**Prioritization Power Up Day 1 - Concept summary**

**Line of sight**

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| **Line of Sight: A Contributor’s Guide** **What it is:** Line of sight means knowing how your daily work connects upward to strategies, goals, mission, and vision. It helps you see purpose in what you do.  **Why it matters:** When you see the link, you focus better, avoid wasted effort, and stay motivated. Without it, tasks can feel like meaningless busywork.  **How it works in practice:**  **Vision – What is our dream to achieve?** Read the Team / Department vision statement and reflect on its relevance to your work. Mention in weekly updates how your tasks support the vision. Share examples that show progress toward the long-term aspiration.  **Mission – What is our purpose?** Review the mission and ask how your tasks contribute to it. Explain to colleagues how a piece of work delivers on the purpose. Use mission words when describing your achievements.  **Goals – What are our objectives?** Identify the top goals for the quarter and keep them visible. Check each week that your tasks advance one of those goals. Report progress in terms of goals achieved, not only tasks completed.  **Strategies – What is our plan to achieve the goals?** Ask which strategy a task belongs to before starting. Organise your work under the right strategy in trackers or boards. Question tasks that seem outside agreed strategies.  **Tactics or Tasks – How do we carry out the plan?** Write down the three most important tasks each week. Connect each task to a strategy or goal. When finished, explain the impact created rather than simply noting completion. | **Line of Sight: A Supervisor’s Guide** **What it is:** Line of sight means helping your team see how daily work connects upward to strategies, goals, mission, and vision. You turn strategy into meaningful action.  **Why it matters:** Teams rely on supervisors for focus and clarity. Without your guidance they may work hard in the wrong direction. With it they know what matters and why it matters.  **How it works in practice:**  **Vision – What is our dream to achieve?** Remind the team of the team / department vision in meetings and updates. Explain how current projects advance the long-term aspiration. Share stories that connect daily work to the dream.  **Mission – What is our purpose?** Frame tasks in language that ties to the mission. Point out examples where the team is delivering on the purpose. Reinforce the mission by linking outcomes to customer or organisational value.  **Goals – What are our objectives?** Break high-level goals into clear team outcomes. Repeat the top goals often in check-ins and stand-ups. Review progress in terms of outcomes achieved, not only activity.  **Strategies – What is our plan to achieve the goals?** Show how work fits under each strategy in trackers and planning tools. Reinforce strategy in decision-making and prioritisation. Redirect work that does not align.  **Tactics or Tasks – How do we carry out the plan?** Translate strategies into actionable weekly tasks. Ask team members to explain how their tasks tie upward. Use reviews and 1:1s to check that actions are connected to strategy and goals. |

**5Cs of Effective prioritisation and engagement**

**What it is:** The 5Cs is a practical framework designed to help teams and individuals make better decisions about what to focus on, and why it matters. It encourages smarter prioritisation by strengthening five performance conditions: Clarity, Context, Connection, Consistency, and Celebration. These elements help create a working environment where people know what to do, why it matters, how it connects, and how to sustain it.

**Why it matters:** Even highly capable teams struggle to stay aligned under pressure. Competing demands, shifting strategies, and lack of recognition lead to disengagement or wasted effort. The 5Cs help reduce noise, increase meaning, and reinforce alignment, especially in technical, matrixed, or fast-moving organisations. When these conditions are present, people are more focused, motivated, and able to deliver work that truly matters.

**How it works:** The 5Cs

**Clarity –** Goals and expectations are visible and understood

Teams perform better when they know exactly what success looks like. Clarity reduces rework and confusion by setting shared targets and defining “done” up front.

Three things contributors can do now:

* Ask clarifying questions before starting a task to confirm what’s expected and by when.
* Write out your top three priorities for the week and confirm alignment with your manager or team.
* Use a shared format (like task statements or checklists) to describe what “done” looks like in updates or briefs.

**Context –** Everyone understands why the work matters now

Work is more purposeful when people understand how today’s tasks support current goals, customer needs, or broader business challenges.

Three things contributors can do now:

* When given a task, ask “What’s driving this right now?” to understand the urgency or business driver.
* Review recent company or team communications and map your tasks to current goals.
* Share what you learn: connect tasks to impact in team chats or handovers to help others see the bigger picture too.

**Connection –** Everyone can link tasks to team and enterprise outcomes

People stay engaged when they can see how their work contributes to something bigger. Connection builds ownership and motivation.

