Lucid Facilitator's Guide

WEEKLY LEADERSHIP MEETING

Held at the same time and day each week, teams use this meeting to drive accountability and resolve issues impeding progress. This is an action-oriented working meeting rather than a reporting and information sharing meeting. The agenda leaves no time for reading reports or explaining delays. Instead, the time is spent working through high-priority issues and finding solutions.

Use this template as a starting place when designing your weekly leadership team meeting and adapt the agenda to fit your team.

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INTRODUCTION

This meeting drives accountability and momentum.

Every week, your team will celebrate victories and review progress on the top strategic priorities, making sure the team follows through on the agreements you made in your Strategic Planning sessions.

While there is some discussion of status and progress, this agenda keeps reporting short. Instead, **much more time goes directly into problem solving.** After a quick performance review, your team takes on the challenges that have emerged in the course of day-to-day operations. Then, as a group, you'll prioritize the most important issues faced by your organization this week—whether those are strategic or tactical—and create a plan for immediately knocking those barriers out of the way.

This is a very rewarding way to work, because not only do you stay up-to-date, you see that you're part of a group that can stick to your commitments, deal with issues, and get work done.

This Weekly Leadership meeting works as part of an interconnected series of leadership meetings.

During the Weekly Leadership Meeting, your team will:

- Review the metrics and progress on priorities identified during Strategic Planning
- Discuss and solve issues raised during Daily Huddles
- Identify decisions to address in a dedicated Monthly Decision Making Meeting
- Review progress on action items assigned in previous meetings

Core Concepts

This template doesn't assume that your team uses a specific management methodology. The agenda uses the generic terms described below. You can and should update the agenda to match the specific terminology used by your organization.

The Numbers

These should be the **top 5 to 10 target metrics** your team uses to gauge performance for the entire organization. For example, our company tracks marketing leads, new sales, revenue, support ticket volume, and a handful of other high-level numbers to see if we're performing as planned. These high-level numbers are often backed by more detailed numbers tracked in each department or line of business.

Each number has a target. Every week, the most recent number is reported and called out if it strays too far from the target.

Other terms you may be using:
Performance Metrics or Measures, the Scorecard, the Dashboard, KPIs

The Priorities

Every quarter (90 days) your team will set the top priorities to accomplish by the end of that quarter. Everyone on the leadership team will be responsible for making sure one or more priorities gets done, and will report every week on whether they're on track to complete on time.

Other terms you may be using: Key Objectives, Goals, Rocks

The Issues List

An issue represents a challenge faced by the team. This could be a problem (e.g., a budget issue, angry customer, power outage), an opportunity (e.g., a new business opportunity, an exciting hire), or something that has the team puzzled or stuck (e.g., unexpected performance numbers, stalled projects).

Effective leadership comes not only from deciding what to do, but often from the more difficult task of deciding what NOT to do. Every week your team will identify and solve only the highest priority issues, and leave the rest on the Issues List. This list carries over from one meeting to the next, with an issue added when it comes up and removed when it is either resolved or deemed no longer relevant.

