot and Risk Log must be clearly visible to the group for the entire meeting and if not resolved at the end of the meeting, a plan as to how those items will be addressed should be shared with the group.

Your Sidekick: ELMO

ELMO (Enough . . . Let's Move On) can help you to keep the meeting moving when the discussion is going in circles. To call upon ELMO, simply use the phrase "I'm calling ELMO. It sounds to me like we're going in circles on this topic (or already discussed this topic or getting a bit sidetracked). Does everyone agree that we can move on?"



HOW TO BE A MEETING SUPERHERO

Defeat the Meeting Super Villains and
bring value back to meetings