Three things contributors can do now:

* Start updates or check-ins by linking your work to a broader goal or customer outcome.
* Ask, “How does this task contribute to our success metrics or delivery goals?”
* Invite others to reflect: “How do we know this work is helping our team or customer succeed?”

**Consistency –** Priorities are reinforced in rituals and systems

Focus sticks when it’s reflected in how the team works — not just in words, but in routines, calendars, check-ins, and workflows.

Three things contributors can do now:

* Use a single planning tool or tracker to manage and reflect priorities — and update it regularly.
* Set a short daily check-in routine (solo or with a buddy) to review what matters most today.
* Notice and flag when tasks or meetings feel off-track from the team’s stated goals.

**Celebration –** Aligned success is noticed, shared, and rewarded

Recognition drives repeat performance. When people feel seen and valued for meaningful contributions, it strengthens culture and focus.

Three things contributors can do now:

* Call out a teammate’s effort in helping deliver a goal in a public space (like chat or stand-up).
* Start your next update with one thing that’s working well and why it matters.
* Capture small wins — even in your own notebook or team board — and reflect on how they contribute to team outcomes.

**OKRs – Objectives and Key Results**

**What it is:** OKRs are a goal-setting framework designed to align teams and individuals around what truly matters. Each OKR includes an Objective, a clear, motivational goal, and 2–4 Key Results that measure whether you’re making real progress. It’s used by companies globally to focus execution and drive results.

**Why it matters:** Without clear goals, work becomes reactive and fragmented. OKRs clarify direction, make success measurable, and help people focus on outcomes instead of just completing tasks. They also make it easier to align across levels — so individual effort ladders up to strategic impact.

**How it works:**

* Start by setting 3–4 Objectives per cycle (quarter or month). Each should be ambitious, specific, and time-bound. Then define 2–4 Key Results for each Objective: quantifiable metrics that prove progress is being made. Below this lay out 3 to 5 initiatives (tasks/mini projects) that will deliver the result
* Examples of Key Results: revenue targets, customer satisfaction scores, reduction in incidents, speed of deployment, etc.

OKRs should be reviewed regularly, weekly or biweekly, not just at the end of the cycle. Use them in check-ins and team updates. Keep OKRs visible and grounded in data, and avoid turning them into task lists. The power of OKRs lies in clarity, not volume.

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| LEADERS   * Start with strategy, not tasks: Ensure every objective supports the long-term vision and aligns with strategic imperatives. * Co-create, don’t cascade: Avoid rigid top-down goal-setting. Invite teams to create their own OKRs aligned to your goals to increase buy-in. * Prioritize ruthlessly: Stick to three or four clear objectives, each with two to four measurable key results. Less is more. * Make it ambitious, but grounded: Set stretch goals that inspire innovation and forward movement * Drive transparency and ownership: Make OKRs visible across teams. Assign clear owners to each objective and key result. Ownership encourages accountability and clarity. * Review regularly, not annually: Use a monthly or quarterly cadence to review progress, and have honest conversations about what is working and what is not. * Model agility and openness to failure: Show your teams that missing a stretch goal is a learning opportunity. Reflect openly on what to change or do differently. | CONTRIBUTORS   * Start with purpose: Clarify your role’s contribution to the team or organization. What outcome are you trying to advance? Why does it matter? * Write one clear objective: Your objective should be short, inspiring, and outcome-based, not a to-do list. Think about what success would look like, not just what you will do. * Use measurable key results: Each key result should be specific, measurable, and framed around results, not effort. Think “increase,” “reduce,” or “achieve,” not “work on” or “attend.” * Set key results you control: Focus on outcomes you can realistically influence. Do not tie your success to something dependent on another team or external event. * Focus on outcomes, not outputs: Instead of “complete five reports,” try “increase stakeholder understanding of X by 30%.” Impact matters more than volume. * Limit to what you can track weekly: If you cannot check in on your progress regularly, the OKR may be too broad or vague. Track at least monthly, ideally weekly. * Use OKRs to say no: Strong OKR helps you push back on low-priority work. Use it to defend your time and focus. * Be flexible and adjust: If your key results are not helping you move toward your objective, revise them. OKRs are not static; they are learning tools. |

A diagram with red text

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

On the following page:

* Red Text is for you to edit
* You can also use pen and paper if that is easier
* Sample OKRs exist for reference

