

ShoreTel Survey Upends Common Assumptions about the Value of Meetings



Global survey delivers surprising results from Millennials, Remote Workers

ShoreTel® (NASDAQ: SHOR), the leading provider of brilliantly simple unified communications (UC) solutions and phone systems, announced today the results of a global survey answered by over 1,000 respondents regarding meeting habits and productivity. The meeting challenge, available here, includes questions regarding how many hours people spend in meetings weekly, as well as their perceptions regarding that use of time based on their generation (Baby Boomer, Gen X or Millennials) company size, industry and region.

The results were often surprising. Contrary to what many people feel today, i.e. that there are too many meetings that get in the way of real work and that meetings are a general waste of time useful only for multitasking, ShoreTel's Build a Better Meeting Challenge found the opposite to be true. Based on surveys taken between January 11, 2016 and April 30, 2016, over two-thirds of all respondents (76 percent) said they spend one hour or under each weekday in meetings. Generation X'ers, those born between 1965-1979, were more likely than the other generations to spend more time in weekly meetings at 9+ hours (28 percent), as were people working in Technology (30 percent).

Only 11 percent of global respondents found meetings a "waste of time." Forty percent of all respondents reported meetings were "productive" with 48 percent saying they were "sort of productive." Overall Baby Boomers (those born between 1943-1964) were the most likely to think meetings were productive (47 percent) as compared to Millennials (those born between 1980-2000, at 34 percent). However, Baby Boomers and Millennials were virtually identical and the lowest in calling them a waste of time (9 percent and 11 percent, respectively).

"Although anecdotal evidence tends to suggest otherwise, ShoreTel's research findings show that meetings are generally considered productive. This may seem surprising, yet not unexpected. People have an inherent need to be involved, included and to know what's going on. Apart from the grapevine, meetings fill this need," said Bob Selden, Managing Director, The National Learning Institute and author of Don't: How using the right words will change your life.

"Generationally, the statistics are really interesting. Compared to the other generations surveyed, Millennials are likely to see meetings as less productive because of their formalised structure and the pace of meetings as 'too slow'. Generation X'ers, on the other hand, were born in the era where meetings were seen as the basis of gaining employee involvement and have grown up with them, hence the ShoreTel research shows us that they spend more time in their 'comfort zone'."

What do people do in meetings? The majority of all respondents (67 percent) listen and take notes, 25 percent get other work done, and only 8 percent say they are checking personal email, texting or engaging with social media.

Whether working from home or in the office, there appears to be no correlation as to how people view meetings or meeting productivity. Of all respondents, 46 percent work at the office every day, although that number is much smaller in Europe (29 percent). Asia had the fewest hours of meetings a week (57 percent citing 0-4 hours) and Australia the most (45 percent citing 9+ hours). Both Asia and Europe found meetings to be more productive (48 percent and 52 percent respectively) than North America (40 percent).

Not surprisingly, enterprises reported the most meetings and start-ups the fewest. Globally, the majority of respondents report a preference for meeting in conference rooms (64 percent), with Education reporting the highest (81 percent) from conference rooms. The Technology sector attends by phone or remotely half the time. Interestingly, Millennials (representing 57 percent of Asian respondents, 48 percent of European respondents and only 25 percent in North America), reported a preference for conference room attendance at about the same rate as other generations (64 percent for Millennials, 65 percent for Gen X'ers and 63 percent for Baby Boomers), but also had the highest preference for attending via desk phone (24 percent).

"Our survey dispels many misperceptions about meetings and productivity by the generations currently in the workforce," said Frederic Gillant, vice-president and managing director, Asia-Pacific at ShoreTel. "For instance, the results did not show that meetings are unproductive, or that certain generations find them a waste of time. Millennials often get a bad rap, but our data shows they participate in meetings in conference rooms with their peers at the same rate as other generations."

“Improving meeting productivity as well as employee efficiency is a key priority for many businesses. ShoreTel's collaboration technologies and intuitive tools can further optimise meetings for those in the office or attending remotely,” added Gillant.

ShoreTel Connect, a unified communications solution, provides a simple, natural way for employees, partners, and customers to engage and communicate, whether they are remote or in the office. Connect changes how employees communicate with its unique collaboration experience that eases collaboration among groups and adapts to individual preferences. Features include built-in agenda tools and access to multiple styles of communication (voice, fax, IM, and more) all from one interface.

For more survey results, see the Build a Better Meeting e-book here. To take the meeting challenge, visit here.

About ShoreTel, Inc.

ShoreTel, Inc. (NASDAQ: SHOR) is a leading provider of brilliantly simple unified communications (UC) products, cloud services and IP phone systems powering today's always-on workforce. Its flexible communications solutions for contact centers and cloud, onsite and hybrid UC environments eliminate complexity, reduce cost and improve productivity. Recognized for its industry-leading customer experience and support, ShoreTel's innovative contact center solutions, application integration, collaboration tools, mobility, SIP trunking and business phones enable users to communicate and collaborate no matter the time, place or device, with minimal demand on IT resources. ShoreTel is headquartered in Sunnyvale, Calif., and has regional offices and partners worldwide. For more information, visit shoretel.com.

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