

In praise of stand-up meetings



Nothing conveys urgency and efficiency like being on your feet during a daily meeting.

Stanford Business School professor Bob Sutton observed this as he was co-writing the management book *Hard Facts*, along with Jeff Pfeffer. He and Pfeffer would often meet at Pfeffer's home, in a room with only one chair. With no place to sit, he and Pfeffer took care of business quickly.

That led the team to look into a study that compared decisions made by 56 work teams who had stand-up meetings vs. 55 groups holding seated meetings. In all cases, the meetings were short—roughly 10 to 20 minutes. But in the stand-up meetings, groups took 34% less time making decisions, with no real difference in the quality of the decision.

In the real world, good bosses use stand-up meetings to speed things along. CEO David Darragh of Southern food and drink company holds 15-minute stand-up meetings in his office four days a week.

"Like many areas of discipline, repetition begets improved results," Darragh says. "The role of stand-up meetings is not to work on strategic issues or even to resolve an immediate issue. The role is to bubble up the issues of the day and to identify the ones that need to be worked outside the meeting and agree on a steward to be responsible for it."

If your all-hands meeting runs longer than 15 minutes or so, a stand-up format isn't likely appropriate.

In Darragh's case, the team has a 90-minute sit-down meeting once a week for delving into strategic issues.

— Adapted from ["The Virtues of Standing-Up: In Meetings and Elsewhere,"](#) Bob Sutton, Work Matters.