**OKR TEMPLATE**

**MY MISSION: *XYZ***

**Objectives:**

* **Objective 1: *XYZ***
* **Objective 2: *XYZ***
* **Objective 3: *XYZ***

**Key results for Objective ? (choose one of your objectives and write below the key results)**

* **KR1: *XYZ***
* **KR2: *XYZ***
* **KR3: *XYZ***

**Initiatives for KR ? (Choose one of your Key Results areas and write below the initiatives)**

* **Initiative 1: *XYZ***
* **Initiative 2: *XYZ***
* **Initiative 3: *XYZ***

***Continue with other Objectives 🡪 Key Results 🡪 Initiatives***

**Sample OKRs – Reference only** (Do not copy and paste, rather use these as a “brain jogger” / inspiration for your role!)

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| **Role: 5G Network Engineer**  **Objective 1:** Deliver high-quality deployment of new 5G RAN sites across priority regions   * KR1: Complete integration and acceptance of 50 new 5G RAN sites by end of Q3 * KR2: Achieve >98% first-time pass rate in site acceptance testing * KR3: Reduce average site deployment time by 15%   KR3 Initiatives: Standardise pre-deployment checklist and share with all field teams. Run weekly deployment retros to identify and eliminate process blockers. Automate routine configuration steps using scripting tools.  **Objective 2:** Optimise 5G network performance in live environments   * KR1: Identify and resolve top 10 cell-level performance degradations per region * KR2: Reduce call drop rate by 20% in urban clusters * KR3: Implement automated parameter tuning in at least 3 networks   KR3 Initiatives: Pilot self-healing algorithms in one metro region. Collaborate with analytics team to define auto-tuning thresholds. Document tuning impact and share results in monthly performance reviews.  **Objective 3:** Accelerate validation and rollout of new 5G radio features   * KR1: Conduct successful field trials for 3 new features (e.g. DSS, mMIMO, SUL) * KR2: Submit technical feedback within 3 working days of trial completion * KR3: Achieve 100% execution of test cases in each feature trial   KR3 Initiatives: Coordinate with R&D to finalise test scope and acceptance criteria. Develop site-level execution plans and resource assignments. Run post-trial debriefs and submit lessons learned to central knowledge base. | **Role: Solution Architect (Telecom / Cloud / Core)**  **Objective 1:** Design and deliver high-quality, customer-aligned solutions using the Ericsson portfolio   * KR1: Deliver validated high-level designs (HLDs) for 5 enterprise or operator clients per quarter * KR2: Achieve a 90% customer satisfaction score on solution clarity and relevance in post-delivery surveys * KR3: Ensure 100% of HLDs are aligned with current product capability and security compliance standards   KR3 Initiatives: Maintain an updated design template repository aligned to the latest product releases. Set up a monthly sync with product leads to validate alignment. Conduct quarterly compliance audits with the security and governance team.  **Objective 2:** Support pre-sales engagements by shaping compelling and technically sound proposals   * KR1: Provide architectural input into 100% of priority RFx responses and strategic bids * KR2: Lead or support 10 customer solution workshops per quarter * KR3: Contribute to a 20% increase in win rate for cloud and core deals in assigned accounts   KR3 Initiatives: Create and maintain a solution library with reusable modules for core/cloud architecture. Work with Sales to tailor business cases for each workshop. Conduct pre-workshop briefings with Sales and Account teams to ensure alignment.  **Objective 3:** Strengthen internal collaboration and knowledge sharing across sales and delivery teams   * KR1: Lead 6 cross-functional design review sessions per quarter involving delivery, product, and operations * KR2: Document and share 3 validated solution blueprints across the regional architect community * KR3: Mentor at least 2 junior solution architects per half-year cycle   KR3 Initiatives: Establish bi-weekly check-ins with mentees to review project challenges and learning goals. Create a shared mentoring journal to track support and outcomes. Co-present a case study with a mentee at a quarterly solution forum. |

