

Meeting-avoidance for self-managing developers



Peter Hilton
Senior developer
Lunatech Research

LUNATECH
R E S E A R C H

Presentation goal

Learn when and how to avoid meetings
(and get more time to write code)

Speaker

- Peter Hilton is a senior developer at Lunatech Research www.lunatech.com
- Peter has project management responsibility for commercial development projects
- Management tasks really cut into time spent coding, so he constantly seeks more efficient methods
- Peter used to work for a large IT consultancy with a heavily-documented project management process
- Now he works for a small company with an agile methodology and has the opportunity to experiment

outline

- What developers can contribute to project management
- Avoiding meetings by reducing project management cost
- Avoiding meetings by self-managing within the team

Although we cannot (and should not) avoid all meetings, developers are in a position to *reduce* the need for meetings by introducing planning and tracking software tools that make project information easier to record and access.

How to reduce time spent in meetings as a developer?



25





3

What is the single best tactic a developer can use to avoid spending time in meetings?

I'm mainly thinking of the seemingly-pointless meetings that (project) managers often schedule, that can be a real barrier to getting real work done.

So far, I have had some success with the following techniques, which seem to remove some of the need for meetings.

- Be able to answer all status questions with *'It's in JIRA'* (we use JIRA for task-management).
- Be able to answer most planning questions with *'It's in JIRA'*.
- Be able to answer most other questions with *'It's on the wiki'*.
- Use the beer in the office fridge (or the coffee machine) to enable brief ad-hoc 'stand-up meetings' at the end of the day, so that everyone already knows what's going on.
- Use an internal IRC channel or chat room so that everyone already knows what's going on.

[project-management](#)
[development-processes](#)
[meetings](#)

[edit](#) | [close](#) | [delete](#)

[add comment](#)


asked **Sep 30 at 19:58**




Peter Hilton
1,791 ● 3 ● 15


25 Answers:

[Oldest](#)
[Newest](#)
Votes

- 

12





There are meetings and there are meetings.

Class I Time Wasters - all hands status reports. The PM doesn't know the status and needs to have everyone in the same room to feel important. You mention these, and you have a sensible approach -- you've posted the status elsewhere.

Class II Time Wasters - watching a manager think. The PM has to present something to higher up the food-chain and you have to help them do it. In short, they can't seem to read or write without reading to someone or having someone watch them type. You don't mention these, so I'll assume this just doesn't happen to you.

You're viewing a single question tagged

[project-management](#) × 195
[development-processes](#) × 3
[meetings](#)

asked **1 month ago**

viewed **822 times**

latest activity **today**

Related

- [How do you handle TDD in the continuous integration?](#)
- [How do you bring a failing project back on track?](#)
- [How many concurrent projects can a senior developer handle at one time?](#)
- [Best way to avoid scope creep as a developer with no project management](#)
- [What's your Post-Mortem meeting format?](#)
- [Time management tricks, tools & tips](#)
- [Exceptional Project Management Moment](#)
- [What do project/program managers do](#)

negative approaches

- Negative suggestions for dealing with meetings:
 - do not turn up to the meeting (rude)
 - take a laptop and write code in the meeting (ruder)
http://randsinrepose.com/archives/2007/08/31/the_laptop_herring.html
 - sit back and take time off from working (lazy)
 - sneak out when no-one is looking (harder)
The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook: Work
- These do not help you or your project
- Instead I will consider more constructive options

positive approaches

- Reduce project management effort
- Share project management effort with developers

Programmers are good at finding more efficient ways to do things, especially information exchange tasks like meetings.

Ambitious software developers have plenty of motivation for adding project responsibility to their role.

‘Project Management is Communication’

Basecamp Manifesto, 37signals

‘Programmers are typically stereotyped as non-communicative individuals who like to sit in darkened rooms alone with their computer screens.

