

Rock Canvas

90-Day Transformation Sprint

Transform your biggest bottleneck into your competitive advantage in 90 days.

What is a Rock?

A **Rock** is a focused 90-day sprint to eliminate your single biggest organizational bottleneck.

Why 90 days?

- Long enough for meaningful progress
- Short enough to maintain intensity
- Human psychology optimized for this timeframe

Key principle: One Rock, one owner, one outcome.

The Rock Canvas Template

The Problem

What is the bottleneck slowing everything down?

The Physics

What are the actual mechanics creating this delay?

Describe the specific organizational dynamics, sequential dependencies, approval chains, handoffs, or waiting periods that create the bottleneck.

Example: "Sequential approvals through 14 systems create 41 days of waiting for 90 minutes of actual work."

Key insight: Understanding the physics reveals where to intervene for permanent elimination.

The Outcome

What does success look like? Be specific and measurable.

Current state: _____

Target state: _____

Measurement: _____

Success criteria (Done looks like):

- [] _____
 - [] _____
 - [] _____
 - [] _____
-

The Timeline

Start date: _____

Target completion: _____ (90 days from start)

Milestone checkpoints (every 2 weeks):

WEEK	MILESTONE	STATUS
1-2		
3-4		
5-6		
7-8		
9-10		
11-12		
13	COMPLETE	

The Rock Owner

Name: _____

Why this person?

- ☐ Deep frustration with the current state
- ☐ Detailed knowledge of the actual process
- ☐ Respect from operational teams
- ☐ Willingness to break rules (except regulations)
- ☐ No political agenda or empire to protect

- [] Track record of building workarounds
- [] Available 50%+ time for 90 days

Rock Owner time commitment: _____ % (minimum 25%, ideally 50% +)

The Team

Team size: _____ people

Team members (to be selected by Rock Owner):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Selection criteria: Skills needed to eliminate the constraint, not political representation.

The Resources

Budget

Discretionary budget: \$ _____

Budget authority: Rock Owner can spend without approval up to \$ _____ per transaction

People

Dedicated time:

- Rock Owner: _____ %

- **Team members:** _____ % each

Can pull resources from other departments: Yes / No

Technology

Tools/software needed:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Procurement authority: Can purchase directly without standard procurement process for items under \$ __

Time

Protected time blocks: _____

Meeting exemptions: Rock Owner and team exempt from non-essential meetings

External Support

Consultants/contractors needed:

- _____
- _____

Hiring authority: Can engage contractors directly (Yes / No)

The Obstacles

What are the 3 biggest obstacles to success?

Obstacle 1:

Mitigation:

Obstacle 2:

Mitigation:

Obstacle 3:

Mitigation:

The Authority Package

Critical for success: Organizations that give responsibility without power fail.

Decision Rights (Rock Owner has authority to):

- ☐ Change any process that doesn't violate regulations
- ☐ Eliminate any approval that isn't legally required
- ☐ Redesign workflows without committee approval
- ☐ Select team members from any department
- ☐ Make technology decisions without IT approval
- ☐ Adjust budget allocation within total Rock budget

Resource Control:

- ☐ Discretionary spending up to \$ _ without approval

- ☐ Authority to purchase tools/software without procurement process
- ☐ Ability to hire contractors or consultants directly
- ☐ Access to any internal data or system

Protection Guarantees:

- ☐ Direct line to CEO, bypassing hierarchy
 - ☐ Weekly CEO check-in (15 minutes max)
 - ☐ Public executive support announcement
 - ☐ Immunity from political retaliation
 - ☐ Exemption from standard approval processes (except regulatory)
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Weekly Review Questions

Answer these every week during the 90-day sprint:

Week _____

1. Are we on track to hit the 90-day outcome?

- ☐ Yes, on track
- ☐ No, but adjusting approach
- ☐ No, blocked (escalate immediately)

2. What constraint did we eliminate this week?

3. What's blocking us from moving faster?

4. What support do we need from leadership?

Red Flags

▶ Rock Owner Changed Mid-Sprint

This almost always means failure. Rock ownership requires deep context and commitment. Changing owners resets the clock.

▶ Success Criteria Changed

If the target moves, you're managing perception, not solving problems. Lock success criteria at the start.

▶ No Measurable Progress for 2+ Weeks

Lack of progress = blocked or wrong approach. Escalate immediately for CEO intervention.

▶ Rock Owner Spending <25% Time

If the Rock isn't worth 25% of the owner's time, it's not a real Rock. Either free up the owner's time or choose a different Rock.

▶ Team Keeps Changing

Rotating team members prevents momentum. Lock the team for 90 days unless someone leaves the company.

▶ Scope Creep

Adding objectives mid-sprint dilutes focus. If new priorities emerge, finish this Rock first, then start a new one.

