

Schachter Monthly

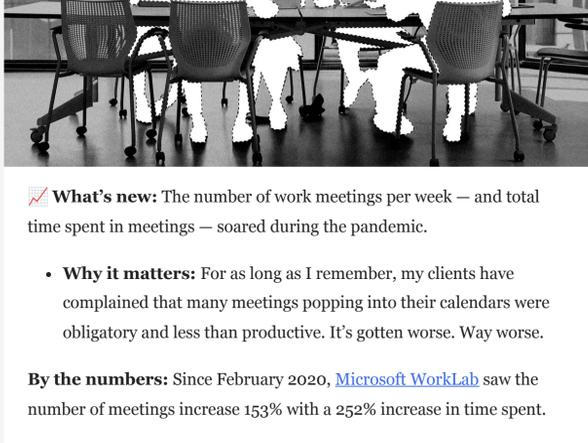
By Ephraim Schachter • May 10, 2022
Smart Brevity® count: 4.5 mins... 1199 words

🌸 **Happy May** to my senior leaders in Business, HR, Academia and Nonprofits! Here are this month's insights and actionable tools & tips.

Situational awareness: With many predicting an economic slowdown, it's the right time to demonstrate able leadership and management.

📧 Did someone forward you this email? [Subscribe here](#) to receive it directly.

1 big thing: Too many meetings



📌 **What's new:** The number of work meetings per week — and total time spent in meetings — soared during the pandemic.

- **Why it matters:** For as long as I remember, my clients have complained that many meetings popping into their calendars were obligatory and less than productive. It's gotten worse. Way worse.

By the numbers: Since February 2020, [Microsoft WorkLab](#) saw the number of meetings increase 153% with a 252% increase in time spent.

- **The upshot:** There are only so many hours in the day. Meetings are either crowding out actual work or time-shifting it to pre or post workday hours.

💡 **I've got a theory** for why this has developed. In a remote and hybrid work world, 'managing-by-walking-around' has all but disappeared. Leaders lack this useful informal mechanism to get a handle on what's going on and where they need to calibrate, focus and align workflows.

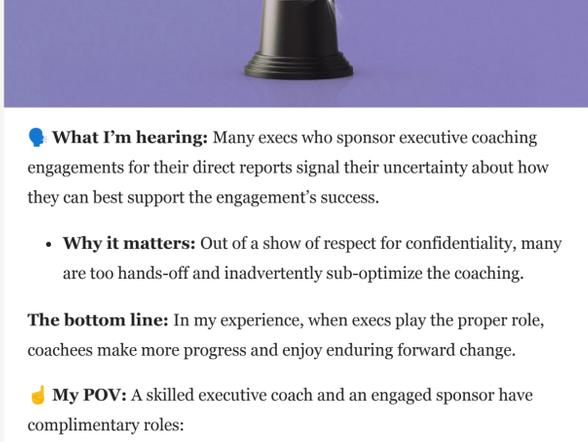
- They're compensating with more Zoom.

👉 **My two-cents:** Charter and deploy a meeting-reduction task force in order to turn this current pain point into a morale-boosting exercise with your team.

- Clarity of purpose and genuine buy-in will follow.

The bottom line: Many teams are already rethinking their processes post-pandemic. Make this deliberate and focused.

2. Supporting a coaching engagement for a direct report



👂 **What I'm hearing:** Many execs who sponsor executive coaching engagements for their direct reports signal their uncertainty about how they can best support the engagement's success.

- **Why it matters:** Out of a show of respect for confidentiality, many are too hands-off and inadvertently sub-optimize the coaching.

The bottom line: In my experience, when execs play the proper role, coachees make more progress and enjoy enduring forward change.

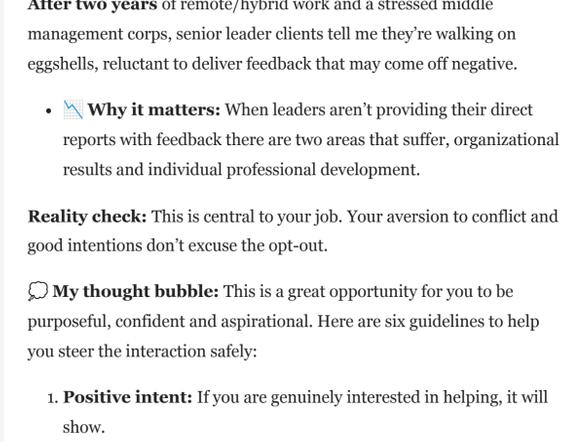
👉 **My POV:** A skilled executive coach and an engaged sponsor have complimentary roles:

- **The Coach** creates the conditions for the coachee to acquire self-awareness and loosen up to embrace the self-consciousness that accompanies trying out new behaviors.
- **The Sponsor** demonstrates a shared commitment to the coachee's development by reinforcing them when they demonstrate those nascent behaviors.

📌 **My 5 recommendations** for supporting a coaching engagement for a direct report:

1. Set clear expectations with the executive coach and the coachee. Get aligned on the development objectives.
2. Provide the coach with updates of behaviors you are observing (good and not-so-good). Every 6 to 8 weeks is a good cadence.
3. Provide timely, positive reinforcement feedback to the direct report as when you observe the behavior or hear it's been demonstrated.
4. Be open to the possibility that you might learn something useful about your own leadership and management by way of this process.
5. Don't triangulate the relationship so you and the coach are sending inconsistent messaging.

3. Post-pandemic feedback



After two years of remote/hybrid work and a stressed middle management corps, senior leader clients tell me they're walking on eggshells, reluctant to deliver feedback that may come off negative.

