

The real meeting happens before the meeting

(Video transcript)

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00:00 GORICK NG: It's one of these unspoken rules in the workplace where before every meeting is another meeting. People call it the **meeting before the meeting**.

00:00 Imagine a big decision is being made. It's not the case that people are just showing up cold. Chances are the decision has already been made well ahead of that actual meeting.

00:21 Think about how a decision gets made around whether A Company should acquire B Company. People don't just show up one day in a meeting and say, hey, I think we should do this. What do you think?

00:32 There's going to be oftentimes a meeting before the meeting and probably a meeting before the meeting before the meeting before the meeting. What's going on?

00:36 Well, someone has an idea. They **socialize the idea**, meaning they go around to their colleagues, starting with their most ardent supporters, and they say, hey, what do you think of this? They're getting feedback. They're getting advice. They're understanding if this decision has been made before. They're understanding who the naysayers are, who they should talk to next.

00:57 And once they've gotten smarter over this topic, they then take their proposal to the next person, and then to the next person, and then to the next person until 10 conversations later and the proposal may now look very different from how it first began but it now has all that much more of a chance of surviving because they've gotten input.

01:17 Then what happens? Well, then the meeting happens. And if you were an alien swooping in from outer space, it may look like, wow, this meeting is going swimmingly. It seems like everybody is just on board when, in fact, they had been socialized to this idea long before this meeting began so the decision had already been made long before this meeting even started.

01:40 So what is a meeting before the meeting? Well, it could be as simple as you instant messaging a coworker and saying, hey, I was thinking of bringing this up, what do you think, or I was thinking of trying this. Has this ever been tried before? Am I thinking about this the right way?

01:58 Or it could be something more formal where you have a meeting with your manager, and you present an idea, and they suggest that you speak to so-and-so and then so-and-so and then

so-and-so, and then you have slides, and you have memos, and you have documents.

02:10 So it really ranges from the super informal, that water cooler conversation, all the way through to version 30 of a slide deck.

02:20 If you want to make an impact in your career, it's not enough to just put your head down and do the hard work. You have to speak up. And if you've navigated these unspoken rules effectively along the way, you'll not just see your ideas implemented, you'll have your name attached to it. And you may even be the face of it too. This is real impact that you can have even early on in your career, assuming you navigate these unspoken rules effectively.