

# THE REALITY CHECK™

## The 30-Minute Meeting That Stops You Building The Wrong Thing

### A Guide by Veritas BS

"We're Business Solutions. We kill the other kind."

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## Table of Contents

1. [The Uncomfortable Truth](#)
  2. [The Problem](#)
  3. [The Solution](#)
  4. [The Three Questions](#)
  5. [How to Start](#)
  6. [What Will Happen](#)
  7. [Rules for Success](#)
  8. [Warning Signs](#)
  9. [For Leaders](#)
  10. [Real Case Studies](#)
  11. [FAQ](#)
  12. [Get Help](#)
- 

## The Uncomfortable Truth

Right now, your organisation is building something that will fail.

Someone on your team knows it.

They can't say it.

It will cost you millions.

This guide will fix that in 30 minutes a week.

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## The Problem

### Every Failed Project Tells the Same Story

**Month 1:** "This is definitely what customers want"

**Month 3:** "Great progress, on track for delivery"

**Month 6:** "Just needs some polish"

**Month 9:** "Why is adoption so low?"

**Month 12:** "Let's pivot to something else"

## The Real Tragedy

Someone knew at Month 2 that it would fail.

- Maybe the developer who couldn't find the use case
- Maybe the designer who saw customers confused
- Maybe the analyst who noticed the data didn't support it
- Maybe the PM who knew competitors had already failed at this

But they couldn't say it because:

- "We've already committed to the board"
- "The CEO loves this project"
- "I don't want to be negative"
- "Maybe I'm wrong"
- "It's not my place"

## The Cost of Silence

- **Average wasted per failed project:** £2.3M
- **Average time lost:** 9 months
- **Average team members who "knew":** 3-4
- **Average week they knew:** Week 8
- **Week it gets killed:** Week 52

**The gap between knowing and saying is where money burns.**

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## The Solution

One meeting. Three questions. 30 minutes. Every week.

### The Reality Check

**What:** A weekly meeting that surfaces uncomfortable truths before they become expensive disasters

**When:** Every Thursday at 2pm (or whenever works - but same time, every week)

**Who:** Everyone touching the work + anyone who can say "stop"

**How long:** 30 minutes maximum (set a timer)

**What happens:** Three questions that cut through BS

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## The Three Questions

### Question 1: What evidence do we have that someone wants this?

#### Not Acceptable:

- "We think customers want it"
- "Research shows millennials prefer..."
- "Gartner says this is the future"
- "Our competitors are doing it"
- "The board expects it"

#### Required - Actual Evidence:

- Customer said: "[specific quote from real customer]"
- Usage data shows: [specific metric and number]
- Someone paid: [actual amount paid]
- Behaviour observed: [what you witnessed]
- Support tickets asking for: [number and quotes]

If silence lasts longer than 10 seconds, you have your answer.

#### Examples of Good Evidence:

- "37 customers have specifically requested this feature in the last month"
- "Trial users who have this capability convert at 73% vs 22% without"
- "We lost 3 deals last week specifically because we don't have this"
- "Customer X said they'll pay £50k extra for this capability"

#### Examples of Bad Evidence:

- "Everyone wants things to be faster"
  - "Digital transformation is essential"
  - "We need to keep up with innovation"
  - "The strategy says we need this"
-

## **Question 2: What did we learn this week that surprises us?**

### **What This Reveals:**

If nothing surprised you, you're either:

- Not looking at reality
- Ignoring what you're seeing
- So far off track that you don't even know what to measure

### **Good Surprises:**

- "Usage is 10x what we expected"
- "Customers are using it completely differently than designed"
- "Our assumption about the problem was wrong"
- "The technical approach won't scale"
- "Customers actually prefer the old way"

### **What Counts:**

- Things that challenge assumptions
- Data that doesn't match expectations
- Feedback that changes your thinking
- Discoveries that make you pivot

### **The Test:**

Did someone say:

- "Oh shit"
- "Really?"
- "I didn't expect that"
- "That changes things"
- "We need to rethink this"

**If nothing surprised you this week, you're not learning.**

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## **Question 3: What are we pretending not to know?**

### **The Most Important Question**

This is where truth lives. The silence before someone answers is where value hides.