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| **Role: Field Services Engineer / Site Engineer**  **Objective 1:** Execute high-quality on-site installations, upgrades, and maintenance activities   * KR1: Complete 100% of assigned site visits within SLA and customer window * KR2: Achieve 98% first-time-right rate on installation and upgrade tasks * KR3: Reduce average fault resolution time on-site by 20%   KR3 Initiatives: Implement a pre-visit readiness checklist for all jobs. Introduce weekly debriefs to identify and eliminate common resolution delays. Provide refresher training on common equipment fault patterns and fix protocols.  **Objective 2:** Strengthen health, safety, and compliance practices across all field activities   * KR1: Conduct safety audits on 100% of live sites visited during the quarter * KR2: Achieve zero major safety incidents and <2 minor reportables per quarter * KR3: Ensure 100% compliance with local regulatory and customer-specific site requirements   KR3 Initiatives: Coordinate with HSE leads to update the mobile compliance guidebook. Deliver monthly toolbox talks during morning team huddles. Roll out a site photo documentation process for spot checks.  **Objective 3:** Improve collaboration and communication between field, support, and project teams   * KR1: Submit structured field reports within 24 hours for 95% of completed jobs * KR2: Participate in weekly syncs with support or project coordination teams * KR3: Contribute to 1 service delivery improvement initiative per quarter   KR3 Initiatives: Propose field-driven process changes via monthly ops forums. Lead pilot testing of new field workflow tools with selected sites. Document best practices and upload to shared knowledge base. | **Role: Technical Support Engineer / NOC Engineer**  **Objective 1:** Deliver timely and effective support to maintain network stability and SLA performance   * KR1: Resolve 90% of priority incidents within SLA-defined timeframes * KR2: Maintain average mean time to resolution (MTTR) below 4 hours for critical tickets * KR3: Achieve >95% accuracy in fault diagnosis during initial triage   KR3 Initiatives: Create a structured fault categorisation playbook for common issues. Run weekly review sessions on resolved cases to identify pattern gaps. Integrate smarter alert filtering rules to improve triage clarity.  **Objective 2:** Proactively monitor network health and prevent recurring issues   * KR1: Implement 5 automated monitoring or alerting improvements per quarter * KR2: Reduce repeat incidents by 25% for the top 3 recurring fault types * KR3: Publish monthly network health insights and action recommendations to the delivery team   KR3 Initiatives: Correlate incident data with platform logs to uncover hidden trends. Partner with engineering teams to tune monitoring thresholds. Launch a feedback loop between NOC and solution teams for persistent issues.  **Objective 3:** Strengthen collaboration with field engineers, R&D, and service delivery teams   * KR1: Provide actionable guidance to field engineers in 90% of dispatched incidents * KR2: Participate in 100% of post-incident reviews involving Tier 2/Tier 3 escalations * KR3: Co-author 3 knowledge base articles per quarter for internal or partner use   KR3 Initiatives: Capture and structure learnings from recent critical incidents. Collaborate with field services and PM teams on shared documentation. Host monthly drop-in sessions to troubleshoot shared escalation patterns. |

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| **Role: Customer Project Manager (Delivery Programmes)**  **Objective 1:** Deliver projects on time, on budget, and within scope for key customers   * KR1: Achieve 95% on-time milestone completion rate across all active projects * KR2: Keep project delivery variance within ±5% of original budget estimates * KR3: Maintain >90% customer satisfaction score in project closure reviews   KR3 Initiatives: Use a standardised kickoff checklist to align scope and expectations early. Run mid-project review sessions to assess cost and schedule alignment. Deploy post-project retrospectives to capture improvement opportunities.  **Objective 2:** Strengthen cross-functional coordination between technical, commercial, and delivery teams   * KR1: Facilitate biweekly steering committee meetings with internal and customer stakeholders for all Tier 1 projects * KR2: Resolve 90% of inter-team blockers within 5 working days * KR3: Ensure 100% of project team members have access to an up-to-date delivery plan   KR3 Initiatives: Implement a shared online project tracker with automated update reminders. Assign a communications lead per project to manage escalation flow. Host monthly lessons-learned sessions across delivery teams.  **Objective 3**: Improve delivery governance, reporting, and risk management   * KR1: Submit complete risk and issue logs for 100% of active projects * KR2: Deliver weekly status reports with green/yellow/red indicators for 100% of ongoing projects * KR3: Maintain <10% of projects in red status for more than 2 consecutive reporting cycles   KR3 Initiatives: Automate key parts of the weekly reporting pack using dashboards. Introduce a “top 3 risks” spotlight in steering meetings. Review early warning indicators weekly with the PMO or regional delivery head. | **Role: Sales / Account Manager (Operators / Enterprise)**  **Objective 1:** Drive revenue growth and renewals across assigned accounts   * KR1: Achieve 100% of quarterly revenue target and >90% renewal rate across key accounts * KR2: Close at least 3 new solution deals (e.g. private 5G, managed services) per quarter * KR3: Increase average deal size by 15% through upselling and bundling   KR3 Initiatives: Collaborate with solution architects to create value-led bundles for top clients. Use win/loss reviews to refine pitch strategies. Track and review proposal success rates monthly with sales ops.  **Objective 2:** Strengthen strategic partnerships with key customers   * KR1: Conduct quarterly executive business reviews with 100% of top-tier accounts * KR2: Maintain a 90+ Net Promoter Score (NPS) across strategic accounts * KR3: Identify and develop 2 new joint innovation opportunities per customer per year   KR3 Initiatives: Co-host solution discovery workshops with customer stakeholders. Launch innovation opportunity logs to track collaboration ideas. Align internal product teams with customer tech roadmaps via quarterly syncs.  **Objective 3:** Improve account planning, pipeline accuracy, and internal alignment   * KR1: Maintain pipeline coverage of 3x quarterly quota with 90% forecast accuracy * KR2: Update and validate strategic account plans for all Tier 1 accounts quarterly * KR3: Conduct biweekly pipeline reviews with pre-sales and commercial teams   KR3 Initiatives: Use CRM dashboards to track deal velocity and ageing. Integrate account health scoring into account planning. Conduct quarterly joint reviews with delivery and finance on key accounts. |

