# Managing the Cost of Meetings
## A Review by R. Max Wideman
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## Introduction

There is no doubt about it, some project meetings can cost an awful lot of lost productive time and rack up the expenditure side of the project budget. It gets worse if some or all of the meetings are a waste of time – not necessarily for everyone, but certainly for some of the attendees. The sorts of time-wasters that we have in mind are those that grandstand, argue pointlessly, or are intent on sharing their family history, to say nothing of last night's conquest.

Another terrible time waster is the "Open door" policy. Personally, my door was always shut, that is, when I had a door. If someone wished to discuss something with me we would arrange a mutually convenient time by phone or Email. Otherwise, by all means drop by around quitting time.

But today, things seem to be different. With large numbers of people working in open cubicles and everyone seemingly in the "need to know" circle, the amount of wasted time in both official and unofficial meetings must be monumental. No wonder it is difficult to bring projects in on time and within budget!

But wait! Here are a couple of devices that attempt to solve these problems. The following news releases[1] detail two unique products designed to help increase productivity for companies and businesses nationwide, and especially on complex projects that are rife with meetings that need to be short and to the point.

## Bring TIM! – A meeting cost calculator [2]

Bring TIM! is a new time management desk clock that proves to be both fun and functional. It calculates the real-time cost of business meetings. It is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Bring TIM!**

According to the news release:
> "It's the first ever portable time management cost calculator designed to provide a constant reminder for employees to stay on topic and keep business meetings efficient and effective. The unit is a sleek and easy to use meeting cost calculator and clock that shows the cost of a meeting in progress. Users simply enter the number of attendees,

estimate an average hourly rate and press the start button. The cost of every second ticking by is prominently displayed.

Bring TIM! is a professional yet lighthearted consumer electronic device that politely conveys that Time Is Money - the "T-I-M" in the Bring TIM! Name. The clear message is that when this clock is brought to a meeting, it encourages any painfully long business meeting to be brought to a succinct and successful close. When people understand the cost involved in such a meeting, discussion becomes brief, topical and productive.

Brad Johnson, President & Founder of Bring TIM! LLC, points out "Many people are frustrated by long and unproductive meetings. They are also expensive. Bring TIM! gives users the power to break the cycle and serves as a friendly reminder to stay on track." Johnson created Bring TIM! out of his own experience with business meetings that frequently ran four hours or more. As Johnson sat through each meeting, he couldn't help but think of the work piling up on his desk and how much the meetings were costing. He knew there had to be a solution."

Anything to curtail those long-winded diatribes seems to us to be a godsend. Just a glance at the clock should give the hint without offence.

### CubeGuard – A cubicle message barrier[3]

For those working in cubicles, CubeGuard is a cubicle entry barrier with a message that provides a great new way to help stop workplace interruptions. Being marked with creative banners and custom messages also help to improve productivity. CubeGuard is shown in Figure 2.
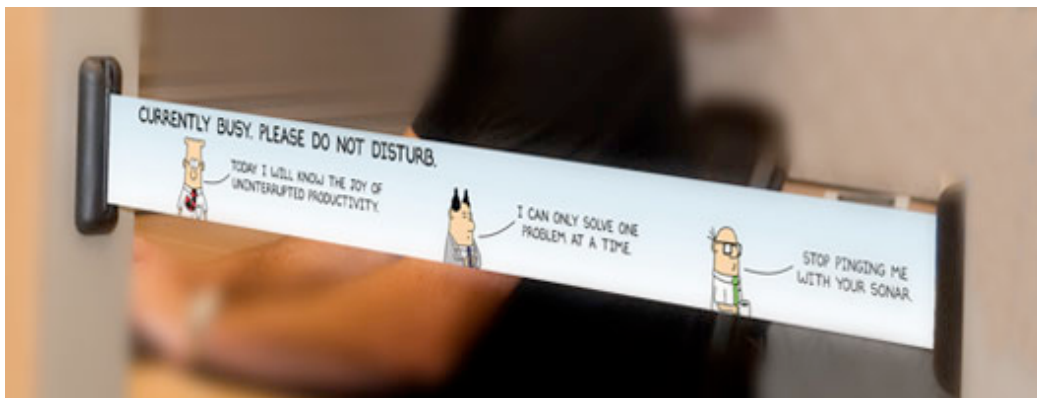


**Figure 2: CubeGuard**

According to the news release:
"Based on U.S. Census Bureau data, there are an estimated 50 million or more cubicle workers in U.S. offices today. These workers all share a common problem – interruptions from other co-workers or visitors to their cubicles, wasting time and reducing productivity. Workers lose a significant amount of time to unnecessary interruptions, and the time it then takes to refocus on work after each interruption. Such interruptions must cost the U.S. economy hundreds of billions of dollars.[4]

Until recently, there has been no effective way to prevent interruptions while working on important tasks. But now a unique new product called the CubeGuard Cubicle Message Barrier helps solve this challenge by providing a retractable message banner that is easily

mounted across a cubicle or office entryway. This fun yet functional new communication tool lets workers prevent productivity interruptions before they start by sharing a colorfully direct message like 'Please Do Not Disturb' or 'On a Deadline' to ward off unwanted interruptions from co-workers.

How Does CubeGuard work? CubeGuard is designed to fit into any professional office environment and can also be fully customized with corporate logos and themes. It attaches in seconds by either Velcro or magnets to each side of the cubicle entryway and fits openings of up to 50 inches wide. Users simply pull the message banner across their cubicle entryway when they need to prevent interruptions or to share their availability status. Changing the message status is as easy as swapping out message cartridges. CubeGuard can be personalized with customized designs and messages to suit specific requirements."

A casual drop-by with: "Hi, how are you? Hope your wife is feeling better?" (or whatever) is probably a social necessity in the office. But the garrulous are certainly not welcome when serious work has to be done to meet a project deadline.

So the CubeGuard might just do the trick!

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[1] News releases shared with us by Todd Brabender, *Spread The News PR*, Email: todd@spreadthenewspr.com

[2] Bring TIM!, Bettendorf, Iowa. Bring TIM! can be purchased directly from www.BringTim.com

[3] CubeGuard, Santa Clara, California, is available from www.CubeGuard.com.

[4] According to Jonathan B. Spira, Chief Analyst at Basex, a knowledge economy research firm, and author of Managing the Knowledge Workforce