

The Meeting Fix

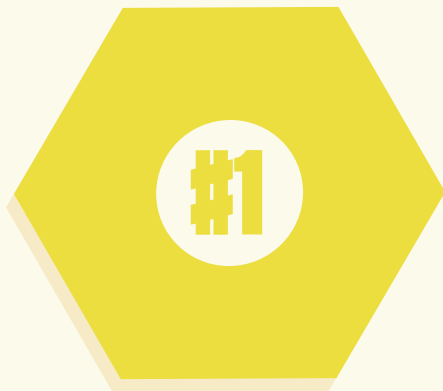
Get back a full workday each week with five simple rules that turn repeat conversations into one future-ready plan

BY JOE CURCILLO

Most leaders you meet are losing almost a full workday every week to meetings that go nowhere. Same people. Same topics. Same problems. No real movement. The problem is not that you have meetings—the problem is that your meetings are built for silos, not for the whole organization. Everyone shows up to speak for their lane, but no one is asked to take in the entire picture.

That is where a generalist mindset helps—not a new title, but a new way of running the room. You treat every meeting as the place where the whole system comes together, not just a series of updates.

Here are five simple rules you can put in place this week. If you stick to them, you will get back hours you are now wasting in repeat conversations, clean up handoffs, and walk out of the room with one plan instead of six versions.



RULE 1:

Every meeting gets one job

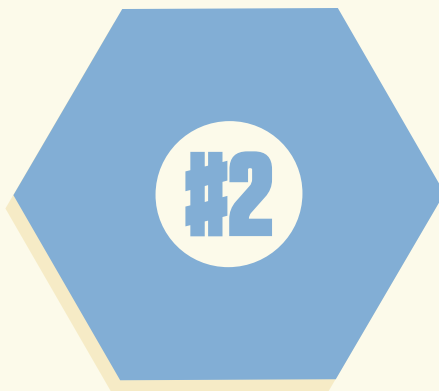
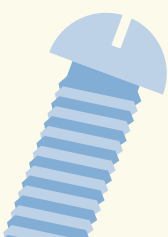
Most meetings try to do three or four things at once. You “update,” “brainstorm,” “decide,” and then “vent” for a while. No wonder nothing sticks.

Give every meeting one clear job. For example:

- “Decide the metrics we will use to determine success in one area.”
- “Fix the delay between invoices being submitted and paid.”
- “Agree on the three messages we want residents to hear.”

If you hear yourself saying “and” in the purpose, you are trying to fit too much into one hour. Split it or park the extra question for another time.

One job gives you focus. Focus gives you time back.



RULE 2:

Invite roles, not just titles

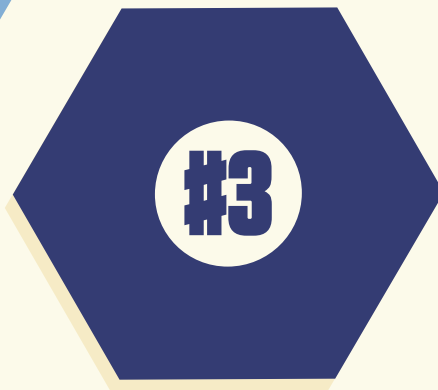
Silos show up on your guest list. You invite the usual suspects by title, and you end up with a room full of people who all think the same way.

Instead, build your list by role, like this:

- Someone who lives closest to an area being discussed for improvements.
- Someone who runs the daily work in a relevant department.
- Someone who watches risk and cost.
- Someone who can tell the story to the rest of the organization.

Those roles might sit in four different departments. That is the point. You want different lenses in the same room. That is how you spot the land mines before you step on them.

Ask yourself before you send the invite: “Which roles do we need so this decision works in the real world?” Then fill seats to match.