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| **Role: Product Line Manager / Portfolio Lead**  **Objective 1**: Drive commercial success of the assigned product portfolio in the region   * KR1: Achieve or exceed quarterly revenue and margin targets for the product line * KR2: Increase market share in target segment by 10% YoY * KR3: Deliver 95% forecast accuracy for product uptake across key accounts   KR3 Initiatives: Collaborate with sales and delivery teams to refine forecasting models. Conduct quarterly win/loss analysis to identify market trends. Maintain an active product dashboard with real-time KPIs.  **Objective 2:** Align local go-to-market strategy with global product roadmap   * KR1: Localise and launch 100% of new product releases within 30 days of global launch * KR2: Provide structured market feedback to the global portfolio team on a monthly basis * KR3: Deliver 4 enablement sessions per quarter for regional sales and solution teams   KR3 Initiatives: Build and maintain a localisation tracker with launch checklists. Organise monthly feedback roundtables with field sales and architects. Develop short-form “What’s New” decks for each release with use cases.  **Objective 3:** Strengthen product positioning and customer engagement in strategic deals   * KR1: Support at least 5 high-value deals per quarter as product lead * KR2: Co-develop solution positioning with pre-sales for 100% Tier 1 opportunities * KR3: Increase product feature adoption rate by 20% across installed base   KR3 Initiatives: Run feature adoption campaigns in partnership with customer success. Track usage telemetry and customer feedback post-deployment. Host customer-focused webinars or advisory sessions to promote advanced capabilities. | **Role: HR Business Partner (Contributor Level)**  **Objective 1:** Support workforce planning and staffing alignment across key business units   * KR1: Coordinate quarterly workforce plan updates with business and finance partners * KR2: Track and follow up on 100% of open role approvals within SLA * KR3: Maintain accurate, up-to-date headcount reports with <2% variance in monthly reporting   KR3 Initiatives: Organise monthly syncs with business operations and recruitment. Manage the live tracker for all staffing actions. Validate headcount changes with local HR ops team before report submission.  **Objective 2:** Strengthen engagement, retention, and employee experience   * KR1: Ensure >90% participation in pulse or engagement surveys across assigned units * KR2: Track and follow up on 100% of agreed actions from engagement results within 60 days * KR3: Support delivery of mid-year and annual performance review campaigns with >95% completion rate   KR3 Initiatives: Prepare manager toolkits and timelines for review periods. Track compliance and send nudges for completion. Summarise trends and escalate concerns to senior HR or business leads.  **Objective 3:** Deliver people-related processes and partner effectively with leaders   * KR1: Support facilitation of 3 talent and succession sessions per year * KR2: Coordinate logistics, content, and follow-up for 100% of leadership development events in assigned area * KR3: Resolve or escalate 90% of employee relations queries within 10 working days   KR3 Initiatives: Maintain an active case log for HR queries and status. Partner with legal/HR specialists to resolve sensitive issues. Create a shared calendar and checklist for upcoming development sessions. |

**MoSCoW Method**

**What it is:** The MoSCoW Method is a flexible prioritisation framework that categorises items into four levels of importance: Must have, Should have, Could have, and Won’t have (for now). Originally developed for software development, it is now widely used across industries to set delivery expectations, define minimum viable scope, and manage stakeholder input.

