

## Welcome to our September 2014 Newsletter!

We are pleased to continue to send our *Collaborative Systems Reader*, providing you with up-to-date information and news about [The Axelrod Group](#) and collaborative change systems.

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## Post-Launch Update

It's hard to believe the launch of *Let's Stop Meeting Like This* was just over a month ago.

**Thanks to your support, the book is off to an incredibly good start!**

This thanks includes all of our recent subscribers as well as those of you who have been proponents of The Axelrod Group for years.



Some highlights:

- The book is one of [Amazon's](#) Hot New Business Releases
- A Forbes article was published titled [How to Run a Great Meeting](#) by [Kevin Kruse](#), who writes that, "Even after 20+ years of meeting facilitation I learned a lot of new ideas that I'm eager to try out from *Let's Stop Meeting Like This*."
- A few different organizations are talking with Dick and Emily about developing video courses and training programs based on book content
- Various press and online sightings are listed [here](#)
- Dick and Emily have been busy with interviews and forthcoming articles are due to appear in such magazines as US Airways and INC

The overwhelmingly positive response to *Let's Stop Meeting Like This* makes it clear that people are frustrated with bad meetings and eager for the kind of helpful tips shared by Dick and Emily. The book is already making a difference in many meetings, and the success of the launch also allowed the Axelrods to make a difference for [The Dreamcatcher Foundation](#).

**Again, we thank you!**

## The NY Times' Workologist

**Dick added to the conversation initiated by Rob Walker, aka [The Workologist](#), of The NY Times:**

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Peer Review: More Meeting-Repair Tactics

Barry Harmon of Chatham, N.J. writes:

Regarding [your Aug. 10 column](#) about the company meetings led by a manager who devotes time to showing off his kids' achievements: I worked at a company years ago where the meetings would take hours and hours and go nowhere. In one memorable case, we spent two days of an off-site meeting deciding on the first sentence of the annual business plan. A confederate and I came up with a solution. We circulated a proposed agenda for the next meeting, inviting all who would be there to weigh in. We took in the feedback and revised it. When the meeting was called, we made sure that everyone stuck to the agenda and swiftly cut off any deviation. This cut meeting time and sharpened the group's focus on real issues. It worked because all the participants wanted sharper, shorter meetings and participated in keeping the meeting on track; no one could be singled out as the bad guy.

The meeting-gone-awry column drew plenty of responses. Possibly one thing that still unites us as a society is our dislike of bad meetings.

I'm intrigued by this reader's suggestion. Giving everyone a sense of agency in keeping meetings efficient sounds smart. But I suspect that in practice it still comes down to how any given meeting is led.

**Still, the primary point here is echoed by feedback from another correspondent: Dick Axelrod, founder of [The](#)**

[Axelrod Group](#), a management consulting firm, and co-author of *Let's Stop Meeting Like This*. "The question all of us answer when we attend a meeting is whether we are going to be a meeting investor or a meeting bystander," he writes by email. Meeting investors, he explains, work toward the success of the meeting. Meeting bystanders watch the meeting go downhill while exerting little or no effort to make it a success.

I think this fits nicely with the proactive approach the reader above suggests. We all know how easy it is to smirk and eye-roll through a badly run meeting, and kvetch about it later. **But maybe it's worth asking: Are terrible, meandering, no-payoff meetings things that merely happen to us? Or are they things that, by acting as passive "bystanders," we help create?**

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A question definitely worth asking.

Thank you, Rob!

## Latest Axelrod Blog Post



### Engaging Millennials: 5 Core Engagement Factors Your Meetings Must Have

[Millennials](#) are continuous learners, team players, collaborators, achievement-oriented, socially conscious, and highly educated. Like many of us, they hate to have their time wasted in meetings that become soul-sucking chores. The experience of a meeting has a ripple effect that reaches far beyond those in attendance. If the outcome is enthusiasm, that enthusiasm spreads. If the outcome is cynicism, that cynicism spreads. Can you afford to have meetings where disengagement is the primary outcome? Where the newest members of your workforce leave disenchanting and disengaged?

In a recent [Forbes article](#), Ron Ashkenas talks about the importance of "creating an environment in which the new guard [Millennials] will thrive, with more flexibility, transparency, engagement, and fun," and how such an environment is necessary for the ultimate success of the organization.

