SALES GEEK LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

COMPANION PLAYBOOK — EPISODE 18

The Meeting Rhythm

Four meeting formats that replace a week of updates

FOR	USE	TIME TO COMPLETE
Sales leaders and owners	**Redesigning the team's week**	**Ninety minutes to plan**

WHAT THIS PLAYBOOK IS FOR

Most sales teams meet constantly and decide very little. The cause is rarely the number of meetings. It is that nobody has defined what each one is for, so the same conversations circle round the week and nothing has to be resolved anywhere. This playbook gives you four meeting formats, a test for deciding which meetings deserve to exist, and a sequence for changing the rhythm without a mutiny.

HOW TO USE IT

- Part One is a diary audit. Do it before anything else — it usually frees up more time than the redesign does.
- Part Two contains the four formats, ready to run.
- Part Three is the thirty-minute weekly meeting in full detail, because it is the one worth the most.
- Part Four is how to make the change stick.
- None of it requires having heard the podcast episode.

PART ONE

Audit the week you have now

Before designing a new rhythm, find out what the current one costs and what it produces. Two exercises, about forty minutes in total.

Exercise one: the cost

List every recurring meeting your sales team attends. For each, multiply the attendees by the length by the number of times it runs in a year. Total it. This is not a statistic and it is not meant to be precise — it is arithmetic, and its purpose is to make the investment visible. A team of eight in a weekly hour comes to somewhere near four hundred selling hours a year.

Exercise two: the four jobs test

Every meeting in a sales business does one of four jobs. Write one of these four words next to each meeting on your list. If you cannot pick a word, that meeting has no job.

TEST

The Four Jobs Test

Inform, Decide, Coach, Commit — pick one, maybe two, never all four

JOB	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	HOW YOU KNOW IT WORKED
Inform	One-way. Something changed and people need to know it.	Nobody asks a question the email already answered. Usually this should have stayed an email.
Decide	A choice must be made and the people who can make it are present.	A decision exists, and somebody wrote down who does what by when.
Coach	One person gets better at something. Requires psychological safety.	They tried something afterwards they would not have tried before.
Commit	Somebody states what they will do and puts their name to it. Requires exposure.	A specific commitment exists that can be checked next week.

The rule that comes out of the test

Coach and Commit must not share a room. Coaching asks somebody to admit what they cannot do. Committing asks them to stand behind what they can. Put both in one meeting and people choose the second every time, which is how one-to-ones quietly turn into deal reviews and the coaching stops.

Cancel anything you could not label. Tell people why you are cancelling it. Very few will object, and the ones who do will tell you something useful about what the meeting was really for.

PART TWO

The four clocks

A sales team needs four rhythms running at four different speeds. The common failure is running everything weekly, so the daily questions and the quarterly questions end up in the same room.

FRAMEWORK

The Four Clocks

Four speeds, four jobs. The weekly clock has two hands.

CLOCK	HOW OFTEN	THE ONE QUESTION IT ANSWERS	LENGTH
Daily	Every morning, standing	What is in the way today? Blockers only.	10 min
Weekly team	Same slot weekly	What do we decide about the deals that need a decision this week?	30 min
Weekly 1-2-1	Same slot weekly, per person	How is this person getting better?	45 min
Monthly	First working week	Where does the number land, and what does the pipeline say about next month?	60 min
Quarterly	Away from the desk	Is the plan still right? Skills, territory, targets, what we stop.	Half day

The daily ten minutes

Standing up, same time, ten minutes, hard stop. One question only: what is in your way? Not what are you working on — that is a status update and it belongs nowhere. Most blockers get cleared on the spot. The alternative is that they sit until Monday.

The weekly one-to-one

Forty-five minutes, coaching only, no pipeline review. This is the meeting most likely to be cancelled and the one that costs most when it is. If your one-to-ones have drifted into deal reviews, the fix is structural rather than one of willpower: the deals now have their own meeting, so this one is free to do its job.

The quarterly session

Half a day, away from the desk, four times a year. This is the one that always gets cancelled, because missing it has no immediate consequence. It is also the only meeting where you ask whether you are doing the right things at all. Book all four now, twelve months ahead.