Other terms you may be using: Topics for Discussion, Real Time Agenda

The Actions List

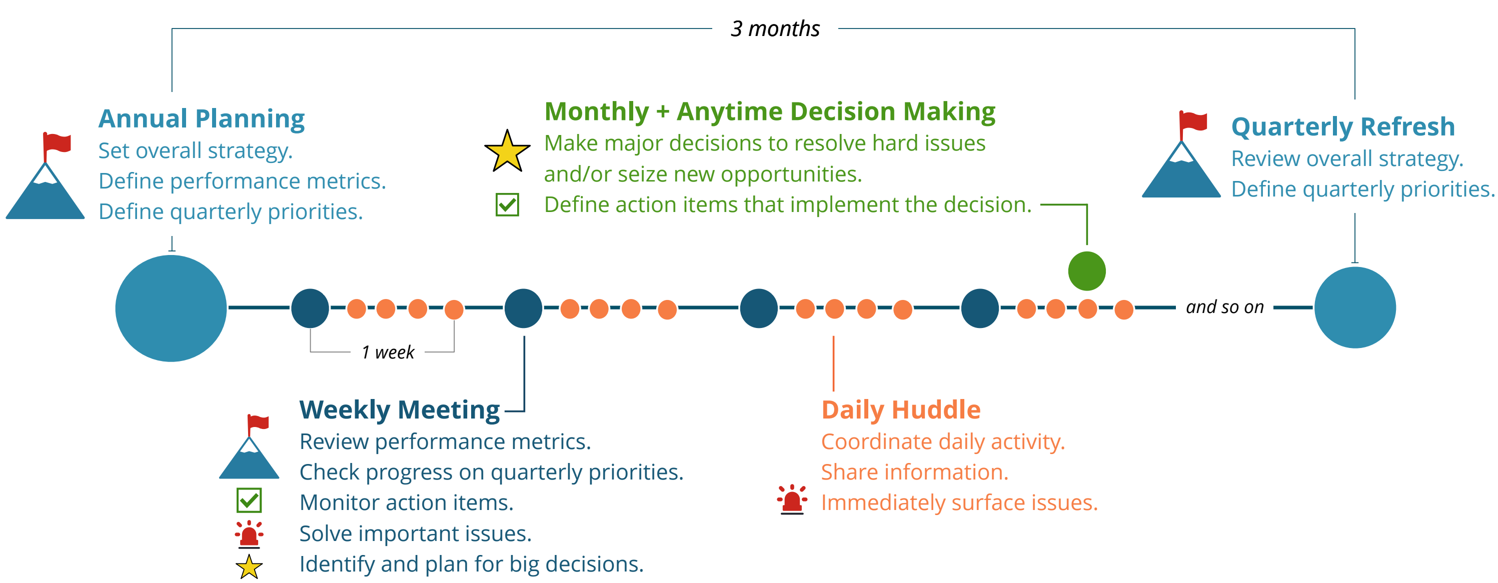
The Actions List contains open action items assigned to someone on the team. Each action item includes the classic information of Who, What, and When; Who lists the name of the person responsible completing the action, What includes a brief description of the task, and When clarifies the due date.

Like the Issues List, you will add to the Actions List and update it each week. Your team can add action items during any of the leadership team meetings for follow-up in the Weekly meeting.

Best Practice

Define actions than can be completed in no more than one or two weeks. If an action will take longer than that, it should be broken down into a more manageable first step and/or moved to your projects list. Ideally, your team will complete 80%+ of the actions on the list each week.

Other terms you may be using: Tasks, To-Dos



Managing numbers, priorities, issues, actions, and decisions across meetings.

AGENDA

GOAL

Share information, drive accountability and resolve challenges impeding progress.

DURATION

90 minutes or less, depending on the issues or opportunities addressed in item 7.

1. Welcome & Review Actions List
2. Schedule Announcements
3. Victories
4. Review the Numbers
5. Quarterly Priorities & Progress
6. Identify Top Issues
7. Tackle Top Issues
8. Review and Confirm Actions List

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Before the Meeting

Preparation for this meeting goes quickly. You'll use the same agenda every week, with a lot of the information simply carried forward from previous meetings with minor updates.

Most teams need 10-15 minutes per week to prepare. Each person needs to:

- Update any numbers he or she owns
- Add any new issues to the list
- Update action item status

They also need to come ready to share:

- Victories: accomplishments and good news from their department
- Schedule updates: time away or major events for the week ahead

See our tips on Weekly Meeting Administration for ways to streamline this work.

When to Meet

Many teams like to meet early Monday mornings as a way to kick-off the week ahead. For our team, we found that Wednesday worked better. A Wednesday meeting means we rarely cancel for holidays or vacations, and we all appreciate the momentum boost during the mid-week lull.

Consistency matters. Whatever you pick, try to stick with the same day and time every week for a full quarter. Then, during your Quarterly review, you can decide on a different time if necessary.

During the Meeting

1 Welcome and Review Actions List

Purpose	Transition the group's focus into the meeting
Outcomes	• Everyone present • Open action items updated
Duration	5 minutes

Instructions

This agenda item gives everyone a chance to arrive or get online before you begin. As people get settled, **show the list of open action items from previous meetings**. Any that didn't get updated before the meeting will get updated now. You'll talk about progress on priority projects later in the meeting, so you don't need to go over the list in detail. Simply showing the list reminds people of open commitments and **focuses them on the work of the team** while waiting to start.

This is also the time for small talk. Small talk helps the group connect with each other and get a feel for how everyone is doing. Small talk reveals opportunities: new connections, ideas, and commonalities that don't otherwise fit on the agenda.