‘It is not a true stereotype, though. Programmers just like to communicate about things they like to communicate about’

Agile Software Development, Alistair Cockburn

what developers can contribute

- Sophisticated communication skills
- Use of a wide selection of communication tools
- More efficient information-sharing

When you re-cast project management as a communication problem, it is easier to see how software developers can improve on traditional methods.

reducing management cost

Use software tools to refactor:

- planning – communicating what you are going to do
- tracking – communicating status
- reporting – communicating with external stakeholders

These requirements for refactored project management are addressed by existing software tools

All Projects : Visible Logistics (Key: VIZ)

Project Lead: [Peter Hilton](#)

URL: <https://confluence.lunatech.com/confluence/display/VIZ>

- [Create a new issue in project Visible Logistics](#)
- [Administer Project](#)
- [Release Notes](#)


























































Select: [Open Issues](#) [Road Map](#) [Change Log](#) [Popular Issues](#) [Subversion Commits](#) [Labels](#) [Calendar](#) [Versions](#) [Components](#)

Road Map

- [View personal road map](#)
- Scope:** next 3 versions | [all versions](#)

[V21 \(visiblelogistics.com\)](#) (10/Nov/08 | [Release Notes](#))

Progress:
16 of 62 issues have been resolved

	VIZ-1004 UNRESOLVED Search: indexing isn't done properly		
	VIZ-478 UNRESOLVED Catalogue item: upload photos		
	VIZ-1016 UNRESOLVED Consignments: copy order lines to consignment resource lines		
	VIZ-957 UNRESOLVED Contacts: make the contact selector's "add contact" behave like Contacts>Add contact		
	VIZ-714 UNRESOLVED Dashboard: configurable time history graph		
	VIZ-401 UNRESOLVED Order lines: display catalogue item data when editing order line		
	VIZ-301 UNRESOLVED Orders page: past performance filters		
	VIZ-663 UNRESOLVED REST API: require authentication		
	VIZ-1015 UNRESOLVED Sub-orders		
	VIZ-371 UNRESOLVED Update status: allow free text status label		
	VIZ-159 UNRESOLVED Account details: upload logo		
	VIZ-898 UNRESOLVED Account: after changing e-mail address, activation says 'please sign out'		
	VIZ-1046 UNRESOLVED Add a new contact in the Directory sends Not found error		
	VIZ-869 UNRESOLVED Always returns the first searched for item, regardless of later search terms		
	VIZ-1006 UNRESOLVED Build: avoid web.xml duplication by using XMLTask		
	VIZ-835 UNRESOLVED Check for XSS vulnerabilities		
	VIZ-761 UNRESOLVED Create automated web tests		
	VIZ-1012 UNRESOLVED Database times are stored in local time zone instead of UTC		
	VIZ-986 UNRESOLVED Date Selection on resources results in invalid date format		






Reports

- [Recently Created Issues Report](#)
- [Created vs Resolved Issues Report](#)
- [Resolution Time Report](#)
- [Average Age Report](#)
- [Pie Chart Report](#)
- [Time Sheet Report](#)
- [Project Pivot Report](#)
- [User Workload Report](#)
- [Version Workload Report](#)
- [Time Tracking Report](#)
- [Single Level Group By Report](#)

Preset Filters






- [All](#)
- [Outstanding](#)
- [Unscheduled](#)
- [Assigned to me](#)
- [Reported by me](#)
- [Resolved recently](#)
- [Added recently](#)
- [Updated recently](#)
- [Most important](#)

Project Summary

	Open	237	<div style="width: 23%; height: 10px; background-color: blue;"></div>	23%
	In Progress	18	<div style="width: 2%; height: 10px; background-color: orange;"></div>	2%
	Reopened	5	<div style="width: 0%; height: 10px; background-color: blue;"></div>	
	Resolved	54	<div style="width: 5%; height: 10px; background-color: blue;"></div>	5%
	Closed	710	<div style="width: 69%; height: 10px; background-color: blue;"></div>	69%

Open Issues

By Priority

	Blocker	2	<div style="width: 1%; height: 10px; background-color: red;"></div>	1%
	Critical	9	<div style="width: 3%; height: 10px; background-color: red;"></div>	3%
	Major	189	<div style="width: 73%; height: 10px; background-color: blue;"></div>	73%
	Minor	57	<div style="width: 22%; height: 10px; background-color: blue;"></div>	22%
	Cosmetic	3	<div style="width: 1%; height: 10px; background-color: green;"></div>	1%

By Assignee

Jean-Baptiste Perrin	8	<div style="width: 3%; height: 10px; background-color: blue;"></div>	3%
Kate Howlett	11	<div style="width: 4%; height: 10px; background-color: blue;"></div>	4%

planning refactored

- Task information only exists as a published plan:
 - wiki
 - task tracking system, e.g. JIRA
- The plan is visible (to everyone) and flexible
- The plan is therefore easy to update (for everyone)

tracking refactored

- Provide status visibility to reduce tracking cost
- Annotate published task list with status
- Use a capable tracking tool, e.g. JIRA
- Report exceptions to plan

09:06 You joined the channel

09:01 <phb> meeting! we need to discuss the status

09:05 <phb> @#!

