



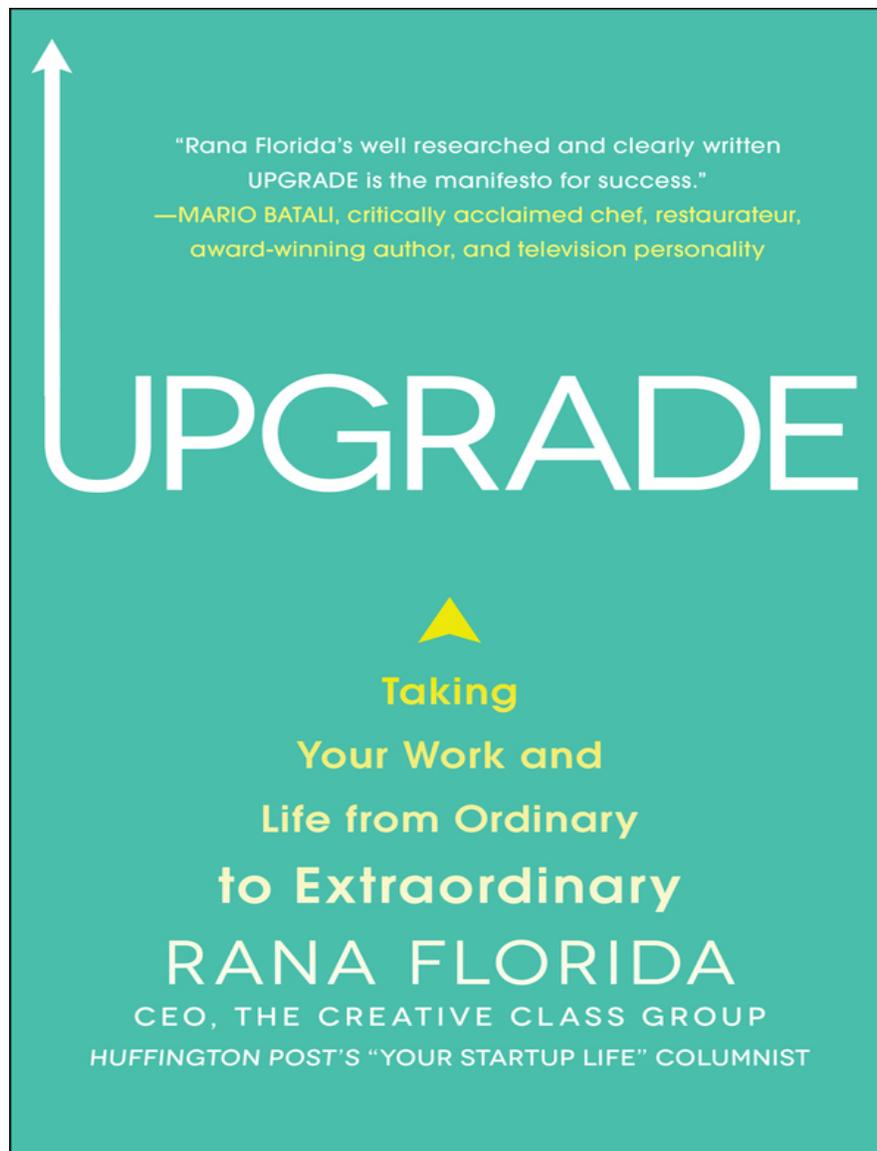
[Rana Florida](#)

CEO, The Creative Class Group & Author, *Upgrade*

## Kill the Breakfast Meeting

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Adapted from [Upgrade: Taking Your Work and Life From Ordinary to Extraordinary](#)  
by [Rana Florida](#)



It's time to kill the breakfast meeting. Kill it dead. I seriously think the first breakfast meeting was convened by a bitter boss who was unhappy with their family life, couldn't wait to get out of the house in the morning and wanted to inflict pain on subordinates.

The notion of a 7 or 8 a.m. breakfast meeting is unnatural, exhausting, stressful and completely unnecessary. First, the very anticipation of the meeting ruins a good night's sleep. Next, the way you experience your morning sets the tone for the rest of the day. If you're rushing out of bed, running out of the house with barely a shower and something to eat, skipping the morning news, and speeding through traffic, the rest of your day will feel like an uphill climb. Lastly, what could be accomplished over breakfast, with all the disruptions, that couldn't have been accomplished more effectively in the office in the afternoon or even with a brief phone call?

Most meetings are useless time wasters and accomplish nothing. Often, meetings swerve off the agenda and into ancillary areas. Sometimes this is helpful, but other times it ends up wasting the time of the people around the table.

Off-site meetings make for an even bigger challenge in terms of having to find the building, search for parking and in some buildings deal with security screenings before finally making your way to the right conference room. Moreover, a majority of meeting organizers and participants probably will ask to reschedule, show up late, interrupt the meeting by checking e-mails or taking calls, leave early or not show up at all.

I have made a rule of not accepting an invitation for a meeting unless there is a compelling reason to attend. When I do accept meeting invitations, I always request an agenda that concludes with assignments for next steps. Otherwise, no action will come out of the meeting, which in my opinion is the sole reason to have a meeting.

In a *New York Times* article titled, "[They Work Long Hours, but What About Results?](#)" Harvard Business School Senior Lecturer [Robert Pozen](#) cautions:

"Internal meetings can be a huge waste of time. A short meeting can be useful for discussing a controversial issue, but long meetings -- beyond 60 to 90 minutes -- are usually unproductive. Leaders often spend too much time reciting introductory material, and participants eventually stop paying attention.

Try very hard to avoid meetings that you suspect will be long and unproductive. When possible, politely decline meeting invitations from your peers by pointing to your impending deadlines. If that's not an option, make clear that you can stay for only the first 60 minutes, and will then have to deal with more pressing obligations. And be hesitant to call meetings yourself; you can deal with most issues through e-mail or a quick phone call. . . ."

I think that the main purpose of meetings seems to make heavy-handed, top-down managers feel important. If you have to resort to such tactics, meetings should take the following format:

1. Schedule the meeting during regular business hours and limit it to one hour max.

2. Hold the meeting on-site in a nondisruptive environment. The challenge of trying to find a new place is too risky and time-costly.
3. Circulate an agenda at least one week in advance and encourage feedback to it. Bring extra copies of the agenda to the meeting.
4. At the start of the meeting, review the agenda and the time allotted for the meeting and enforce it like a drill sergeant.
5. Appoint a timekeeper to watch the clock so that the meeting does not run over.
6. During the meeting, encourage dialogue, input and feedback. Do not create a negative environment where ideas are shot down and team members are afraid to speak.
7. Consider allowing all team members to be responsible for a portion of the agenda items.
8. At the end of the meeting, talk about next steps, communicate desired outcomes for each team member and agree on deliverables.

If you're going to have a meeting, at least make it worthwhile.

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