- 📌 **Why it matters:** When leaders aren't providing their direct reports with feedback there are two areas that suffer, organizational results and individual professional development.

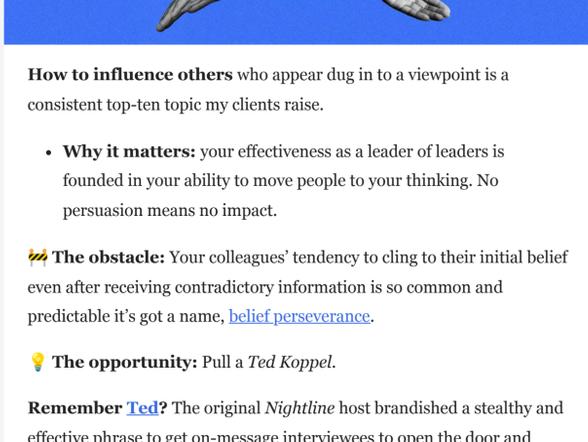
Reality check: This is central to your job. Your aversion to conflict and good intentions don't excuse the opt-out.

💡 **My thought bubble:** This is a great opportunity for you to be purposeful, confident and aspirational. Here are six guidelines to help you steer the interaction safely:

1. **Positive intent:** If you are genuinely interested in helping, it will show.
2. **Specific observable behavior:** Recount what you saw. Not what you think it meant.
3. **Evaluation of the action** and not the person: this is your chance to objectify the behavior.
4. **Recency:** A useful feedback opportunity can have a shelf-life; usually not much more than several days.
5. **No speculation as to motives:** Resist offering an, "I understand how you feel." You probably don't.
6. **Succinct remarks:** Keep it pithy. Precision is key. Less is more.

👉 **Go deeper:** My in-depth interview on feedback, [here](#).

4. May pro tip: Pull a Ted Koppel



How to influence others who appear dug in to a viewpoint is a consistent top-ten topic my clients raise.

- **Why it matters:** your effectiveness as a leader of leaders is founded in your ability to move people to your thinking. No persuasion means no impact.

👉 **The obstacle:** Your colleagues' tendency to cling to their initial belief even after receiving contradictory information is so common and predictable it's got a name, [belief perseverance](#).

💡 **The opportunity:** Pull a *Ted Koppel*.

Remember Ted? The original *Nightline* host brandished a stealthy and effective phrase to get on-message interviewees to open the door and consider modifications or alternatives: "*Let us, as the lawyers say, stipulate that your [the interviewee's] point is correct ...*"

💡 **My thought bubble:** This worked brilliantly as a way to respectfully affirm the person and invite them to feel safe to drop their defenses and think together.

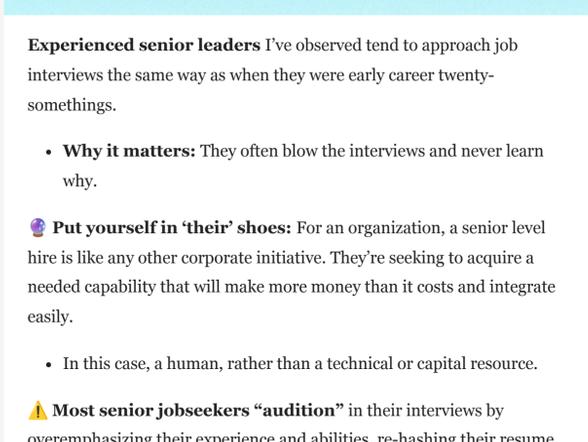
I have seen my clients deploy this technique to great effect. It's a way to disagree without being disagreeable and then move towards joint problem-solving.

👉 **Pull a Ted Koppel** the next time someone signals stubborn resistance. Follow, "*Let's, as the lawyers say, stipulate that it works,*" with clauses like:

- "What if we considered ...?"
- "Couldn't we also say that ...?"
- "What might the outcome be if we ...?"

👉 **Go deeper:** My [webinar](#) to Boston University Alums on how to influence with or without authority.

5. Career Corner: Interview like a consultant



Experienced senior leaders I've observed tend to approach job interviews the same way as when they were early career twenty-somethings.

- **Why it matters:** They often blow the interviews and never learn why.

👂 **Put yourself in 'their' shoes:** For an organization, a senior level hire is like any other corporate initiative. They're seeking to acquire a needed capability that will make more money than it costs and integrate easily.

- In this case, a human, rather than a technical or capital resource.

👉 **Most senior jobseekers "audition"** in their interviews by overemphasizing their experience and abilities, re-hashing their resume bullet by bullet. This is a wasted opportunity.

👉 **My POV:** Assume the posture of a consultant who seeks to help the company, rather than a performer auditioning for a role with a tap dance.

1. **Before the interview:** Do the research to become an industry expert. Seek out the hiring organization's strategy, strengths and aspirations. Develop a POV on what might be helpful to the company writ large.
2. **During the interview:** Demonstrate curiosity and ask lots of informed questions. Share your thinking only after you've heard theirs. Geek out with them on what's so exciting in their space.
3. **After the Interview:** Craft a decent summary for your thank you email(s). Assume a complimentary, appreciative, and familiar tone that has them imagining you already work there.

📧 **Thanks for** spending some of your May with us. *Please invite your friends and colleagues to [sign up](#) for Schachter Monthly.*

- 🌸 See you in June!

[Click here to unsubscribe.](#)

This email was sent by CSuite Accelerator via [Axios HQ](#)