

RingCentral

2024: The death of the meeting?

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INTRODUCTION

The conventional meeting—in person, prescheduled, and time-boxed—is out of control. Over the past few years, meeting lengths, attendances, and per attendee costs have **all increased significantly**. But this trend cannot last forever. Poorly organized meetings already cost the U.S. economy nearly **\$400 billion**. As meetings continue to grow larger and costlier, businesses simply won't be able to bear the cost—and they'll begin searching for an alternative.

One solution is to replace many of our conventional meetings with contextual alternatives. Contextual meetings take place within the digital collaboration space a team uses. Instead of moving to a physical office, employees hold contextual meetings where they're already working, right alongside the conversations they're having and files they're working on.

This move, from conventional to contextual meeting, is slow right now—but many predict a rapid acceleration driven, in part, by technological advances. New technology such as smartphones, mobile internet, and cloud computing have radically transformed both the work we do and how we do it.



As work culture and technology continue to mature, there may be less space for conventional meetings.

They're inflexible, resource-intensive, and don't complement the way many contemporary organizations operate.

But the disruption of conventional meetings is just the start. Many experts predict that workplaces of the future will seem entirely alien to contemporary workers.

WORKPLACE OF THE FUTURE

In the 1930s, a worker sitting at a long, regimented factory table could not have conceived of the egalitarian, open-plan workspaces of the early-2000s. Likewise, we will struggle to accurately predict the exact composition of the workspace of the future. Surely, uninvented technologies, ideas, and philosophies will guide the development of both the work we do and the spaces in which we do it. But that doesn't mean we can't identify trends and make predictions.

As the contemporary workplace has matured, **several key themes have emerged that we think will steer the future of workplace communication and meetings.**



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Personal assistants for everyone

PERSONAL ASSISTANTS FOR EVERYONE

According to productivity expert Cal Newport, people have forgotten how to work in long, uninterrupted, cognitively-demanding stretches of deep concentration, which he calls deep work. Instead, we fill our days with easy, administrative tasks he categorizes as shallow work. “Shallow work is my term for anything that doesn’t require uninterrupted concentration,” explained Newport in an [interview](#) with *The New York Times*. “This includes, for example, most administrative tasks like answering email or scheduling meetings. If you allow your schedule to become dominated by shallow work, you’ll never find time to do the deep efforts that really move the needle.”

But Newport believes that artificial intelligence (AI) holds the answer to combating the proliferation of productivity-sapping shallow work. He claims that our digital assistants will shoulder most of our shallow work, leaving us free to concentrate on cognitively-demanding work.

“[I]t’s gonna be like you have your own presidential Chief of Staff,” Newport told [Dropbox](#). “Everyone has their own agent and the agents talk to each other. So when you come in, it can say, ‘I’m talking to other people’s AI on your behalf.’ And Newport’s prediction might become reality sooner than you think. “The technology is here,” explained Michele Pini, Chief Technology Officer at AI company iGenius, “but there are two things separating us from an AI-augmented future: AI training and human trust.”

If Pini is right and shallow work-shouldering AI assistants are just around the corner, we’re standing at the precipice of something truly exciting. If our digital assistant can remove all our shallow work, we can wipe out all of our more administrative meetings.

WHEN WE WALK INTO OUR OFFICES ON A MONDAY MORNING:

- » Our AI assistant will look back on last week,
- » Write a report of our work and send it to our stakeholders and managers,
- » Then, it’ll scan our calendar,
- » Work out what we need from other people, and
- » Set up automated meetings with their AI assistants.
- » If our work requires any information that we don’t have, our personal assistant will go and find it for us.

Just like that, our personal assistants will have taken over stakeholder updates, briefings, information sharing, coordination, and planning meetings.

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Innovation everywhere

INNOVATION EVERYWHERE

With AI assistants handling the bulk of our shallow work, the fundamental nature of our jobs will change—and our meetings will shift with them. Instead of devoting our time to email, data entry, and information finding, we will be free to focus on the things that humans do best—ideation, creativity, and collaboration.

But our existing meeting paradigm isn't set up for that.

With the impending changes to the way we do our work, businesses will inevitably migrate away from conventional meeting structures towards something more like a continual conversation between colleagues.

We will centralize our communication systems, pulling together all of our work, information, and discussions into one integrated hub.



Where we still need meetings, they'll be lightweight, contextual check-ins.

Instead of booking formal meetings, we'll dip in and out of conversations—usually supported by video conferencing and chat.

Our workplaces will change, too. Instead of devoting large areas to bookable offices, architects and designers will integrate a mix of public and private shared spaces to encourage ad hoc collaboration between colleagues.

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Virtual environments

VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS

Virtual reality (VR) technology has been around for decades, but until very recently it's been prohibitively expensive for all but a few niche applications. That, however, seems to be changing. In the last few years, a handful of technology companies have released headsets at a fraction of their original price.

