

# WhiteSpace

## Skeptic Q&A

**Q** We've tried programs like this before, such as a no-meeting day. Why should we expect this program to be any different? Can it possibly have any lasting benefit? Sounds like another "flavor of the month" program being rolled out by senior management.

**A** Many companies attempt isolated interventions such as the one listed above, and we are never surprised when they have short lifespans. Throwing a meeting-management program or email rules at your team without providing any mindset and cultural context is like planting a flower on cement: it dies fast. WhiteSpace approaches these issues by first spending significant teaching time on mindset/philosophy and culture so by the time we're working on tactical issues, we all see the big picture and the why of these changes. The focus on team accountability through the huddle process also adds to the difference in our approach. Additionally, if management chooses to invest in it, WhiteSpace provides a smart and minimalist maintenance program to keep improvements from backsliding.

**Q** Fixing busywork sounds straightforward enough: stop cc'ing people on emails and be more careful about attendees when scheduling meetings. Can't we do this ourselves?

**A** Meetings and email constitute only a small slice of the problem, and they are not at all straightforward to fix. Problems in these areas arise from a complex behavioral stew that includes aspects of addiction, inclusion needs, worrying about what folks think, lack of team accountability, and more. A well-rounded approach is needed to change these specific issues within the larger cultural norms. You can try to fix these issues yourself, but like calling a plumber instead of banging around on your pipes, you can save lots of effort by using a specialist.

**Q** Nine months of digital training? Why is this taking so long? Can't we speed up the process and compress it down to six weeks instead?

**A** Love this one. How long did it take us to become addicted to our phones? How long did it take us to each gain those pesky ten pounds? How long did it take to bake a corporate culture that validates overload as a normative way of working? These issues develop slowly and take patience to overcome. Additionally, the solutions are not transactional; they are behavioral, which means they will take awhile. The slow drip of learning designed by WhiteSpace allows users to learn something, try it, play with it as a team, and come back for the next sip, which is an effective and realistic time frame for change.

**Q** **Doesn't change have to start at the top? Won't senior management have to embrace WhiteSpace for it to be successful?**

**A** Leaders need to be engaged for this to work, and the WhiteSpace program approach has been designed to draw them in. The pains and complaints around busywork are clearly a costly problem for many teams. The program's quantifiable gains are laid out clearly and repeated frequently. But at the end of the day, the leader has to be truly willing to roll up their sleeves and dive in, and that's why it's so critical to choose the right leader in the first place. But while it's a convenient excuse to wait for senior leadership to go first; most professionals and teams have plenty of work they can do, just within their span of control- making great strides with WhiteSpace regardless of levels of executive participation.

**Q** **Many of our systems are less than effective. I don't see how this program is going to fix that.**

**A** With ineffective systems, there are three options: we can work around them, we can lower expectations of them, or we can replace them. A combination of all three is needed in most companies waiting to be able to change technology. One thing WhiteSpace will deliver is more time to be thoughtful, which can then be used to address any problem, including creating a road map to improve systems.

**Q** **Digital learning sounds nice but doesn't have any "teeth." What tools or forums will WhiteSpace provide to employees to really facilitate change?**

**A** Self-paced online learning has no teeth: that is correct. But WhiteSpace Digital Learning is not a self-paced program. The teeth come from an orchestrated cadence in which teams learn together and meet regularly to discuss how the theoretical will become behavioral. It's within the framework of the facilitated weekly huddles and the monthly meetings for senior leaders where the "teeth" come through.

**Q** **What kind of changes and results can we expect after the program? Will the improvements justify the cost of the program and all the time we'll spend going through it?**

**A** The money and time you will spend will be far less than the talent value and time you get back if you apply yourselves according to our specific instructions. This has been proven in numerous case studies, which we are happy to share. Changes available to a group that takes our direction (staying in cadence, doing huddles, leaders' taking monthly time to do their reductive meetings) include reduction of time on emails, meetings, and reports; less stress in the workplace; reduction of tasks piling up; reduction of overload-related turnover intention; and talent time freed to be repurposed for richer work.