



# The Chief of Staff's Board Meeting Playbook

Run the Prep. Drive the Strategy. Free the CEO.



# Own the Board Meeting Process.

As Chief of Staff, you're not just helping with board meeting logistics—you're orchestrating a strategic event that influences the company's direction. Your goal is to make board meetings more focused, more productive, and more aligned with the CEO's priorities.

# 1 – Know the Stakes—and the Players

Board meetings are where strategy, performance, and credibility converge.

## What You Must Know:

- Board dynamics: Who challenges, who supports, who skims
- Key areas of concern: growth, runway, product, churn, team
- The CEO's narrative: What story are you helping tell?

👉 **Pro Tip:** Keep a “Board Dossier” with profiles of each director, their historical comments, and how they consume info.

# 2 - Set the Timeline—and Enforce It

Most board prep stress comes from delayed starts and unclear ownership.

## Standard Timeline (Adjust as Needed):

- T-30 Days: Agenda and goals aligned with CEO
- T-21 Days: Department heads submit inputs
- T-14 Days: First draft of the deck
- T-7 Days: CEO review and feedback
- T-3 Days: Final polish + distribution
- T+1 Day: Post-meeting summary & task tracking

👉 **Pro Tip:** Create a standing “Board Prep War Room” calendar series with prep milestones for every quarter.

# 3 – Architect the Agenda with Intention

A great board meeting starts with a focused agenda, not a bloated one.

## How to Build It:

- Anchor on the company's biggest strategic questions
- Limit routine updates—shift them to pre-read
- Prioritize discussions where the board adds value

👉 **Pro Tip:** Design the agenda around decisions, not presentations.

# 4 – Direct the Deck (Without Designing It)

You don't need to make the slides—but you do need to drive the message.

## Your Role:

- Define the narrative arc with the CEO
- Collect insights from functional leaders
- Ensure consistency of data and tone
- Collaborate with design or EA to clean up slides

👉 **Pro Tip:** Review last quarter's deck and post-mortem—what worked, what confused the board, what got ignored

# 5 - Reclaim Executive Hours

The CEO doesn't just present updates—they tell a strategic story.

## Help Them:

- Craft a compelling open and close
- Highlight wins—but own challenges transparently
- Connect today's metrics to tomorrow's mission

👉 **Pro Tip:** Use a “One-Minute Narrative” test: Can the CEO clearly state the board meeting takeaway in 60 seconds?

# 5 - Coordinate Leadership Contributions

Department updates shouldn't derail the meeting—they should support the strategy.

## Actions:

- Coach execs to provide context, not just metrics
- Align all updates to a single narrative theme
- Review slides for brevity and clarity

👉 **Pro Tip:** Host a 30-minute “dry run” with all execs presenting in order—timing, flow, and transitions matter.



# 6 – Prep the Board, Not Just the CEO

A well-prepped board gives better input and wastes less time.

## How to Do It:

- Deliver materials 3–5 days in advance
- Include a “What You Need to Know” summary
- Flag the 2–3 biggest questions the CEO wants feedback on

👉 **Pro Tip:** Send a brief “Board Cover Note” with the deck—focus their attention on what matters most.

# 7 – Run the Room (Even from the Background)

During the meeting, your job is part operator, part strategist.

## What to Do:

- Track timing and move the meeting forward
- Capture questions, follow-ups, and tone
- Step in to clarify if discussions drift or become unclear

👉 **Pro Tip:** Sit near the CEO. Be their silent signal system (e.g., sticky notes, Slack, eye contact).

# 8 – Follow-Up Is Where Value Is Cemented

The board meeting's real ROI comes from how you act on it.

## Post-Meeting Moves:

- Share a short, structured board recap
- Turn discussion points into assigned tasks
- Archive materials securely (e.g., Zeck, Notion, Drive)
- Start the prep loop for next quarter

👉 **Pro Tip:** Keep a “Board Meeting Journal”—note wins, gaps, and suggestions after every session.