**Why it matters:** Without structured prioritisation, teams often try to do everything at once, resulting in delays, resource strain, and unclear trade-offs. MoSCoW helps teams and individuals distinguish between essential and non-essential work, ensuring that the most critical outcomes are protected even when timelines shift or resources tighten.

**How it works:**

Start with your backlog, list of tasks, or project requirements. For each item, decide:

* Must have: Cannot be left out. Without this, the project or goal fails.
* Should have: Important but not vital. Can be dropped or delayed if needed.
* Could have: Useful, low-effort extras. Nice to include if time allows.
* Won’t have (this time): Out of scope for now & revisit later.

Consider if you should be creating a “Not to do” list: Topics and tasks that are not in your remit.

Use MoSCoW in project planning workshops, sprint kickoffs, or prioritisation discussions. Keep labels visible and revisit weekly as priorities evolve.

**Eisenhower Matrix (Urgent vs Important)**

**What it is:** The Eisenhower Matrix is a time-management framework that categorises tasks into four quadrants based on their urgency and importance. It’s named after U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who famously said, “What is important is seldom urgent, and what is urgent is seldom important.”

**Why it matters:** People often spend their energy putting out fires (urgent but not important), leaving strategic work undone. This model helps you step back and focus on high-impact, long-term goals, not just fast-moving distractions. It’s a tool for rebalancing attention, reducing stress, and protecting your most valuable work.

**How it works:**

* List out your tasks
* Grade them 1 to 10 on Urgecy and Importance
* Draw a 2x2 grid. Label the horizontal axis “Urgent → Not Urgent” and the vertical axis “Important → Not Important.” Now list your current tasks and place each one in a quadrant:
  + Quadrant 1: Do Now (Urgent & Important)
  + Quadrant 2: Schedule (Important, Not Urgent)
  + Quadrant 3: Delegate (Urgent, Not Important)
  + Quadrant 4: Eliminate (Not Urgent, Not Important)
* Once mapped, take a pen and circle the estimated time each task might take — 15 mins, 1 hour, 3 hours, etc. This helps visualise where your time is likely to go. Aim to spend more of your week in Quadrant 2, where quality work and long-term results live.
* Use this matrix to plan your day, mentor others, or run a weekly reset.

**Impact vs Effort Matrix**

**What it is:** The Impact vs Effort Matrix is a visual decision tool that helps you quickly prioritise tasks by comparing the value they create (Impact) with the effort required to deliver them (Effort). It’s widely used in team planning, agile sprints, and product development to separate high-return activities from time sinks.

Why it matters: When teams or individuals have a large backlog, it’s easy to get stuck in low-impact work or spend too long chasing complex ideas. This matrix cuts through noise and helps you target the most valuable quick wins first, especially when speed and efficiency matter.

How it works:

* List out tasks to do
* Grade them on the business or project impact they will have and effort required (low effort being 10)
* Draw a 2x2 matrix. Label one axis “Low to High Impact,” the other “Low to High Effort.” Then map each item into one of four zones:
  + Top Left (High Impact, Low Effort): Quick wins — do these first
  + Top Right (High Impact, High Effort): Strategic bets — plan carefully
  + Bottom Left (Low Impact, Low Effort): Small tasks — do only if time allows
  + Bottom Right (Low Impact, High Effort): Avoid or drop
* Use it in team workshops, retrospectives, or decision reviews. Revisit regularly, especially as new data emerges, and make impact vs effort conversations part of regular planning rituals.

**ACE – Align, Cost, Effect**

**What it is:** ACE is a strategic scoring model designed to help individuals and teams evaluate the trade-offs of different initiatives by balancing alignment with strategy (Align), resource intensity (Cost), and projected benefit (Effect). It’s simple, transparent, and designed to support decision-making under constraint. It is basically an Impact vs Effort with Alignment thrown in.

**Why it matters:** Teams often face more ideas than they can execute. Without a consistent method to compare them, decisions may be based on loud voices or bias. ACE introduces structure — helping stakeholders debate ideas on shared terms and favour high-leverage moves over low-impact noise.