Rock Identification Matrix

Rate potential Rocks on four criteria (1-10 scale):

CRITERIA	WEIGHT	YOUR ROCK SCORE
Universal Pain - Does everyone suffer from this bottleneck?	30%	_____ / 10
Contained Scope - Clear process boundaries, not enterprise-wide?	25%	_____ / 10
Measurable Impact - Can we quantify the improvement?	25%	_____ / 10
Catalytic Potential - Will solving this unlock other improvements?	20%	_____ / 10
TOTAL SCORE	100%	_____ / 10

Scoring guide:

- **8.0+** Ideal Rock—clear impact, achievable scope
- **6.0-7.9** Good Rock—consider prioritizing
- **<6.0** Too diffuse or low impact—choose different constraint

Example: Protocol Amendments Rock

The Problem

Protocol amendments take 6-12 weeks, destroying trial momentum and delaying patient enrollment.

The Physics

Sequential approvals through 14 systems create 41 days of waiting for 90 minutes of actual work:

- 127 discrete steps across 14 systems
- 23 approval signatures (only 3 required by regulation)
- 47 documents generated (most never read)
- 16 handoffs between departments
- 11 waiting periods built into the process
- 6 committees that review but never reject

Reality: We're not slow at protocol amendments. We're fast at protocol amendments. We're just world-class at waiting.

The Outcome

Current state: 42-day average cycle time (portal to portal)

Target state: 48-hour protocol amendment turnaround (portal to portal)

Measurement: Days from amendment submission to final approval

Success criteria:

- [] 90% of amendments complete within 48 hours
- [] Only regulatory-required approvals remain
- [] Zero committee reviews for standard amendments
- [] Automated routing and documentation

The Timeline

Start: January 8, 2025

Target completion: April 8, 2025 (90 days)

The Rock Owner

Name: Sarah Chen, Clinical Operations Manager

Why Sarah:

- ✓ Deep frustration—built 3 workarounds in last year
- ✓ Knows every step of current process intimately
- ✓ Respected by sites, medical teams, and regulatory
- ✓ Willing to challenge sacred cows
- ✓ No empire to protect (came from external role)
- ✓ Successfully eliminated site activation delays last year
- ✓ Available 60% time for 90 days

The Team

5 people selected by Sarah (not assigned by politics)

The Resources

- **Budget:** \$150,000 discretionary
- **Authority:** Up to \$25K per purchase without approval
- **Time:** Sarah 60%, team members 30% each
- **External:** Can hire workflow automation consultant

The Obstacles

1. **Medical review committee resistance** → Mitigation: CEO announces regulatory analysis showing only 3 signatures required
2. **Legal department risk aversion** → Mitigation: External regulatory counsel validates streamlined process
3. **Regulatory interpretation confusion** → Mitigation: Direct FDA liaison established

The Authority Package

- Direct line to CEO weekly
 - Can eliminate any non-regulatory approval
 - Can redesign workflows without IT approval
 - Public CEO announcement of Rock with executive support
 - Immunity from departmental pushback
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After Your Rock: Quick Wins & New Rocks

Quick Wins (Weeks 10-12)

As you complete your Rock, you'll discover easy adjacent improvements:

- Processes similar to your Rock
- Teams requesting your approach
- Systems ready to replicate your solution

Document and share these immediately.

Next Rock Selection

Use what you learned to identify the next biggest bottleneck:

- What became visible during this sprint?
- Where did you hit unexpected obstacles?
- What constraint emerged once you eliminated this one?

90-day cadence: Complete Rock → Identify next Rock → Launch immediately

Success Metrics

Does your Rock succeed if:

- ☐ You hit your 90-day outcome (measurable target achieved)
- ☐ The constraint is eliminated permanently (doesn't recur)
- ☐ The solution is systematized (encoded into processes/systems)
- ☐ Other teams request your approach (catalytic impact)
- ☐ Your team wants to tackle another Rock immediately (momentum built)

All 5 checkboxes = Rock success

Getting Started

This week:

1. Identify your biggest bottleneck using the Rock Identification Matrix
2. Complete "The Problem" and "The Physics" sections
3. Select Rock Owner using the 7-point checklist

Next week:

1. Define success criteria with Rock Owner
2. Assemble Rock Owner Authority Package
3. Get CEO commitment for weekly check-ins

Week 3:

1. Rock Owner selects team
2. Secure resources and budget
3. Public launch announcement

Week 4+:

1. Execute with weekly reviews
2. Track progress against milestones
3. Escalate blocks immediately

Remember: One Rock, one owner, one outcome, 90 days. Focus eliminates the constraint.

From The Velocity Framework: Breakthrough Biotech @ Breakthrough Speed