

A weekly leadership meeting agenda that ends on time

Most leadership meetings overrun because the agenda has no budget. Here is one that does, and what to do when a segment blows through it.

The Sambia Team · September 21, 2026 · 3 min read
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A leadership meeting that runs long is rarely a discipline problem. It is an agenda problem. An agenda that lists topics without giving each one a time budget is a wish, and the first person with a long story spends everyone else's hour.

The fix is an agenda where every segment owns a number of minutes, and where one segment — the one that does the real work — is deliberately the largest. What follows is that structure, and the part most teams skip: what happens when a segment overruns anyway.

The 90-minute shape

Ninety minutes, once a week, same day and time. The segments below add to 90 exactly, which is the point — there is no slack to absorb an overrun, so an overrun has to be *decided* on rather than drifted into.

5 min Check-in	5 min Scorecard	5 min Goal review
15 min Headlines and updates	55 min Issues	5 min Close

The issues segment is over half the meeting. If it is not, the meeting is a status report.

What each segment is for

Check-in (5 min). One personal and one professional good news item per person, thirty seconds each. It is not filler. It is the thing that makes the next eighty-five minutes possible between people who otherwise only meet in conflict.

Scorecard (5 min). Read the numbers. Do not discuss them. A number that is off-target becomes an issue on the list — that is the entire response. Discussing it here is how a five-minute segment becomes twenty.

Goal review (5 min). Each quarterly goal gets one word from its owner: on track or off track. Off track also becomes an issue. Same rule, same reason.

Headlines and updates (15 min). Customer and employee news, and anything carried over from last week. Short. The test for whether something belongs here: could you say it in one sentence without anyone asking a follow-up question? If not, it is an issue.



The pattern in the first four segments

Three of them exist mainly to *generate* the issues list, not to resolve anything. Teams that overrun almost always overrun here, because each segment quietly turns into the discussion it was supposed to defer.

Issues (55 min). Take the list you just built, pick the three most important, and solve them one at a time — all the way to a decision and an owner, not to a general sense of agreement. Three solved beats ten discussed. The rest of the list keeps until next week, and most of it will turn out not to have mattered.

Close (5 min). Read back every action item with its owner and its date. Then rate the meeting out of ten. A score below eight gets one sentence of explanation, and that sentence is usually worth more than anything else in the ninety minutes.

When a segment overruns

It will. The question is whether the overrun is a decision or an accident. Three responses, in order of how often you should reach for them:

1. **Cut it to an issue.** The default. Whoever is talking stops, the topic goes on the issues list, and the meeting moves. Most overruns are a discussion that wandered into the wrong segment.
2. **Trade the time.** If it genuinely belongs in this meeting and genuinely cannot wait, name what you are giving up — usually the third issue — and take the time from there, out loud.
3. **Schedule it out.** Some topics are not issues, they are projects. A ninety-minute weekly is the wrong container for a strategy debate; book the strategy debate.

What you do not do is let it run and hope the next segment is short. That is the failure mode that turns a 90-minute meeting into a 140-minute one, every week, until people start declining it.

The meeting does not need to cover everything. It needs to end on time with three things decided and owned.

The only rule that matters

Common failure modes

SYMPTOM	ACTUAL CAUSE	FIX
Runs 30+ minutes long every week	Scorecard and updates turning into discussion	Move them to the issues list without comment
Ends on time, nothing changes	Issues discussed, never decided	Solve three, name an owner and a date for each
Same issue every week	Owner assigned, no date	A goal without a date is a topic
Attendance slipping	The meeting is a status report	Give issues more than half the clock

Almost every one of these is a time-budget problem wearing a different hat.

Where to start

IF YOU CHANGE ONE THING THIS WEEK

Put a number on every segment	Written down, visible to everyone in the room
Start and end on the clock	Even when unfinished — especially when unfinished
Count decisions, not topics	Three decided beats ten discussed

Sambia runs this agenda as a timed, segment-by-segment meeting, with the scorecard and goal review pulling live from the same data the rest of the week runs on — so the numbers are read, not assembled the night before. See [how the weekly meeting works](https://sambia.io/) (sambia.io/) or [compare the alternatives](https://sambia.io/sambia-vs-ninety) (sambia.io/sambia-vs-ninety).

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