**How it works:**

* Rate each proposed task or initiative on three criteria:
  + Align: How well does this support current goals or strategy? (Score 1–5)
  + Cost: What is the effort, time, or investment required? (Lower score = lower cost)
  + Effect: What impact will this have if successful? (Score 1–5)
* Use the formula: ACE = Align × (Effect ÷ Cost).
* Rank tasks or proposals by ACE score to spotlight the highest-return options.
* Discuss outliers, debate scores as a team, and adjust based on new data. This tool is ideal for roadmapping, budget planning, or when resources are stretched and trade-offs must be explicit.

**Priority path**

**What it is:** The Priority Path is a practical framework for improving everyday work habits. It helps individuals focus energy on meaningful work, make better trade-offs, streamline effort, and protect time and focus. Instead of doing more, it helps people achieve better outcomes with less friction.

**Why it matters:** In high-pressure roles, it’s easy to default to busywork, reactive tasks, or scattered priorities. The Priority Path offers a way to work with greater clarity and purpose by improving small habits that shape performance. It empowers people to do less, but better, by focusing on what truly drives progress.

**How it works:** The Four Paths

Focus – Directing energy where it matters most

* Focus is about knowing your most important work and protecting your best energy for it. Without focus, even the hardest work risks being wasted on the wrong outcomes.
* Example habit: Starting the day by naming the single result you want to achieve, not just listing tasks.
* How to apply: Use tactics like morning prioritisation, outcome-based planning, and distraction tracking to consistently move the needle.

Cut – Saying no to make room for what matters

* Cut means clearing away low-value tasks so you can say a deeper yes to what counts. Saying no is not selfish, it’s a strategic skill.
* Example habit: Using a “Would I say yes again?” test to review standing meetings or requests.
* How to apply: Learn to push back clearly, set boundaries with purpose, and regularly review where your time goes.

Simplify – Making important work easier to do

* Simplify is about reducing friction in how you work. It’s not about cutting corners, it’s about building flow.
* Example habit: Grouping similar tasks into batches so you stay in flow and reduce start-up time.
* How to apply: Streamline processes, use fewer tools, and build simple templates that save time and decision energy.

Protect – Guarding time, focus and energy

* Protect means putting up guardrails so your most valuable work isn’t overwhelmed by noise or burnout.
* Example habit: Blocking off calendar time for deep work and treating it as non-negotiable.
* How to apply: Use tools like status signals, boundary scripts, “no meeting” zones, and recovery time to ensure your energy is spent where it counts.

**Essentialism**

**What it is:** Essentialism is a disciplined approach to prioritisation. It’s about choosing to focus your time, energy, and resources on only what truly matters, and letting go of everything else. Rooted in the work of Greg McKeown, Essentialism rejects the idea that we can do it all, and replaces it with a mindset of less, but better.

**Why it matters:** In environments filled with competing demands, high-speed change, and digital distraction, Essentialism protects your capacity to make a meaningful contribution. It helps individuals and teams avoid burnout, clarify decision-making, and deliver higher-quality outcomes by narrowing focus to what’s essential.

**How it works:** Key Mantras

* **ONE thing only:** Focus on the single most important task or decision at any given time. Multi-tasking scatters attention. Progress happens through deliberate concentration.
  + Start each day by asking: *“What is the one task that, if done, makes the biggest difference?”*
  + Clear small distractions before beginning, so the main task has your full attention.
  + Use visual trackers (like a board or list) to mark your “one thing” clearly for yourself and your team.
* **LESS but better:** Don’t do more, do the right things with greater care, quality, and intent. Trade off volume for value.
  + Cut your to-do list in half, then raise the quality bar for what remains.
  + Challenge tasks that add volume but not real value, simplify or drop them.
  + Review completed work: did it meet “good enough” or “excellent”? Aim for the latter, even with fewer outputs.
* **If it’s not a CLEAR YES, then it’s a NO:** Use this rule to filter distractions. If an opportunity, meeting, or request doesn’t spark strong conviction, decline or defer. Ambiguity is not enough.
  + Before saying yes, ask: *“Does this directly support our goals or outcomes?”*
  + If hesitation lingers, treat it as a no, clarity prevents wasted effort.
  + Use criteria (value, urgency, alignment) to test requests quickly and consistently.
* **Protect the important:** Block time, space, and energy for the truly valuable. Say no to the noise so you can say yes to what matters most, whether it’s strategy, relationships, or deep work.
  + Block protected time in your calendar for key work and defend it firmly.
  + Use team rituals (stand-ups, check-ins) to keep important priorities visible.
  + Say no to low-value interruptions by reminding others of the bigger priority you are safeguarding.

