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Whether you are selecting the right seat at a meeting or ensuring you and your team are in the right seat on the proverbial bus, take some time this month to make sure you are working in your sweet spot. Sure, things inevitably will get challenging or uncomfortable at times, but you can still have meaningful conversations to wiggle your way toward the zone where you are thriving and flourishing.

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#### WHERE TO SIT AT A MEETING TO INCREASE SUCCESS

You walk into the room a few minutes before the meeting begins. You check out who is already present and where they are sitting. You grab a cup of coffee and sit down at the first available seat. Or do you?

People choose their seats for all kinds of reasons. Some sit wherever there is an empty seat. Others want to sit where they always do. Some want to sit next to a particular person. Others want to be close to the coffee pot. But how do you choose where to sit to help you achieve your objective?

Where to sit at a meeting:

**Power.** Sit at the end of the table.

**Influence.** Sit directly across the table from someone you want to influence. This provides maximum opportunity for eye contact, verbal, and non-verbal messages.

**Leadership.** Although most meeting leaders typically sit at the end of the table, the best place is in the middle seat on either side of the table. This allows the leader more flexibility to control the conversation or "gate-keep."

**Build Trust.** Sit to the right of a person when you want to generate a feeling of trust. In medieval times, people of questionable loyalty were seated on the left because right-handed people would normally thrust a dagger to the left! Hence, we now have the term "right-hand man."

**Alignment.** Sit next to (preferably to the right of) the leader or other individual when you want to be identified with that person. This puts you in view as people look at the leader, and a subliminal connection is made.

**Attention.** Sit directly across from or next to someone you want to have notice you.

**Discussion.** Choose the “central seats” (those at the ends and the middle seats) when you want to be actively involved in the meeting discussion. Don’t sit next to the leader who is acting as “gatekeeper.” The leader will recognize you less. If you want to stay out of the discussion, choose the corner seats.

**Confrontation.** Sit directly across from someone who has an opposing view or recommendation.

**Networking.** Sit next to anyone with whom you want to strengthen your relationship.

**Exit.** Sit closest to the door in the event you must leave before the meeting is over or if you want to make a quick exit.

Finally, when you don’t have a compelling reason for choosing one seat over another, sit wherever you are most comfortable!

## REASONS TO SAY “NO” TO AN OFFER TO MODERATE A PANEL DISCUSSION

While there are many (at least 9!) reasons to say “yes” to the invitation to moderate, there are an equal number of reasons to say “no” to an offer to moderate a panel discussion. Reasons to Say “No” to an Offer to Moderate a Panel Discussion

1. **Not Enough Time.** Some meeting organizers think you can just show up and moderate a panel. Au contraire! If you’ve been reading this blog, you’ll realize that the more you prepare, the easier it is to moderate a panel. After all, when the panel is AWESOME, it looks effortless. But when the panel goes south, the panel moderator is left holding the mess. So, what’s the cause of the short notice? Did the other moderator cancel or become ill? The organizers didn’t plan ahead? There’s something weird about the topic, the panelists, or the location? If you don’t get enough time to prepare (whatever that means to you), think carefully before saying “yes.”
2. **Too Much Structure.** Some panel formats are extremely controlled or fairly formulaic with not a lot of wiggle room to leverage your own personality and stagecraft. If you’re comfortable with the prescribed parameters, go for it. But if you *aren’t* comfortable at the starting gate, you might as well not join the race.
3. **Too Many People.** The optimum number of people on the panel is 3-4 with a maximum of 5. More than that, it’s just too many to have a meaningful discussion. See if you can downsize the number of panelists, but you’re starting at a known deficit even before you get to the starting gate!
4. **Cloudy Promise.** When you see a difference between the meeting organizers’ objectives and the marketing materials’ “promise” as to what the audience can expect to experience when they attend the panel, you’ve got a real problem on your hands. If you can’t resolve the discrepancy, think twice about moderating this panel!
5. **Tokenism.** You might be offered to moderate a panel as the token woman on a manel (an all-male panel). (I call this pinkwashing your panel!) The reverse can be true: You’re the only male on an all-female panel. Denise Graveline suggests you “ask to see the entire roster of speakers and moderators to be sure you’re not just window dressing for a conference with gender imbalance.” Depending on the circumstances and your comfort level with the imbalance, you may want to say “no” to an offer to moderate a panel discussion.
6. **High Maintenance.** Some meeting organizers need more handholding than others, yet a few are just too, too much! It might be their first panel discussion and they lean heavily on you....to do everything – including their job! Or if the logistics, location, topic, promise, length, panelists etc. keep changing, that’s a lot to keep up with. If you think it may be too much work to feel good about the overall experience (and you

- might not know until you are knee-deep into it!), you may want to say “no” to that offer!
7. **Tight Travel Schedule.** Especially in these post-Covid days when flights are being delayed left and right, make sure your travel plans allow for you to arrive well rested and in plenty of time.
  8. **Not a Steppingstone.** One of the reasons you may want to say “yes” to the offer is that it will position you or your company and help you get ready for bigger speaking opportunities. But if it’s not positioning you in a favorable light or you’re always being asked to moderate, but never to speak, you may want to say “no.”
  9. **Doesn’t Feel Right.** Lastly, sometimes, it just doesn’t feel like a good fit. Your intuition is telling you “No, take a pass.” I have learned the hard way to listen to my spidey-sense when it comes to saying “no” to an offer to moderate a panel discussion!

### **FROM THE BOOKSHELF: THE SIX TYPES OF WORKING GENIUS**

As a certified facilitator of Patrick Lencioni’s 6 Types of Working Genius, I have been anxiously awaiting the arrival of the companion book to the certification. The recently released book, *The 6 Types of Working Genius: A Better Way to Understand Your Gifts, Your Frustrations, and Your Team* is, like all of Lencioni’s books, a business fable that shares a theory in a fictional setting so we can easily understand and implement the ideas.

This book is a bit different in that it is an autobiography! The characters are (mostly) real, with a few name changes and character composites. But knowing the backstory of how Lencioni arrived at this model IS the story that is captured in the book!

The premise of the book is quite simple: every task has six elements and while we can DO each of these tasks, TWO are our “genius.” Our genius gives us energy and joy and is pretty much our default happy place. We also have two that are our “frustrations.” These are the things we don’t like to do, and two that we are competent at.

While some people might view this as a personality profile, it’s more of a productivity tool in making sure we have our people in the “right seats on the bus” and maximizing their gifts! It also explains why some very competent people are suffering from burnout. Our team members are suffering from burnout because we heap so much on them because they *can* do a good job, but it is not their genius or happy spot! It’s a quick and easy read and worthwhile to have a team discussion about how the six working geniuses apply to your team!