外刊晨读

Taking Minutes, Wasting Hours

https://www.economist.com/business/2018/06/30/tortured-by-meetings

MOST workers view the prospect of a two-hour meeting with the same enthusiasm as **Prometheus** awaited the daily arrival of the eagle, sent by the gods to **peck** at his liver. Meetings have been a form of torture for office staff for as long as they have pushed pencils and **bashed** keyboards.

One eternal problem has been their inefficiency. In 1957, C. Northcote Parkinson, an academic and **legendary** writer on management, came up with the law of **triviality**, that "the time spent on any item of the agenda will be in **inverse** proportion to the sum [of money] involved." In that same spirit, this columnist would like to propose an even broader principle, applying to gatherings of ten people or more, and **immodestly** called Bartleby's Law: "80% of the time of 80% of the people in meetings is wasted."

Various **corollaries** to this law follow. After at least 80% of meetings, any decisions taken will be in line with the HIPPO, or "highest-paid person's opinion". In short, those who backed a different outcome will have wasted their breath. Perhaps because they are aware of the **futility** of their input, fewer than half of the people in a large meeting will bother to speak and at least half of the attendees will at some point check their phones.

Part of the problem lies in the **paradox** that, although workers hate attending meetings, they **loathe** being excluded even more. Nothing is so likely to induce **paranoia** than a department meeting to which you are not invited. To avoid this fear, managers are tempted to invite as many people as might be interested.

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译文

做做记录，浪费半日

就像普罗米修斯等待那只由宙斯派来天天啄食他肝脏的鹰一般，大多数员工对于长达两小时的会议的预期也有着一样的“兴趣”。办公室职员按铅笔和敲键盘有多久，会议对于他们的折磨就有多久。

会议的低效是一个永恒的话题。1957 年，C·诺思科特·帕金森——管理界的一名学者兼传奇性作家——提出了“芝麻绿豆”定律，即“在议程表的每个项目上花费的时间与其涉及的金额成反比”。与此相同，本专栏作者提出了一个更广泛适用的定律，课适用于十人及以上的组织，在这里不谦虚地称之为巴托比法则——“在会议中，80%的人浪费了他们 80%的时间”。

该法则的各类推论接踵而至。至少在 80%的会议之后，所有所做决定都符合 HIPPO 原则，或者与“薪酬最高之人的意见”一致。简而言之，持有其他意见的人都是白费口舌。也许是因为意识到了自己的付出总是徒劳，在大型会议上只有不到一半的人会发言，而且至少一半与会者会在某个时刻看手机。

部分问题在于这样一个悖论——尽管员工讨厌开会，但他们更憎恨不被邀请。没有任何事情能像一场你没被邀请的会议那样导致妄想症了。为了避免这种恐惧，经理们总是希望喊足够多的人来参会。

单词

Prometheus [prəˈmiθjuːs]

n. 普罗米修斯

例：**Prometheus** said that man should have Zeus's wonderful flower of fire, which shone so brightly in the sky.

普罗米修斯认为人类应该拥有宙斯那种能照亮天空的奇妙火花。

peck [pek]

vi. 啄食

例：A robin was **pecking** at crumbs on the ground.

一只知更鸟在地上啄食面包渣。

bash [bæʃ]

vt. 痛击；猛击

例：Too many golfers try to **bash** the ball out of sand. That spells disaster.

太多高尔夫球手都想把球从沙子里敲出来，结果酿成了一场灾难。

legendary [ˈledʒənderi]

adj. 传奇的；极其著名的

例：Finally, visitors will come face to face with the **legendary** warriors of China's terracotta army.

人们终于有机会可以和这些传奇的中国陶俑有面对面的接触。

triviality [ˌtrɪviˈæləti]

n. 琐事；小事

例：He was surprised by the **triviality** of her anxieties.

她对琐碎小事的忧心忡忡使他感到惊讶。

inverse [ˌɪnˈvɜːrs]

adj. 相反的

例： The tension grew in **inverse** proportion to the distance from their final destination.

拉力的大小与它们离终点的距离成反比。

immodestly [ɪˈmɑːdɪstlɪ]

adv. 不客气地；不谦虚地

例：I can say, **immodestly**, that I have played this role on many project teams.

我可以不客气地说，我已经在很多项目团队中担任过这个角色。

corollary [ˈkɔːrəleri]

n. 推论

例：We have the following **corollary** to this principle.

由这个原理我们可以作如下推导。

futility [fjuːˈtɪləti]

n. 无用；徒劳

例：Work is the way that people seek to redeem their lives from **futility**.

工作可以避免人们虚度生命。

paradox [ˈpærədɑːks]

n. 反论；悖论

例：Millennials, it seems, face the **paradox** of being the least formal generation yet the most conscious of style and personal branding.

千禧一代似乎面临着一个悖论：作为最不正式的一代，但却最注意个人风格和个人品牌，令人疑惑。（2016 年考研英语一阅读理解 Part B）

loathe [loʊð]

vt. 憎恨；厌恶

例：We **loathe** each other, yet we seem doomed constantly to meet.

我们相互厌恶，但似乎偏偏冤家常碰头。

paranoia [ˌpærəˈnɔɪə]

n. 妄想狂；疑神疑鬼

例：There are no conspiracy theories, no wild speculations, no **paranoia**.

这里没有阴谋论，没有不着边际的猜忌，没有偏执妄想。