Use a timer for this agenda item to keep the small talk from taking over. At the end of 5 minutes, officially welcome the team and get started.

2 Schedule Announcements

Purpose	Learn about any changes to the schedule for the week ahead.
Outcome	Reminders about upcoming closures, vacations and significant events.
Duration	5 minutes or less

Instructions

Transition into the official work of the meeting by sharing information about any notable events coming in the week ahead.

The meeting leader starts by noting any upcoming holidays or big events that impact everyone, such as major client site visits, a board meeting, or big launch. These should be **reminders only**; never spring a major surprise on a group during a weekly meeting unless you're ready to throw out the rest of the agenda.

Then, other team members should share any time they plan to be unavailable due to personal or work commitments.

Make sure each announcement is captured in the notes.

This topic should be very fast. Teams that hold a Daily Huddle should already have a good sense of the schedule. **Feel free to skip it if there's nothing new to cover.**

If you find this is taking more than a few minutes, find other ways to help this group communicate between meetings so they don't need to spend meeting time getting basic information.

3 Victories

Purpose	Celebrate the week's accomplishments
Outcome	Shared acknowledgment and gratitude
Duration	5 minutes

Instructions

This agenda item **anchors a team to the organization's larger mission** by recognizing and celebrating success.

Victories come early in the agenda to provide regular, **specific examples about what a good job looks like** in your organization, and to ensure a time in a busy week to say thank you to those involved.

Connecting to the Mission

What you celebrate tells your team what matters and how they should focus their efforts.

If you know of a victory that should be shared, **ask the person most responsible to share the news** with the group.

Then, ask the group to share any other successes from the past week. These might include:

- Resolution of a major problem that's been plaguing the team
- Awards and recognitions
- New sales
- New hires
- A successful program or product launch

Or whatever success looks like for your organization.

Don't feel like you need to make up a victory if there isn't one; it's more important that the team understands those actions and results that meaningfully contribute to the group's success. Authenticity works; platitudes do not.

Connecting to the Organization

Multiple research studies show that **expressing sincere recognition** and public gratitude is one of the **most effective ways to motivate team members** and **improve employee retention**.

4 Review the Numbers

Purpose	Report on up-to-date performance numbers and identify issues
Outcomes	Visibility of performance trends Recognition of significant spikes or dips List of new issues found in the numbers
Duration	5 minutes

Instructions

The first three agenda items set a congenial tone. In items 4 and 5, we get more serious.

During this agenda item, the team looks at the performance numbers as a group. Notice any number that's remarkably high or low. Do not get into a big conversation about why the numbers look like they do. Instead, create a new issue for any number that falls significantly outside expectations, and move on. For example, a new issue might be:

Issue: Revenue in June fell 12% below forecast.

You will decide if this aberration in the numbers is the most important thing for everyone to talk about in agenda item 6.

5 Quarterly Priorities and Progress

Purpose	Report on progress and identify issues
Outcomes	Visibility into progress on priorities Recognition of areas in trouble List of new issues with projects
Duration	5 minutes

Instructions

For each quarterly priority, the responsible leader reports whether it's on target or not. Again, this is fast and not a time for discussion. Record any areas of concern as new issues.

Great! The team is warmed up.
Now that the context is fresh in everyone's mind, it's time to put it to work solving problems.

6 Identify Top Issues

Purpose	Prioritize the Issues list to determine which ones most need the team's attention
Outcome	Updated issues list Top 3 to 5 issues identified
Duration	5 minutes

Instructions

Now that you've reviewed the numbers and priorities, it's time to pick the top issues to resolve this week.

Review the issues list as a team. The list will contain:

- Issues recorded earlier in the meeting
- Issues added by team members between meetings
- Unresolved issues from past meetings

Identify the top 3 to 5 issues. You can also take a few moments to update the issues list, re-writing any issues that aren't clear and removing old issues that no longer need the team's attention.

If you have trouble agreeing on the top issues, or if this takes more than a few minutes, use dot-voting to identify priorities. You'll find instructions for dot-voting later in this guide.

Caution: watch for issues that one person feels strongly about, but which never seem to make it to the top of the list. When a team member keeps bringing up the same issue but the group de-prioritizes it for more than a few weeks in a row, it needs to be addressed.

