Meeting Audit Lab

Audit guide · test whether a standing meeting still earns its cost — then keep it, fix it, or kill it

Your job: you own a recurring meeting and you're going to decide whether it still deserves to exist. Not whether it could run better — whether it should run at all. Calculate its true annual cost, compare it with the value it creates today, then make one decision: keep it, fix it, or kill it. This is your call as the owner — not a group vote, not a workshop.

The one line: a meeting's cost is paid every week; its value was decided once.

THE ONE DISCIPLINE THAT MAKES THIS WORK

This tool asks one kind of question: **should this meeting exist?** Not "was it a good meeting?" Keep returning to **existence**, never to **facilitation**:
• Does it still justify what it costs? · Could the same outcome happen without a meeting? · Does it still need to run this often? · Does everyone attending still need to be there?
The moment you find yourself asking "was everyone engaged?" or "was the agenda good?", you've switched tools — those questions belong to Decision-Driven Meetings.

· WHEN DO I USE THIS?

Use this when

GOOD FIT

- A standing meeting has run for months and **no one's asked if it still earns its place**
- You suspect a meeting has outlived the reason it was created
- The calendar is full of recurring slots and real work has nowhere to go
- A meeting feels like habit, not value — but you can't prove it

USE ANOTHER TOOL

- The meeting should exist and you want it to **run better** — clearer decisions, tighter agenda → **Decision-Driven Meetings**
- You're an attendee, not the owner — you can't decide its fate → raise it with whoever owns it
- It's a one-off meeting, not a recurring commitment → there's no repeating cost to audit

The test question: "Do I own a recurring meeting I could actually change or cancel?" If yes, this decides whether it should exist. If it should exist and you want it to run better, that's Decision-Driven Meetings — audit first; if it survives, improve it.

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PART 1 AUDIT

the cost, and the honest value

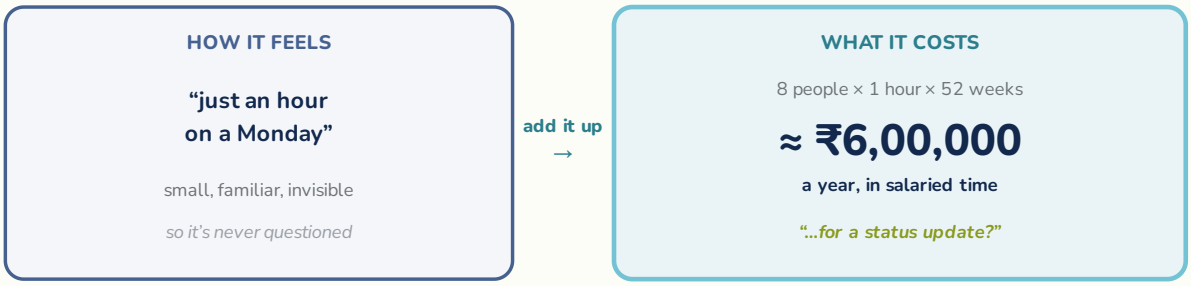
1 · WHAT IS THIS REALLY DOING?

The one idea

THE ONE IDEA

A recurring meeting costs time every week, but its value was judged only once — when it was created. The cost keeps adding up where no one sees it, so the meeting is never re-tested against it. Put the true annual cost next to the honest value, and the decision becomes easy. Most meetings survive simply because **nobody ever decided otherwise**.

THE COST NOBODY ADDS UP



The cost is paid every week. Its value was decided once.

2 · WHAT DO I NEED?

What you’ll need

Item	What it is, and when it’s used
One meeting you own (core)	A specific recurring meeting you control — you can decide whether it continues, changes, or ends. Not one you merely attend.
The audit sheet (core)	Use it to calculate the annual cost, record the meeting’s value, and capture the keep/fix/kill decision — all in one view.
Rough numbers	Headcount, meeting length, how often it runs, and a sense of salaried time. Approximate is enough — you only need a realistic estimate.
An honest view of the value	Be honest about what the meeting delivers *today* — not what it was created to deliver. The audit only works if you’re straight about this.

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3 · HOW DO I RUN THE AUDIT?

Cost, then value

Keep the cost calculation **fast** — it's the number, not a spreadsheet exercise. Spend your thinking on the value and the verdict.

1 · Compute the true annual cost	**4 min**	Attendees × how long the meeting runs × how many times a year, in salaried time. *Get the annual number — the one nobody adds up.* Approximate is fine; you only need a realistic estimate, not two decimal places.
2 · State the real value	**4 min**	*What outcome does this meeting produce today? Could the same result happen without a meeting, less often, or with fewer people?* Be honest — not what it was meant to deliver a year ago.

