Legal Career Studio

Productive Work Sessions

A checklist to help legal teams run focused meetings.

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1. BEFORE THE SESSION

- [ ] Define the meeting's purpose in one sentence.
- [ ] Identify the required outcomes. ("This meeting will be successful if….")
- [ ] Invite only contributors or decision-makers.
- [ ] Share a short agenda (3-5 bullets).
- [ ] Send any pre-read documents early.

2. AT THE START

- [ ] Restate the goal, scope, and desired outcome.
- [ ] Confirm time limits.
- [ ] Clarify roles: Who will facilitate, take notes, etc.? Who are the decision-makers?
- [ ] Align on decision criteria (risk, timeline, dependencies).

3. DURING THE SESSION

- [ ] Keep discussion anchored to the outcome; redirect drift.
- [ ] Track issues and decisions on a visible list.
- [ ] Ask clarifying questions that surface blockers.
- [ ] Name disagreements directly
- [ ] Capture owners, deadlines, and dependencies in real time

4. WRAPPING UP

- [ ] Review each decision made.
- [ ] Restate open times and owners.
- [ ] Confirm next steps (who, what, and by when).
- [ ] Send a brief recap within 24 hours.

COMMON PITFALLS

- Too many attendees
- Agenda too broad
- One voice dominating
- Diving into details too early
- Ignoring decision criteria
- Ending without owners or deadlines

About the Author

Ryan Black is an executive coach with extensive experience in BigLaw and in-house legal departments. He works with lawyers, legal ops professionals, and paralegals to build strong career narratives and represent themselves confidently. His approach is grounded in behavior-change science and proven, practical frameworks that make an impact.