PART THREE

The deal table — your weekly thirty minutes

The weekly team meeting is the expensive one, and it usually runs long because it is doing the wrong job. Going round the table one person at a time is an information exercise, and the information is already in the CRM. This format does one job instead: decide and commit on the deals that need it.

AGENDA

The Deal Table

Thirty minutes, every week, same slot, ends on time

TIME	WHAT HAPPENS	RULE
Before	Everyone updates the CRM and flags the two deals they want on the table.	No update, no seat. Enforce it twice and it stops being an issue.
0–3	Leader states the number. Where we are, what we need.	Facts only. Three minutes.
3–23	The flagged deals, around two minutes each. What is stuck, what is the decision, who does what by when.	Only deals needing something from the room. A deal that just needs working is not on the table.
23–28	Commitments read back aloud, one person at a time.	Specific and checkable. “Chase Dave” is not a commitment.
28–30	One thing the team should know — a win, a loss, something in the market.	Two minutes, then it ends.

Three things that make or break it

- Open next week by checking last week’s commitments. Skip that twice and the team correctly concludes the commitments were theatre.
- End on time even when it feels unfinished. The discipline of the hard stop is what forces the preparation.
- Expect around three weeks of it feeling too short. That is not the format failing — it is people discovering how much of the old hour was filler.

What a good commitment sounds like

A commitment names a person, an action and a date, and somebody else could tell whether it happened. Compare these two. “I’ll push the Henderson deal along this week.” Against: “I’ll have a signed scope back from Henderson’s operations director by Thursday, or I’ll tell you on Thursday why not.” Only one of those can be checked.

PART FOUR

Changing the rhythm without a mutiny

Resistance to a new meeting structure is rarely about meetings. It is usually about what the new structure will make visible. Sequence the change so the benefits arrive before the exposure does.

SEQUENCE

The order to do it in

Roughly one change a fortnight

ORDER	CHANGE	WHY THIS ORDER
First	Introduce the daily ten minutes.	Small, low threat, and people feel the benefit inside a fortnight. Buys credit for the rest.
Second	Split coaching out of the one-to-one.	Your strongest people will welcome it, which gives you visible support for the change.
Third	Replace the weekly team meeting with the deal table.	By now much of what filled the old hour has found another home, so the cut feels smaller.
Fourth	Book the quarterly sessions twelve months out.	Do it while the momentum is there. Nobody ever books these under pressure.

Make the argument out loud

Do not present this as trying something new. Give the team the arithmetic from Part One and tell them you want to know what those hours are buying. Salespeople respect that argument, because it is the argument they make about their own diaries every day.

What to watch for in the first month

- People bringing deals to the table that do not need a decision. Redirect them, kindly, twice. It corrects itself.
- Commitments getting vaguer over time. This is the early warning sign that you have stopped checking them.
- The one-to-one drifting back to pipeline. Usually means the deal table is not yet trusted to handle deals properly.
- Silence in the daily. Ten minutes of nothing means people do not yet believe blockers get cleared. Clear two publicly and it changes.

CLOSE

Your next seven days

- [ ] List every recurring meeting your team attends and work out the annual cost in hours.
- [ ] Write Inform, Decide, Coach or Commit next to each one. Cancel anything you cannot label.
- [ ] Check whether any single meeting is being asked to coach and commit at the same time.
- [ ] Start the daily ten minutes on Monday.
- [ ] Book the four quarterly sessions for the next twelve months.
- [ ] Rewrite next week's team meeting agenda using the deal table format.
- [ ] Write down last week's commitments and check them, out loud, at the start of the next meeting.

A rhythm holds a standard in place week to week. What it cannot do on its own is decide what happens when somebody misses a commitment. A commitment that can be quietly missed with no consequence stops being a commitment within about five weeks. That is the subject of the next playbook in this series.

This playbook accompanies Episode 18 of The Mastery Podcast with James Denny and extends the Sales Geek Leadership & Management Programme. It is designed to be used standalone — no podcast listening required — and may be shared with clients and prospects by Sales Geek franchisees.

Sales Geek — the world's largest provider of part-time Sales Directors. | salesgeek.co.uk