This can happen when the team doesn't understand the issue well enough to see why it's important, or it can mean that this is an issue they'd prefer to avoid. Whatever the reason, it's sure to cause frustration for the person who wants to see that issue addressed, which will only grow if the situation persists.

7 Tackle Top Issues

Purpose	Solve the highest priority issues
Outcomes	New action items and decisions resolving the top issues
Duration	50 minutes

Instructions

Now that you've identified the most important issues in the organization, you'll spend the rest of the meeting solving them. This is the longest and most important part of your meeting, ensuring your leadership team contributes meaningful solutions each and every week.

Start with the highest-priority issue and work on it until you have a resolution.

For each issue, first clarify it. What's the underlying cause, problem, or opportunity behind this issue? Many issues turn out to be symptoms of a more fundamental problem. The better your team gets at identifying the root cause of an issue, the more likely they'll be to implement solutions that last. Otherwise, you may treat this symptom only to find new issues pop up next week.

When everyone feels they understand the issue, discuss the options. There are always several ways to tackle a challenge; **teams that identify 3 or more options before settling on what to do regularly make better decisions**.

The issue is resolved when you settle on next steps. **Write down the next step for tackling this issue, and remove the issue from the issues list.** The resolution might be recorded as a decision and one or more action items that spell out who, what, and when for each next step.

What about issues that can't be resolved in 50 minutes?

If your team is being honest with each other, you'll frequently find issues at the top of your list that aren't simple to define and which can't be responsibly resolved in a quick meeting.

Don't get bogged down here. **When it looks like an issue is bigger than you can handle in the time you have, escalate it to the Monthly + Anytime Decision Making meeting.**

In your weekly meeting, create an action item that assigns one or more people to lead the preparation for a dedicated decision-making meeting devoted to resolving this issue.

If time remains, move on to solving the next item on the issues list. Continue working through the issue list until the 50 minutes ends. **With 10 minutes remaining in the scheduled meeting time, begin closing the meeting.**

8 Review and Confirm Actions List

Purpose	Close the meeting and confirm next steps
Outcomes	Updated action item list Feedback on the meeting
Duration	5 - 10 minutes

Instructions

Close the meeting by reviewing all the action items created. **Make sure each task is clearly worded and that the assigned owners commit to completing each task by the due date.** For example, you might say:

> Please review the action items. Is each one clear enough that we'll know exactly what needs to happen to close it later? If you are assigned to an action item, are you sure you can complete it by the due date? If anything needs to change, let's fix it now.

Once the team agrees that the action list looks good, ask everyone to end by sharing one word or phrase that expresses how they're feeling. This one-phrase close makes sure everyone gets heard before you leave, and can reveal lingering issues that you can follow up on after the meeting.

Then, end the meeting on time. Done!

After the meeting

Send out the follow-up email, which makes sure everyone gets their action items and a full report in their email, even if they couldn't attend the meeting.

CORE TOOL: DOT VOTING

What Is It?

Dot voting is a fast and easy voting system for determining the highest priority items on a list. The technique is called “Dot Voting” because in face-to-face meetings, votes are cast by placing a sticky-dot or using markers to make a dot next to an item pasted on the wall.

How it Works

After assembling a list of options, the group starts a dot vote to determine which few high-priority items to focus on.

The leader will share any criteria that participants should keep in mind when placing votes, then ask participants to cast their votes.

Each person gets a fixed number of votes (or dots) that they can cast however they want; they can place all their votes on the same item if they wish, or vote for several different items. This allows participants to vote for multiple options, and reveals relative priorities rather than declaring any single item a “winner.”

Everyone votes at once.

After participants place all their dots, the leader counts the dots to identify the preferred options. The color of the dots does not matter. The items with the most dots rank highest.

How many dots should each person get?

Everyone needs enough dots to vote on multiple items. This makes it possible to express relative priorities by putting more dots on one item about which one feels strongly. You also need to ensure that when voting concludes, the group will see a clear set of priorities.

To ensure a clear result, **the number of allowed votes can be no more than 30% of the available options**. For example, if the list contains 12 items, each person would have no more than 4 votes to cast.

To keep it simple, many teams use 3 dots per participant every time.