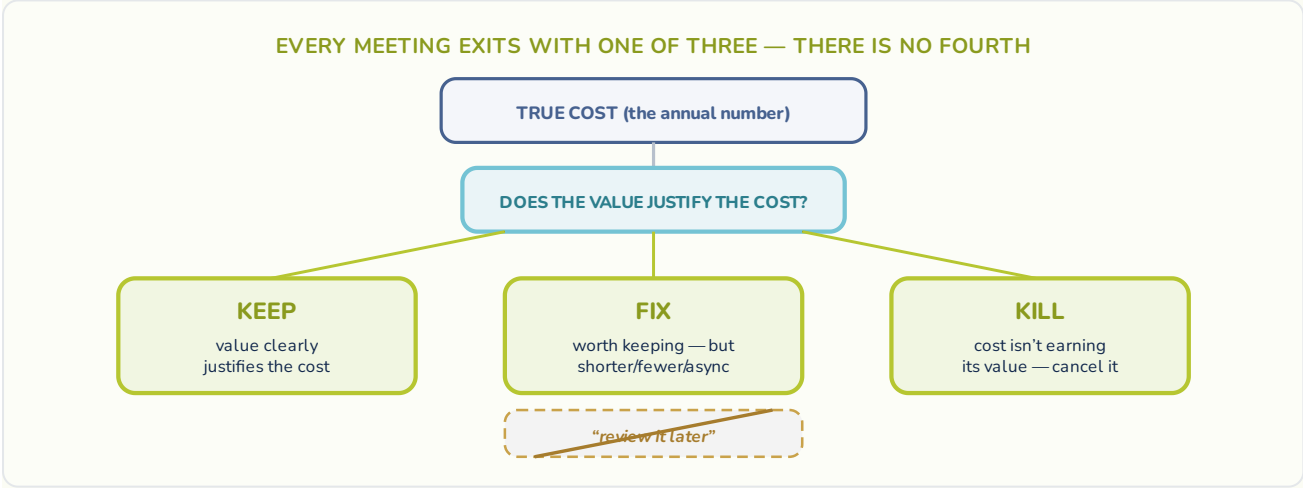
PART 2 VERDICT & ACTION

the forced call, and making it real

4 · HOW DO I MAKE THE CALL?

Keep, fix, or kill

Compare the cost with the value and choose **one of three**. There is no fourth option — no "review it later", no "leave it for now". That escape hatch is exactly how the meeting survived this long unexamined — the real enemy was never the meeting, it was default continuation: it kept running because nobody ever decided to stop it.



Verdict	When it applies — and what it means
KEEP	The value clearly justifies the cost. Note *why*, so next time's audit is faster — and so "keep" is a decision, not a default.
FIX	Worth keeping, but not as it runs. Name the exact change: shorten it, cut attendees, run it less often, or replace it with an async update.
KILL	The cost isn't earning its value. Cancel the series — not "wind it down", cancel it.

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5 · HOW DO I MAKE IT REAL?

Action, same day

A verdict you don't act on is a meeting you kept. Do the action while the audit is in front of you: **KILL** — cancel the recurring invite now. **FIX** — change the calendar invite today (new length, new attendee list, new frequency, or an async replacement). **KEEP** — write one line on why it earns its cost, and set when you'll audit it again.

6 · WHAT IF IT GOES WRONG?

Common mistakes

What you'll see	The fix
You drift into "was it a good meeting?"	The one trap. Engagement, agenda, discussion quality — those are Decision-Driven Meetings questions. Stay on existence: should this run at all?
You reach for a fourth option ("let's revisit next quarter")	There isn't one. "Revisit later" is how it survived unexamined. Keep, fix, or kill — today.
The cost calculation becomes a project	It's a two-minute estimate, not a costing exercise. The rough annual number is enough to force the verdict.
You soften "kill" into "fix" to avoid cancelling	Be honest. If the value doesn't justify the cost and no change would fix that, it's a kill — a half-measure just keeps paying the bill.
The verdict is made but never actioned	Then nothing changed. Cancel or edit the invite while the sheet is still open, or you've simply kept the meeting.

Before you close the audit, check:

- ✓ You have the true annual cost — a real number, not a feeling
- ✓ You stated the honest value it delivers *today*
- ✓ Every question you asked was about existence, not facilitation
- ✓ You chose one of three — keep, fix, or kill — with no fourth option
- ✓ You actioned it: cancelled, edited the invite, or logged why to keep

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7 · HOW DO I MAKE THIS STICK?

Take it back to work

THE HABIT

Audit your recurring meetings on a set day — the first of the quarter is easy to remember. For each, ask the one question: "if this weren't already in the calendar, would I create it today?" If the answer is no, you have your verdict.

Run the audit across your whole calendar once and the maths works in your favour: a handful of kills and fixes can hand a team back days of focus time a month — time that was quietly leaking into meetings no one had re-tested.

Appendix a worked audit · where this sits

8 · A WORKED AUDIT

Watch the number force the call

The meeting: a weekly hour-long status meeting, eight people, running for over a year. It's never been questioned — it's just "the Monday sync".

Step	What the owner found
True cost	8 people × 1 hour × 52 weeks, in salaried time — roughly ₹6,00,000 a year. The owner had never added it up. "…for a status update?"
Real value	Honest answer: it's a round-the-table status update. Useful to hear, but nothing is decided — and most of it could be read in five minutes.
Still valuable?	The outcome (shared status) doesn't need eight people in a room for an hour. It could be an async post.
Verdict	**KILL** — replaced with a written Monday update everyone reads in their own time. Not "shorten it"; cancel it.
Action	The recurring invite was cancelled that afternoon, and the async update posted the next Monday.

The lesson, not stated but felt: nothing about the meeting had changed in a year — only that someone finally put its cost next to its value. The ₹6,00,000 made the call the moment it was visible.

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9 · WHERE DOES THIS FIT?

Where this sits in the Gym

Two tools handle recurring meetings — and they do opposite jobs. They sequence naturally:

Tool	Its job — and when to reach for it
Meeting Audit Lab	**Decide whether the meeting should exist.** Judge it from the outside: does it still earn its cost? Keep, fix, or kill.
Decision-Driven Meetings	**Improve how the meeting runs.** For a meeting that should exist: make it produce clear decisions instead of drifting.

The sequence: audit whether the meeting deserves to exist first. If it survives the audit, then use Decision-Driven Meetings to make it run well. Never improve a meeting you should have killed.

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