

**44 Decisions That
Will Make or Break
All Leaders**

44 DECISIONS THAT WILL MAKE OR BREAK ALL LEADERS

David Siegel
CEO AT MEETUP

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

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APPENDIX 2:

SAMPLE LAYOFF SPEECH

Whatever you do, don't use this speech.

If there could be anything worse than a boss who spends years praising you, then lays you off one morning by reading legally approved language off a card provided by HR (and reading it to you over the phone, no less), it's probably finding out you're being laid off with someone else's layoff speech.

So make the speech your own. Put things in your own words. That's what matters. This is just the order and tone of things from the speech I had given.

Everyone—

- OK, I'm sharing something today that is very difficult.
- There is no easy way to say this, so I am going to come right out with it—
- Today we are going to say goodbye to about 10 percent of our team.

(pause to let that sink in)

- I was originally planning on sending an email, but I decided against it since that's not Meetup.

- We are an IRL company, and whether it is for good or for challenges like today, we are going to face it in a direct, transparent way.
- So I need to read this because it is important that I get this message exactly right.
- Please excuse me for doing it this way . . .

I joined Meetup because of a passionate belief in our business, our community, and the huge impact Meetup has on people's lives. I'm pretty sure that's why we all joined Meetup.

A few weeks ago at our Org Structure All-Hands, I talked about the seven-step process to changing the company. Step one was the new structure, and step two was to identify the people to support that structure.

Through hundreds of hours of conversations with you, really examining the business, close consultation with the lead team, and bringing together nearly one hundred people for our strategy workstreams, this important, but difficult, decision was made. And it is a very important one and not taken lightly.

We are saying goodbye to fellow Meetuppers who have made a meaningful impact on our business.

For me, this is the first time in my entire career that I have had to oversee an action such as this, but unfortunately we felt we have no choice for the sake of Meetup's viability. Simply put, this was a last resort. These changes are being made to ensure we are more focused and the team we have in place is directly aligned with our company priorities—also known as The Big Three (revenue, customer experience, and new business model).

OK, so next steps:

1. People who are leaving us today will receive a calendar invite within the next five to ten minutes after this meeting, letting them know their next steps.

(Short pause)

2. People who are *not* impacted will get an email with an outline for the rest of the day.

(Short pause)

3. Today at 2 p.m. ET, we'll come back together for an all-hands where we will discuss the changes, and most importantly, give you an opportunity to ask questions.

(Short pause)

I know this is a lot to process. There's no ideal way to do this.

Two final thoughts: One, it's important to me that we don't shy away from your questions about it, and, two, that we treat those who are leaving today with integrity, thoughtfulness, and empathy.

(Pause)

Thanks for your time. I'm going to excuse you now.

(Stay onstage while everyone exits.)

APPENDIX 3:

SAMPLE SUCCESSION EMAIL

Whether you're fired or let go in some fashion (the most likely end of your tenure, it's sad to say) or you leave for a new job (good luck!), it's your final responsibility to your employees that you set their new boss up for success. There's no reason they should suffer. So here in full is the email that Scott sent to welcome me to Meetup. Scott's email and embrace of me to his team was truly phenomenal, and I include his email to give you a model for writing one yourself. Remember: Be enthusiastic. Be professional. And be confident that you'll be remembered well by being generous during what is surely a trying time for you.

To: [Staff]

From: Scott

Subject: Welcome David Siegel, Meetup's new CEO

Hi team,

Big news! We found someone really good—and you'll meet him at noon ET today.

I met dozens of candidates.

David went through 26 meetings over three months.

David had the most passion for our mission, the highest energy, and the right approach for what Meetup needs today.

We wanted him, and he starts today!

So what does Meetup need today? And why is David the right leader for Meetup today?

You'll hear more at noon ET, but here's my summary . . .

Meetup needs someone right now who combines:

- a very methodical approach to caring for and growing our customer and member base
- an obsession for the people side: setting up teams to work better together
- experience navigating big companies to make an independent subsidiary successful

That's David. I expected we'd hire someone from one of the giant internet borgs—and we met plenty of those people. David's background was different. He spent the past twenty years leading teams and companies, proving himself as a leader who earns people's trust—and drives success.

Most recently, he was CEO of an IAC company called Investopedia, where he tripled revenue in three years by growing a subscription model (like Meetup) with a rich user-generated ecosystem (like Meetup). His team loved him.

When you spend time with him, it's clear how he makes companies more successful. He knows what he's not—he's not a software engineer or UI designer. He's an organizational design/engineering whiz with a focus on methodically growing Meetup activity and revenue. I went on a Meetup Crawl with him, he felt Meetuppy all along, and you'll sense his integrity, his heart, and his smarts.

Meetup CEO is the best job in the world, IMO. You get to focus on a critical mission: Bring millions of people together IRL to create community and opportunity; and you get to lead the most talented and passionate crew ever assembled to bring that kind of mission to life. It's been the ride of my life for me to serve in the role for almost 17 years.

Meetup CEO is also a really hard job, so I ask that you welcome David, hold him to the high expectations our mission deserves, have patience with him as he learns, and respect what he's here to do: David is here to make Meetup much more successful. "Change the Company" is a long-standing core value of ours because that's the way for any organism or organization to thrive, so I ask for your openness. That's one favor I ask of you.

I'm now moving into the role of chairman and what I want most is for David to succeed as CEO. The best way for a former CEO to respect the new one is to not get in that person's way—and to not confuse the team about who's in charge. So I'll go on sabbatical for 90 days, meeting regularly with David to help him.

Join me in welcoming David—and thanking him for taking this giant leap!

—Heif

Co-founder & Chairman