Why focus on meetings when it comes to Millennials? Because meetings are a snapshot of your organization's culture. Each meeting is a picture in time of decision-making, authority, and communication patterns; [the way people relate to each other](#). What happens in meetings says more about what is really important in your organization than any statement of company values. It is in meetings where Millennials learn what is really important in your organization.

[CLICK TO READ FULL POST](#)

## Switch & Shift Blog

In case you missed it, [Dick's guest post](#) on the Switch & Shift blog was one of the top 3 posts for the month of July! He's in good company as you can see by reading July's other [top posts](#).

## Jennifer Kahnweiler's Guest Post

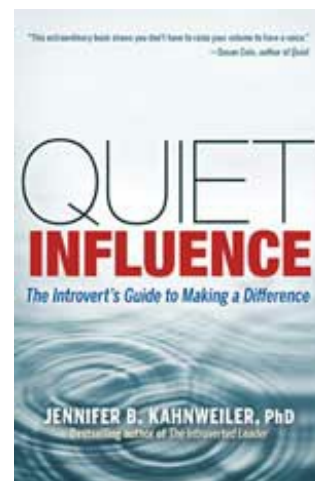
Speaking of guest posts, we're happy to give you a sneak peek at a guest post that will be added to the Axelrod blog later this month.

Our friend and colleague, [Jennifer Kahnweiler](#), wrote the following article, which is a wonderful synthesis of her work and that of The Axelrod Group. For those who don't already know Jennifer's work, she is an expert in helping introverts lead with quiet confidence.

### Tips for Introverts in Meetings

Have you ever been told by your boss that you need to speak up more at meetings? Have you been frustrated that a few people seem to dominate every conference call?

If you are an introvert, meetings are places where you can



influence change AND be recognized for your value. I have learned a great deal from research for my books [The Introverted Leader](#) and [Quiet Influence](#) about how to make the most out of the meetings you lead and attend.

So what do successful introverted leaders recommend?

**Consider these 5 tips for introverts (I's) in meetings that extroverts (E's) can learn from as well.**

1. **Get hold of the agenda.** Take prep time to think about your comments and questions beforehand. This caters to your introverted sweet spot of preparation and allows you to confidently present your thoughts. No agenda? Offer to create one and your teammates will be grateful that someone is taking the organizational reins.
2. **Arrive at meetings early.** Get there 10 minutes before start time. You then have your choice of where to place yourself. Resist the urge to sit in the back of the room. Build rapport with people by using your strength at conducting low-key focused conversations. Arriving early to conference calls also offers opportunities to conduct some chit-chat and make sure any technical bugaboos are handled.
3. **Use technology to hear from more I's and E's.** Author and entrepreneur David Rose of M.I.T. has invented a ["Balance Table"](#) with hundreds of L.E.D's that light up when people speak. He found that this awareness of patterns in the conversation encourages people to take turns and encourages both introverts AND extroverts to speak their minds.
4. **Get your voice in the room.** Use your great listening and synthesizing skills to summarize the discussion. Pulling ideas together is a critical role throughout all phases of the Meeting Canoe in [Let's Stop Meeting Like This](#). Also ask your question or make your comment in the first 5 minutes (the "First Five Minutes Rule"). It becomes more difficult to speak up as time goes by.
5. **Use introvert-friendly techniques.** Try pausing for a few seconds in between topics to let thoughts land. Use an effective brainstorming technique called Brainwriting. You put a problem at the top of a sheet and ask for solutions. Pass it around the table. The first person puts their idea on the sheet, and the next builds on it or writes a new idea. The solutions that emerge are more robust and inclusive than if shouted out in the typical brainstorming way.

Apply these tips for introverts and see the effectiveness of your meetings increase. **It is important that we pull the best from all participants, and meetings can be great springboards for innovation and performance if you add some of these ideas to the success themes profiled in *Let's Stop Meeting Like This*.**

Jennifer B. Kahnweiler, Ph.D. is an author and international speaker who is hailed as a "champion for introverts." Her bestselling books *The Introverted Leader* and *Quiet Influence* have been translated into multiple languages including Chinese and Spanish. Take [The Quiet Influence Quiz](#) at [jenniferkahnweiler.com](http://jenniferkahnweiler.com) and follow her on Twitter at [@jennkahnweiler](#).

Learn more from [Emily](#) and [Dick](#) on Twitter  
**#GREATmeetings**

*Let's Stop Meeting Like This* tip:

**"What do you need to do or say so that you can be fully present during this meeting?"**