Leadership Meeting Ground Rules

Effective leadership team meetings require the full participation and commitment of everyone present. These meetings don't work if one or two people (usually the boss) dominate the discussion. The meeting can also fail if people arrive late or multitask. Finally, the meeting fails if people keep quiet when they see an opportunity to improve the discussion.

If your team struggles here, consider creating ground rules. Ground rules outline a code of conduct that's created and agreed to by the group to help them achieve the meeting goal. The team creates the Ground Rules, then uses them to self-correct when a meeting goes awry.

Search the internet and the books listed in the resources here, or start with our example ground rules below when creating your own.

Example Ground Rules

- **We commit to participating.**
  We come ready to share what we know and contribute to the discussion. We use technology only in support of the meeting.
- **We share responsibility for results.**
  We take responsibility for ensuring every decision made here serves the best interests of our stakeholders. We work to agree on the path forward and commit to next steps. When we can't, we work to disagree and commit.
- **Seek constructive conflict.**
  We seek to understand different perspectives using inquiry, not debate. Because we share responsibility for the result, we speak up when we have concerns and questions. We minimize assumptions and challenge ideas, not people.
- **Engage with respect.**
  We start and end on time to respect everyone's schedule. We respect and encourage differences. We respect the confidentiality of the discussion.

WEEKLY MEETING ADMINISTRATION

This meeting requires teams have access to up-to-date performance numbers and information from past meetings. Teams that update information during the meeting, instead of before the meeting, spend double the time reviewing basic status information.

This eats into the time and energy available for solving problems. Instead, use one of these strategies to make sure information is updated before the meeting.

The Manual Approach

Some experts recommend making an individual the "agenda owner." This person collects updated numbers, action item status, and priority updates from team members before the meeting.

The Collaborative Approach

Shared document editors, like Google Docs and Microsoft Word Live, make it possible for everyone in the team to update the agenda together. The information is still manually typed in, but this way each leader can type in their own data. This increases accountability and reduces the risk of failure when the designated "agenda owner" isn't available.

The Systems Approach

Meeting management systems like Lucid Meetings help teams set up a meeting series all using the same agenda. Action items, issues, and other meeting records automatically roll from one meeting to the next. Dashboarding systems work similarly, automatically collecting performance numbers and progress on priorities from the primary systems of record.

If you follow a specific management methodology (EOS, Gazelles, Balanced Scorecard, etc.), you can also find systems designed specifically for supporting that approach.

For our meetings, we use Smartsheet to manage our scorecard numbers and priorities, and Lucid Meetings to automate the agenda, issues review, decision tracking and action item list. This automation is built into the Lucid Weekly Leadership Team Meeting online template.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books

These books include guidance on running weekly leadership meetings as part of a larger leadership and management approach.

"Scaling Up: How a Few Companies Make It...and Why the Rest Don't (Rockefeller Habits 2.0)" by Verne Harnish
https://smile.amazon.com/Scaling-Up-Companies-Rockefeller-Habits/dp/0986019526

"Traction: Get a Grip on Your Business" by Gino Wickman
https://smile.amazon.com/Traction-Get-Grip-Your-Business/dp/1936661837

"Death by Meeting: A Leadership Fable...About Solving the Most Painful Problem in Business" by Patrick Lencioni
https://smile.amazon.com/Death-Meeting-Leadership-Solving-Business/dp/0787968056

"The Secrets to Masterful Meetings: Ignite a Meetings Revolution" by Michael Wilkinson
https://smile.amazon.com/Secrets-Masterful-Meetings-Ignite-Revolution/dp/0972245804

Related Templates and Blog Posts

The 4 Meeting Agendas that Drive Strategic Execution
http://blog.lucidmeetings.com/blog/4-meeting-agendas-that-drive-strategic-execution

Making Decisions in Meetings
http://blog.lucidmeetings.com/blog/making-decisions-in-meetings

How often should you meet? Selecting the right meeting cadence for your team.
http://blog.lucidmeetings.com/blog/how-often-should-you-meet-selecting-the-right-meeting-cadence-for-your-team

5 Meetings for Remarkable Leaders
http://blog.lucidmeetings.com/blog/5-meetings-remarkable-leaders

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This template was designed and produced by Lucid Meetings founder **Elise Keith**, with support from the fabulous team at Lucid Meetings.

See more of Elise's work on running effective meetings here: https://www.lucidmeetings.com/authors/elise-keith

Learn more about Lucid Meetings on our website.