As the cost of virtual reality equipment continues to tumble, the technology will enter the professional sphere and revolutionize how we approach meetings and collaborative work in general.

Experts predict that businesses will initially use VR to create a virtual mirror of physical offices. By implementing virtual versions of real places, remote team members can interact in a “real” office, and e-commerce customers can browse products in a “real” store. At the start of the VR revolution, businesses will focus on replicating the real-world experience as closely as possible in a virtual context—but that's that's just the start.

If a general evolution of technology holds true for VR, once people are familiar with virtual reality, organizations will start experimenting with virtual worlds to produce experiences that are superior to real life.

\$150 billion

Expected revenue generated
by virtual reality by 2020

[Fortune](#)

41%

Percent of adults who said they
would give virtual reality a try if
given the opportunity

[Yulio Technologies](#)

82 million

Estimated number of virtual reality
headsets in use by 2020

[Yulio Technologies](#)

VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS

“These virtual rooms will begin to break open and enter diverse and creatively engaging settings for work,” says Brady Mick, director of strategic design at SHP. “Say, for example, that you want to organize a thinking session with your teammates so you invite them to the top floor of the Burj Khalifa. The sensory experience promotes advanced thinking among the group to solve gross business problems in innovative ways.”

After virtual reality takes hold, there will be no going back to the staidness of conventional meetings.

After all, who would book a meeting room **when you could hold your meeting on the moon?**



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Neuroscience will hack our learning

NEUROSCIENCE WILL HACK OUR LEARNING

Advances in neuroscience have allowed scientists to look deep into our brains and dismantle the cognitive mechanisms by which we learn. In the future, these discoveries will bleed into the corporate world, says Dr. James Giordano, professor of neurology and biochemistry at Georgetown University Medical Center.

Giordano suggests that business may be one of the first applications for fresh research. Facilitators will begin using different structures and interaction patterns to purposefully engage the particular parts of the brain that are responsible for comprehension and learning.

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Current developments in cognitive and social neuroscience are providing insights to neurological responses to narratives, settings, and interpersonal interactions. Without a doubt, these new tools and methods will progress from the research bench to the boardroom.

– Dr. James Giordano, Professor of Neurology and Biochemistry,
Georgetown University Medical Center

For example, we already know that repetition increases learning retention, so facilitators could easily preview the content of their meeting, deliver the information, and then recap what they said. That is just one simple idea. Experts expect to see more complicated concepts like gamification revolutionize how employees learn in the workplace.

This is particularly important when you consider the amount of content that competes with meetings. Every day, people are pummeled with hundreds of advertisements, autoplaying videos, messages from colleagues, and distracting notifications from phones. Just being heard is a challenge. Meeting facilitators must take every advantage they can get to help their information stick.



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Orchestrated serendipity


ORCHESTRATED SERENDIPITY

For decades, we've known about the power of accidental meetings. Take MIT's Building 20. Building 20 was a ramshackle structure built during World War II and adopted by academics in the post-war years. Its labyrinthine interior was confusing but its winding corridors and meandering stairways caused colleagues to bump into one another as they moved around the building. Each chance encounter was an opportunity to share information and kickstart collaborations. Building 20 became a hotbed for innovation and its occupants won nine Nobel Prizes in just 20 years.

But the problem for organizations seeking to emulate the Building 20 culture of chance encounters is that you can't reproduce it through prescribed meetings.

Accidental meetings must be...accidental.

So even decades after Building 20's demolition, companies are still borrowing from its design. Google, for example, designs most of its buildings to promote what it calls "casual collisions."



When designing its new campus, Google's architects used long, interconnecting rectangles instead of large, singular buildings. By forcing employees to walk along thin corridors, they're always close to each other and are more likely to randomly bump into one another.

As more organizations realize their physical workspaces directly influence communication and collaboration, expect to see more unusual workspaces filled with lots of shared spaces to encourage employees to meet and interact in informal micro-meetings.

IT'S A MEETING, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT

By 2025, the conventional meeting may feel like an ancient relic, like the fax machine and typewriter. By replacing some or all of our conventional meetings with contextual alternatives, we will free up our time, and refocus our precious resources on the jobs we were hired to perform. Instead of spending our days buried in emails, spreadsheets, and project management software, we'll be free to perform the jobs we were hired to do.

But we can only do that with the right technology. Contextual meetings require a space where employees can communicate and collaborate together.

That's where RingCentral comes in. RingCentral combines the three pillars of communication—voice, video, and team messaging— with contact center technology in one integrated platform. With RingCentral, employees can move seamlessly between work and contextual meetings, making the most of their time and maximizing their productivity.

Click [here](#) to learn more about [RingCentral Video](#), our browser-based, effortless video solution.