## **Common Answers:**

- "Nobody actually wants this"
- "We don't have the skills to build this"
- "The CEO's pet project has no business case"
- "Our competitor already does this better"
- "The tech debt will kill us before we ship"
- "Customers are lying to us in user research"
- "This will never get regulatory approval"
- "We're solving the wrong problem"
- "The market has moved on"
- "We're building this for the wrong reasons"

## **Why This Works:**

- Permission to say the unsayable
- Psychological safety in the framing
- Everyone knows something
- Truth is addictive once started

## **The Power:**

When someone finally says what everyone's thinking:

- The room exhales
- Others add their evidence
- Decisions become obvious
- Months of waste prevented

**The uncomfortable silence before someone speaks is where millions are saved.**

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## **How to Start**

### **This Thursday - Send This Email**

#### **Subject: Reality Check - Trying something for 4 weeks**

Team,  
I want to try something. 30 minutes every Thursday.  
Three questions. No prep needed. No presentations.

If it doesn't surface something valuable by Week 4, we'll kill it.

But I think it will change how we work.

See attached guide. First meeting this Thursday, 2pm, [Room/Zoom].

The only requirement: honest answers.

## Attach this PDF

### Your First Meeting

#### Minute 0-5: Setup

- Share the three questions (on screen or whiteboard)
- Say: "We're trying this for 4 weeks. No prep, no slides, just honest answers."
- Set 30-minute timer

#### Minute 5-10: Question 1

- Ask: "What evidence do we have that someone wants this?"
- Don't fill silence
- Don't accept vague answers
- Push for specifics

#### Minute 10-15: Question 2

- Ask: "What surprised us this week?"
- If nothing: "Then what are we not looking at?"
- List surprises without judgment

#### Minute 15-25: Question 3

- Ask: "What are we pretending not to know?"
- Let silence hang
- First person to speak is the bravest
- Others will follow

#### Minute 25-30: Close

- No action items
  - No follow-up emails
  - Just: "See you next Thursday"
  - Let truth simmer
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# **What Will Happen**

## **Week 1: Confusion**

- "Is this really all we do?"
- Awkward silences
- Surface-level answers
- Nervous laughter on Question 3
- "Should we really say this?"

**This is normal. Don't give up.**

## **Week 2: Testing**

- Someone says something slightly uncomfortable
- Others nod in agreement
- "I've been thinking that too"
- Real conversation starts
- Energy shifts

**This is when it starts working.**

## **Week 3: Breakthrough**

- Someone says the thing everyone's thinking
- Major assumption challenged
- Something gets killed or pivoted
- Team feels lighter
- "Why didn't we do this earlier?"

**This is when value appears.**

## **Week 4: Embedding**

- Team can't imagine not having this meeting
- Other teams start asking what you're doing
- Execs randomly show up
- Becomes "how we work"
- First disaster avoided

**This is when it becomes permanent.**

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# Rules for Success

## The Five Iron Rules

### 1. No Slides

PowerPoint is where truth goes to die. Just talk.

### 2. No Prep

Preparation creates polish. Polish hides truth. Come as you are.

### 3. No Politics

Data or death. Evidence or silence. No spin.

### 4. No Actions

Unless someone says "stop everything." This isn't about creating work.

### 5. No Missing It

Ever. Cancel other meetings first. Truth waits for no one.

