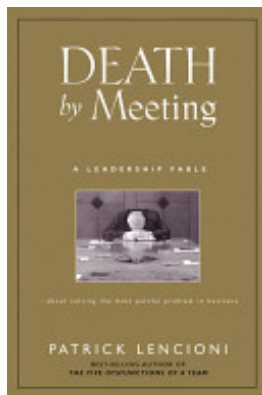


FWPMI Book Review by: Kellie Dye
“Death by Meeting: A Leadership Fable...
about solving the most painful problem in business”
by Patrick Lencioni

Publisher:	Jossey-Bass
Date of Publication:	2004
Number of pages:	254 pages
Book Club rating:	4.5



This fast-read 254-page book is available both as a hard cover and an e-book. The author jumps right into the topic of the book where the un-suspecting reader quickly learns titles are not always as they appear. The reader also quickly learns the point about the need for meetings in business. Any person who has attended a meeting of any kind anywhere – for business or pleasure – has heard the common mantra which inevitably has given meetings a bad reputation and that is, “That meeting was too long” or “That meeting was so boring;” and the best one in which the author focuses, “Now that that meeting is over, I can get back to my real work”. The author prefaces this comment before he even begins chapter one and explains how meetings are actually a

necessary *tool* for conducting business. Is going back to your desk and responding to emails and checking voicemails actually accomplishing business? That very question is how the reader gets sucked into this book and soon realizes they, too, have fallen prey to the negative reputation meetings have endured.

The author uses a very easy-to-follow comparison of film and television to explain his ideas and approach to conducting meetings. As well, the author provides a “white board” for each new meeting type he begins to introduce. This elementary white board shows his point for those readers who need a visual representation with the words in order to fully grasp the idea. Finally, there is a quick executive summary at the end of the book with a more direct meeting-type-cheat-sheet the reader can use to take back to their business for implementation. And yes, you could potentially go straight to this short summary chapter to get the main points, but do you always fast-forward your movies to see the ending only? (This question makes more sense once you read the book....from the beginning.)

It should be understood the topic of this book is simply changing how meetings are prepared-for (or not-prepared-for) and the four different types of meetings. This book does not address the people-factor and their personalities. The author addresses the people-factor in other books he has written. The participants in this leadership fable *go along* with the changes and suggestions and are all executive managers. However, do not let this discourage you from reading the book. It should actually encourage you. To accomplish changing the perception of meetings and the way meetings are moderated, doesn't that type of integrated culture change, well societal change actually, stem from the top down?

Therefore, this book guides you – teaches you – on how to change your meeting facilitation and add substance to make your meetings a robust tool. The book does not stray from its course to address leveraging the egos and personalities of meeting attendees. The egos and personalities component is addressed in the author's other books. That is likely a significant reason as to what makes this book such a fast read and provides a person at any level of an organization facilitating meetings an easy-to-implement plan and fresh approach to how meetings should be moderated.

Lastly, and equally important to the goal of modifying meeting perception, the author explains how to use conflicting ideas to benefit meetings. Instead of meetings trying to avoid conflict, the author explains how to let the conflict happen and how to manage the conflict for the benefit of the business at hand. He does the same for adding drama into meetings. This book accomplishes its goals and truly sets the stage (no pun intended) for changing the culture and perception of meetings from boring, time-wasting meetings to robust, useful meetings necessary to make business decisions, idea generation, alignment of personnel, and so on. *Any* meeting and meeting leader **will** benefit from this book.

Personal Comments: I found this book very enlightening and engaging and immediately recognizable of the dire need to improve how meetings are structured and facilitated. I am a person, that when learning a new idea, needs to align the new idea to *something familiar* in order to fully grasp the new concept. The author does this beautifully in his comparison of film/tv to meeting structure and drive; after all, I have certainly watched my fair share of movies and television shows. I was able to easily employ many of the concepts of this book into my meeting facilitation and look forward to doing my part in changing the meetings of the world!