09:06 <dev> it's in JIRA

09:06 <phb> ah, okay...

09:06 phb [phb@dilbert.com] left the channel.

reporting refactored

(see above)

sharing management tasks

- Participate in task planning
- Use tracking tools that make reporting obsolete
- Self-assign tasks
- Self-manage the development process

planning refactored

- Developers write development tasks:
 - XP user stories
 - Scrum feature backlog
 - JIRA issues
- Developers participate in prioritisation

‘If a day goes by, and I haven’t done something that was publicly visible to someone in the world, then I get really nervous... I feel like I haven’t done anything that day’

Jeff Atwood, Stack Overflow podcast 15

reporting refactored

- Write a weekly developer blog post
- Highlights of the week
- Plans for next week

Writing about weekly progress and plans adds a higher level of visibility than daily Scrum meetings that address the same questions.

Blog posts highlight issues for further discussion.

stand-up meetings

- No chairs – therefore short
- Fixed agenda – therefore no chairman required

Stand-up meetings have a double-benefit: by being more effective, they no longer function as work-avoidance.

Stand-up team meetings therefore discourage people from sitting pointless meetings, promoting meeting-avoidance.



OPMERKELIJK

Vr. 14 november 2008. Het laatste nieuws lees je het eerst op NU.nl

Voorpagina

Algemeen

Economie

Internet

Sport

Achterklap

Opmerkelijk

Beurs

Wetenschap

Gezondheid

Lifestyle

Plugged

Lifehacking

Auto

Muziek

Dvd

Film

Boek

Games

Verkiezingen VS

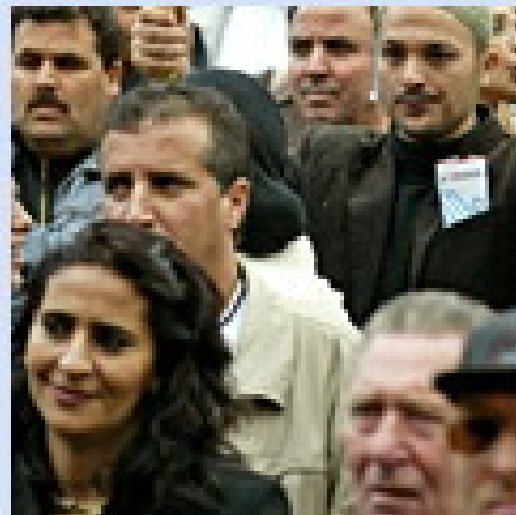
Columns

Staan vergaderen 10 miljard goedkoper

Uitgegeven: 14 november 2008 10:16

Laatst gewijzigd: 14 november 2008 10:16

HOOFFDORP - Door staand te vergaderen kan Nederland 10 miljard euro per jaar besparen. Dat stelt TNO-onderzoeker Peter Vink. De kwaliteit van de besluitvorming wordt er niet minder door en de vergadertijd kan met een derde worden teruggebracht.



Vergaderen in Nederland kost 30 miljard per jaar, heeft Vink becijferd.

De onderzoeker komt met een verstelbare tafel. Zo kunnen de deelnemers zelf kiezen of zij zittend, staand of zelfs halfzittend vergaderen.

De tafel heeft het voordeel dat de hoogte aan de groepswens aangepast kan worden, al moet daar natuurlijk niet al te lang over worden vergaderd.