## Additional Guidelines

### Time Management

- 30 minutes maximum
- Use a visible timer
- Stop mid-sentence when timer goes off
- Never extend "just to finish this point"

### Participation

- Everyone speaks at least once
- Silence is better than fluff
- "I don't know" is a valid answer
- Questions are better than statements

### Documentation

- No minutes
- No formal notes
- Maybe one person captures "what we're pretending not to know"
- Share nothing unless something gets killed

## Follow-Up

- No action list emails
  - No "great meeting" messages
  - Let decisions emerge naturally
  - Actions happen because people can't NOT act on truth
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## Warning Signs

### Signs You're Doing It Right

- **Arguments happen** (productive ones about evidence)
- **Something gets killed** before it wastes millions
- **Uncomfortable truths** get easier to say each week
- "I don't know" becomes acceptable
- **Decisions get made faster** because reality is clear
- **Other meetings shrink** or disappear
- **Execs start attending** uninvited
- **Other teams copy you**
- **Team morale improves** despite killing projects
- **You prevent at least one disaster** per quarter

### Signs You're Doing It Wrong

- **Takes more than 30 minutes** (you're discussing, not facing reality)
- **People prepare presentations** (polish hides truth)
- **Question 3 gets safe answers** (no psychological safety)
- **Becomes a status update** (wrong meeting)
- **Action items multiply** (this isn't about creating work)
- **Someone takes "minutes"** (formality kills honesty)
- **Politics creep in** ("let me position this...")
- **Moves to bi-weekly** (beginning of death)
- **Moves to monthly** (death)
- "**We don't have anything for Question 3**" (you're lying)

## How to Reset When It Goes Wrong

1. Cancel the next one
  2. Send this guide again
  3. Start over with just Question 3
  4. Or just ask: "What are we pretending not to know about our Reality Check?"
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## For Leaders

### For Managers

#### Your Role:

- **Model vulnerability** - Answer Question 3 first
- **Protect truth-tellers** - Publicly and privately
- **Don't punish honest answers** - Ever
- **Kill something visible** in first 4 weeks
- **Share wins upward** - Give credit to team

#### Your Reward:

- Avoid public failures
- Look prescient when you pivot early
- Team trusts you with hard truths
- Less firefighting, more strategy
- Career protected from disasters

#### What to Say:

- "Thank you for saying that"
- "What else are we not saying?"
- "I've been worried about that too"
- "Better to know now than in 6 months"
- "This is exactly why we do this"

#### What Not to Say:

- "Let's take this offline"
- "That's very negative"
- "Let's be constructive"
- "But we've already committed"

- "The board won't like this"

## For Executives

### Why You Want This:

#### Early Warning System

- Know about failures 6-9 months early
- Kill bad projects before they embarrass you
- Pivot before competitors see you fail

#### Ground Truth

- Hear what middle management won't tell you
- Skip the PowerPoint polish
- Get actual evidence, not opinions

#### Cultural Change

- Teams that face reality outperform
- Honest cultures move faster
- Truth-telling becomes competitive advantage

### How to Support It:

#### Publicly:

- Share your own "pretending not to know"
- Celebrate killed projects as wins
- Protect managers who kill bad ideas early
- Make Reality Check mandatory

#### Privately:

- Drop into Reality Checks unannounced
- Ask teams: "What aren't you telling me?"
- Reward truth-tellers visibly
- Fire people who punish honesty

### What You'll Gain:

- Reputation for facing reality
- Fewer surprise failures

- Better resource allocation
  - Faster pivots
  - Higher team trust
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## Real Case Studies

