Ask good questions before you build.

A practical way to prepare for the conversation that decides what to improve, build, or do next.

INSIDE

01

A four-step prep method

Name the decision, trace one example, compare moves, ask what is open.

02

Questions for four meeting types

Discovery, proposal review, unblocking, and rollout.

03

A printable one-page brief

Before the call and after it, on one sheet.

04

An AI prompt for the first draft

Turns your notes into a brief you still verify.

WRITTEN BY

Anna Bui

linkedin.com/in/anna-bui-abplayground

Start with the decision.

A good meeting question comes after you have checked what you can. Prepare enough to understand the choice in front of the group, then ask what still needs someone's judgment.

Step 01

Name the open decision

What needs to be approved, changed, tested, paused, or ruled out? Write the decision in one sentence before you draft questions.

Step 02

Trace one real example

Follow a recent task, record, or incident through the workflow. Compare views, dates, definitions, and what happened next.

Step 03

Compare plausible moves

Look at existing work, a smaller fix, a test, a dependency, and the option to wait or stop. What would make each choice useful or wrong?

Step 04

Ask only what remains open

Turn the evidence into up to three priority questions. Each answer should change a decision, expose an assumption, or alter the next step.

ROUTINE CHECK-IN

Bring the open decision, what is already settled, and one real example. Investigate further only where a gap could change today's choice.

Before you recommend, weigh each serious option.

Value
Whose work improves? How often, and at what cost?

Fit
Does it address the priority? What would it displace?

Existing work
Could another effort be reused or coordinated?

Feasibility
Are data, access, time, and capacity available?

Smallest useful step
What tests the idea before full commitment?

Reason to reject
What would show this is unnecessary?

Label every claim in your brief.

CONFIRMED
What people agreed.

OBSERVED
What a source showed, and when.

ASSUMED
What still needs a check.

UNKNOWN
What remains unanswered.

An empty field may mean data was not collected, could not be matched, or failed to load. It does not prove that nothing happened.

Find the question inside the evidence.

Use this chain to separate a fact you can check from a choice the meeting needs to make.



ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE · NOT A PROJECT REPORT

Two views disagree about whether a task is complete.

Source to check: the status summary and task detail view; confirm they show the same task, when each updated, and what “complete” means.

Supposed finding: one view counts submission as complete; the other waits for acceptance.
Implication: follow-up may stop before acceptance.
Open choice: which event should end follow-up?

> **“One view treats submission as complete; the other waits for acceptance. Which event should end follow-up, and who confirms it?”**

Compare the moves: reminders repeat the ambiguity; rebuilding the views commits effort before the rule is settled. Agree the completion rule and test it on one task first. When options are close, prefer the smaller reversible step that tests the biggest uncertainty; the cheapest test is not always the best.

Can I check this myself?
Do the source or workflow check before the call when you have access.

Would the answer change the choice?
Drop questions that only repeat a fact or invite a status recap.

Have I named the uncertainty?
Say what you could not verify instead of treating it as fact.

Match the question to the moment.

The meeting type changes what you need to verify and what decision the answer should support.

DISCOVER A PROBLEM

Is this worth attention?

“Walk me through the last time this happened.”

Then ask: “What did it cost in time, rework, or a missed outcome?” Check the person’s role and any available example first.

REVIEW A PROPOSAL

Approve, change, or reject?

“What needs to change before we can agree on this?”

Check first: proposed scope, unresolved tradeoffs, and who can approve.

UNBLOCK DELIVERY

Which dependency moves next?

“We’re blocked on X and need Y to proceed. Who can provide it, and by when?”

Check first: the stalled step, missing input, likely owner, and deadline.

DECIDE ROLLOUT

Proceed, limit, or hold?

“Here’s what we’ve verified and what remains untested. What else do you need to decide?”

Check first: test conditions, known failures, and whether recovery is available and checked.

Close on the smallest useful next step. That may be a source check, a test, a policy decision, waiting for another owner, or deciding not to build. If there is a follow-up, agree who owns it and when the decision should be revisited.

Open with continuity.

“Last time we agreed X. I checked Y, and Z remains unresolved. Is that still what we need to settle today?”

For a first meeting, establish the person’s role, priority, and decision authority first.

Questions that keep you honest.

“What happens today when an item goes unanswered?”

“What would tell us the current process is enough, or that something else matters more?”

Your one-page meeting brief.

Fill only the parts that affect the decision. Keep source links and dates beside consequential claims.

Person / role / who can decide

Meeting purpose

The open decision, in one sentence

Already settled

One real example to walk through

Evidence → finding → implication

Mark what is confirmed, observed, assumed, or unknown. Include source and date.

Recommendation / alternative / what would change the recommendation

Opening + up to three priority questions

Write the decision each question affects.

AFTER THE CALL

Confirmed decision / remaining unknown

Next action, owner, review date or trigger

Use AI for the brief. Verify the work.

This prompt helps organize material you provide. It cannot inspect a workflow you have not shown it. Use its gaps as a list of checks before the meeting.

COPYABLE PROMPT

PASTE, THEN FILL THE FIELDS

Help me prepare a concise decision meeting brief from the sources below.

Meeting purpose and people: `[what I know]`
Decision to settle: `[if known; otherwise infer a candidate and label it]`
Constraints or private details to omit: `[if any]`
Sources with dates: `[paste notes, summaries, screenshots, proposals, or work records]`

Read the supplied material. Identify previous decisions, current priorities, existing or planned work, owners, and unresolved gaps. Compare stated needs with observed behavior and source dates. Use one real example where the sources provide one. Distinguish confirmed facts, observations, assumptions, and unknowns. If a source is inaccessible, say so. Do not invent facts or treat a prototype as proof of live behavior.

Give me:

1. A short brief with the open decision, settled points, relevant evidence, and what I should verify before the call.
2. A natural opening and up to three priority questions. For each, show source → finding → implication → open choice and name the decision it affects.
3. A recommendation only if the evidence supports one; include an alternative and what would change the recommendation.

If an essential input is missing, ask me up to three focused questions. Otherwise mark the gap and proceed. Aim for 500 words; use up to 700 only to keep claims grounded. Write questions in language I could say aloud. Separate checks I can do myself from questions requiring judgment or lived experience. Keep proposals distinct from approvals. Close with the smallest useful next step, owner, and review date or trigger only when known. Waiting or stopping may be right. Do not repeat the brief as a checklist or append a blank template.

Tell me which meeting you are preparing for.

Message me on LinkedIn with the decision on the table and the one thing you cannot verify yet.

Message Anna on LinkedIn

linkedin.com/in/anna-bui-abplayground