RULE 3:

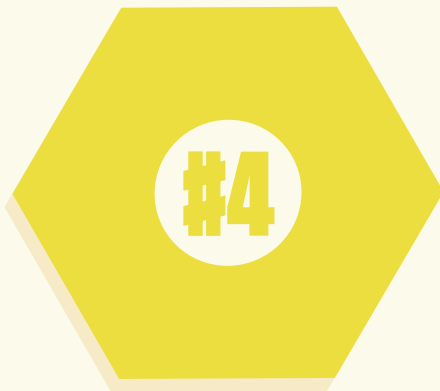
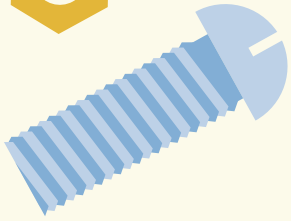
Start with the shared picture, not a status tour

Most meetings start with a long trip around the table. Each person reports from their corner. By the time the last person speaks, the first point is forgotten, or half the room was too busy planning what they were going to say to hear it.

Flip that. Start with the shared picture. Take three to five minutes and answer, out loud, one simple question: “What are we really trying to make true across the whole organization?”

It might be: “We want residents to feel one simple promise, no matter who they talk to,” or “We need to cut the time from idea to implementation in half.” Keep it short. Use plain language.

Once the room has the same picture in mind, the updates and ideas have a place to land. People stop fighting for their own lane and start asking, “Does this help the bigger promise or not?”



RULE 4:

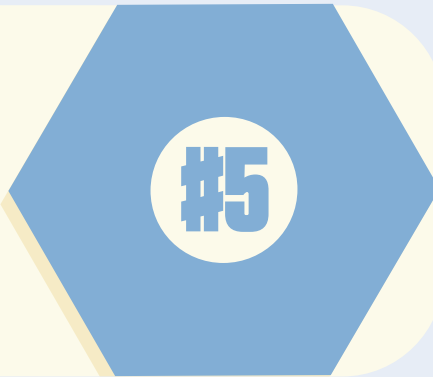
Use a straightforward path to decisions

We waste a lot of meeting time because no one is clear on how the decision will actually be made. So, you circle.

Give your team one simple path:

1. Zoom out. Ask, "If we get this right, what changes across the organization six months from now?" Listen for impact across departments, not just in one area.
2. Zoom in. Ask, "Given that picture, what can we actually commit to between now and Friday?"

That two-step keeps you from getting lost in theory. It respects the future and the present. You do not need fancy language for it. You just need to use it every time. Over time, people will show up already thinking this way. That alone will shorten your meetings.



RULE 5:

Leave with cross-silo promises, not loose ideas

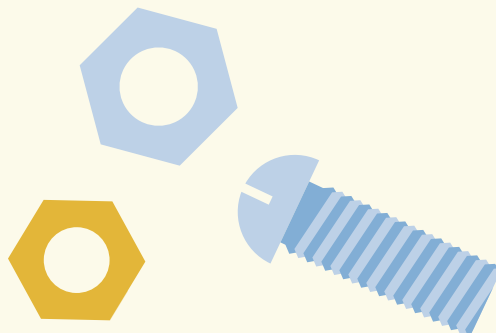
The last five minutes of a meeting are where you win back your week. Or lose it.

Do not end with "Good talk" or "Let's circle back." End with spoken promises that cross the silos. You might want to have each person say one clear sentence:

- "I will do ___ by ___ date, and I will loop in ___ so they are ready."

Write them on the screen as they speak. Make sure at least one promise in the room links two departments. That is where you turn scattered voices into one plan.

After the meeting, send a short note with those sentences only. No novel. No slide deck. Just the promises. That is your new scorecard.



What changes when you follow these rules?

When you run meetings this way, three things happen fast:

- You stop having the same conversation three times in three different rooms.
- People start to prepare at a higher level because they know the meeting has a real job.
- You can cancel whole blocks of follow-up because the "I will" sentences do the work.

Add up the time you save across your calendar, and a full workday comes back into view.

You do not need a new app or a new job title to be future-ready. You need to treat every meeting as a place where the whole system gets in tune. One room. Many lenses. One clear plan walking out the door.

Try these five rules for one month. Watch what happens to your schedule, your stress, and your team's follow-through.

Joe Curcillo is a former trial attorney turned leadership advisor.