### The £2M AI Project Nobody Wanted

*UK Financial Services, 2024*

**Week 1:** "Everyone wants faster service"

**Week 3:** "Customers actually said they prefer talking to humans for complex issues"

**Week 3 Decision:** Killed AI chatbot, invested in better phone support

**Result:** £2M saved, customer satisfaction up 23%

### The Portal Redesign That Wasn't Broken

*Regional Bank, 2024*

**Week 1:** "The portal needs modernising"

**Week 6:** "87% of users only check balances - they don't care about design"

**Week 6 Decision:** Fixed password reset instead of full redesign

**Result:** £340k saved, complaints down 78%

### The Enterprise Feature for Non-Enterprise Users

*B2B SaaS, 2024*

**Week 1:** "Enterprise needs Salesforce integration"

**Week 4:** "Our 3 Salesforce customers use Zapier and are happy"

**Week 4 Decision:** Improved docs instead of building integration

**Result:** £180k saved, built SSO instead (what they actually wanted)

### The App Nobody Would Download

*Local Council, 2024*

**Week 1:** "Residents want a council app"

**Week 3:** "Birmingham's app has 500 downloads from 1M residents"

**Week 3 Decision:** Made website mobile-friendly instead

**Result:** £220k saved, better service delivered

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## FAQ

**Q: We already do retrospectives. How is this different?**

A: Do you ask "What are we pretending not to know?" Do people answer honestly? That's the difference.

**Q: Can we change the questions?**

A: You can, but these three work. Why complicate it?

**Q: What if no one answers Question 3?**

A: Wait. Silence is uncomfortable. Someone will crack. If not, you have bigger problems.

**Q: Should we document outcomes?**

A: Only if something gets killed. Otherwise, let truth simmer.

**Q: What if management doesn't support this?**

A: Start anyway. Call it something else. Once you save them from disaster, they'll support it.

**Q: Can this work remotely?**

A: Yes. Video on. Same rules apply. Silence is harder but more powerful on video.

**Q: What if we're not building products?**

A: Replace "build" with whatever you do. Works for campaigns, strategies, policies, anything that can fail.

**Q: How do we know it's working?**

A: You'll kill something in the first 4 weeks that would have wasted months.

**Q: What if it surfaces something we can't fix?**

A: Better to know. Reality doesn't care if you acknowledge it or not.

**Q: Only 30 minutes?**

A: If it takes longer, you're doing it wrong. Truth doesn't need an hour.

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## Get Help

### When You Need External Truth

Sometimes your team can't say the truth to each other.

Sometimes management needs to hear it from outsiders.

Sometimes you need someone with no skin in the game.

That's what we do.

### Our Services

#### The Reality Check Guide

**Price:** Free (you're reading it)

**What:** This PDF

**Result:** You run Reality Check yourself

## The Reality Coach

**Price:** £2,000/month

**What:** We facilitate your weekly Reality Check remotely

**Result:** External voice asks what your team won't

## The Reality Audit

**Price:** £10,000 one-time

**What:** We spend a week with your team and tell you three things you're pretending not to know

**Result:** Uncomfortable truths that save millions

## Contact Us

**Email:** [reality@veritasbs.com](mailto:reality@veritasbs.com)

**Web:** [veritasbs.com](http://veritasbs.com)

**LinkedIn:** [/company/veritasbs](https://www.linkedin.com/company/veritasbs)

## Our Guarantee

If Reality Check doesn't surface at least one valuable truth in 30 days, full refund.

(This has never happened. Truth always emerges.)

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## Start This Thursday

Don't overthink it.

Don't prepare for it.

Don't committee it.

Don't pilot it.

Just put 30 minutes in everyone's calendar.

Attach this PDF.

Ask the three questions.

The disaster you prevent might be your career's biggest win.

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## About Veritas BS

We're Business Solutions.

We kill the other kind.

Every week, companies waste millions building things nobody wants, solving problems nobody has, and pretending not to know it's failing.

We stop that with three questions.

No methodology. No framework. No certification.

Just organised honesty before it's too late.

**Founded:** 2024

**Projects Killed:** 47 and counting

**Money Saved:** £47M and counting

**Framework Sold:** Zero

**BS Tolerated:** Zero

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## Share This Guide

This PDF is not copyrighted.

Share it freely.

Truth should be free.

If it saves you from disaster, let us know.

If it doesn't work, let us know that too.

We run Reality Check on ourselves.

**Email your story:** [reality@veritasbs.com](mailto:reality@veritasbs.com)

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"Truth before disaster"

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