(c) ANP

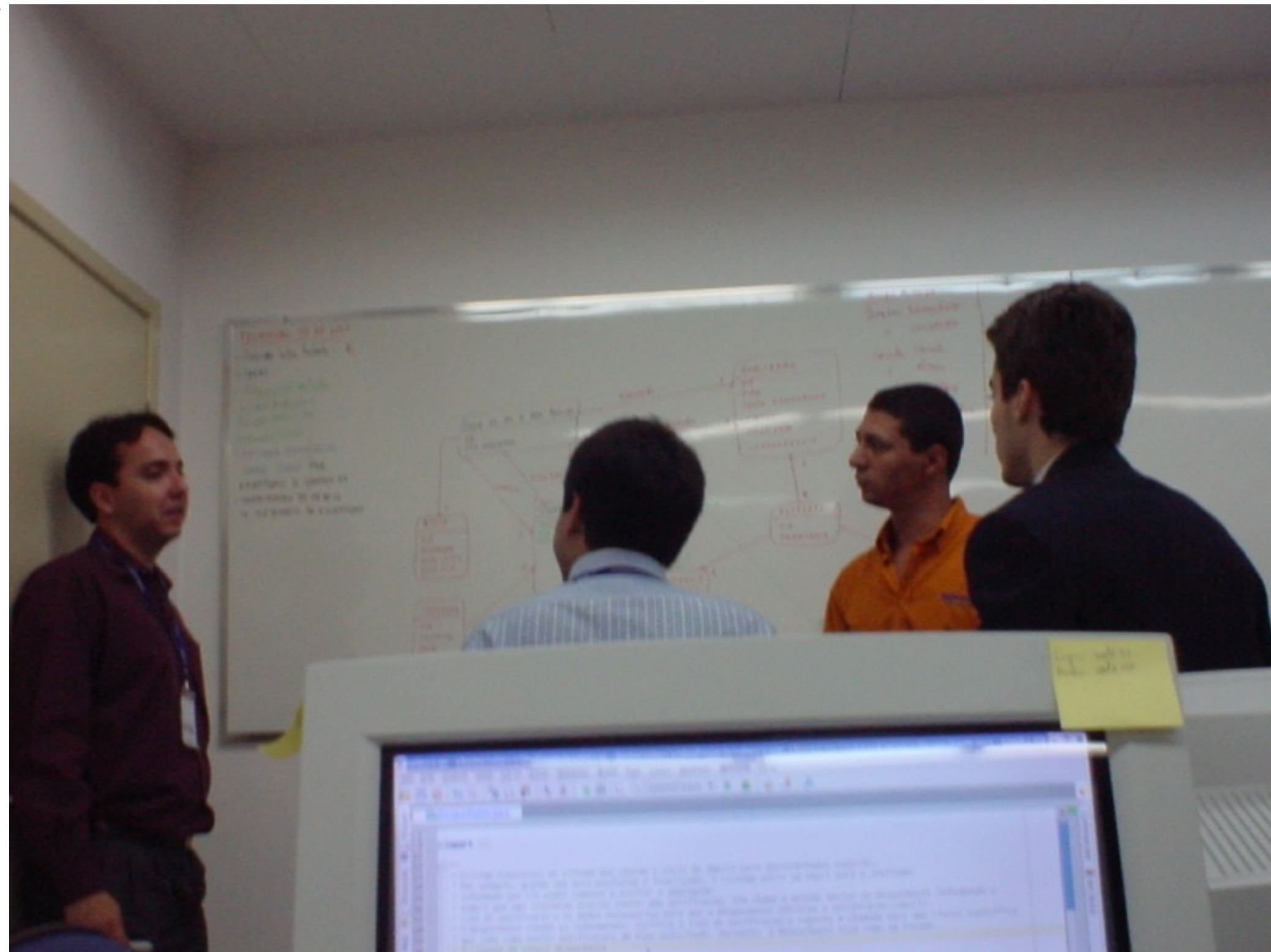
Just-in-time meetings



outsourced meeting facilities



worst-case: use the office



Conclusion

As a developer, you can help your project manager by promoting software tools that let you contribute to project planning and provide more visibility of progress

This will give you opportunities to be more productive and take on responsibility. And avoid boring meetings.

Q&A

Write-up and slides at
Lunatech Research:
www.lunatech.com

More Q&A on Stack Overflow:
[http://stackoverflow.com/
questions/154705](http://stackoverflow.com/questions/154705)



(end of meeting)

www.lunatech-research.com