Putting it into practice: Schedule “essential intent” time into your week. Regularly ask: “What is the most valuable use of my time right now?” Challenge assumptions that all requests are equal. And build systems, not willpower to support focused execution.

**Additional resources for Day 1**

**Reading:**  
  
**Essentialism by Greg McKeown**

Why it’s worth reading: This is the foundation for disciplined prioritisation. McKeown challenges the idea that we can do it all and makes the case for doing fewer things, better. The book offers clear frameworks and mindsets for protecting what matters most, saying no with confidence, and eliminating nonessential distractions in both work and life.

**Timeboxing: The Power of Doing One Thing at a Time by Marc Zao-Sanders**

Why it’s worth reading: This book offers a simple, practical tool for turning intention into execution. Timeboxing helps protect deep work by scheduling focused blocks of time for your most valuable tasks. It blends research and application for professionals who need to focus in chaotic or meeting-heavy environments. A powerful companion to Essentialism and OKRs.

**Make Time by Jake Knapp and John Zeratsky**

Why it’s worth reading: Created by two former Google designers, this book introduces 87 quick, habit-based tactics to take control of your day. Focused on design thinking, energy management, and reducing distraction, it is ideal for anyone trying to protect time for meaningful work. Simple to use, fun to read, and grounded in real-world testing.

**Measure What Matters by John Doerr**

Why it’s worth reading: The go-to book on OKRs (Objectives and Key Results). Doerr draws on decades of experience working with companies like Intel, Google, and the Gates Foundation to show how OKRs focus execution, improve alignment, and inspire teams. Full of case studies, this is a blueprint for goal-setting with impact.

**The 80/20 Principle by Richard Koch**

Why it’s worth reading: A classic on working smarter, not harder. Koch explains how 80 percent of results come from 20 percent of effort and how to apply this rule to time, decisions, clients, and more. A must-read for leaders and individual contributors who want to create leverage and strip away low-value work.

**Listening (Ideacast podcasts @ HBR)**

**Stop Multitasking and Try Timeboxing (Marc Zao‑Sanders)**

Why it’s worth listening: This episode deep dives into timeboxing, a practical technique for allocating fixed time blocks to important work. It shares science-backed strategies to reduce context switching, increase focus, and protect deep work. Perfect for contributors managing competing demands.

**Are You Spending Your Time the Right Way? (Melissa Raffoni)**

Why it’s worth listening: Offers insights into how individuals can take ownership of their time by aligning calendars with real priorities. This episode helps contributors set boundaries, push back on low-value work, and manage requests with intention.

How To Be Less Distracted at Work — and in Life

Why it’s worth listening: Explores common sources of distraction and presents actionable ideas for improving focus and flow. Includes useful tips on habit design, attention training, and reshaping your digital environment to stay on task.

**The Conversations You Should Be Having with Your Manager (Melody Wilding)**

Why it’s worth listening: Focuses on how to manage up effectively, especially for individual contributors. Learn how to initiate alignment conversations, clarify expectations, share your impact, and build trust through transparent communication.

**Breaking Free of the Cult of Productivity (Madeleine Dore)**

Why it’s worth listening: Encourages a healthier relationship with work by challenging the belief that productivity equals worth. A great listen for contributors looking to balance meaningful achievement with well-being, and for those who feel overwhelmed by endless to-do lists.

**Watching (TED talks)**  
  
**Don’t Manage Time, Manage Focus – Savinda Ranathunga**

Why it’s worth watching: A practical, relatable talk that reframes productivity around protecting your attention rather than just your hours. Especially useful for contributors who feel busy but unproductive.

**The Philosophy of Time Management – Brad Aeon**

Why it’s worth watching: Challenges how we perceive and measure time, encouraging a more values-based, intentional approach to daily work and life priorities.

**Achieving My Goals by Prioritising My Time – Paul Thandi**

Why it’s worth watching: A concise, story-driven reminder that aligning your calendar to your goals makes a measurable difference in both wellbeing and performance.

**How to Manage Your Time More Effectively (According to Machines) – Brian Christian**

Why it’s worth watching: Turns lessons from computer science and algorithms into smart tools for human prioritisation. Clear, evidence-based and surprisingly practical.

**How to Multiply Your Time – Rory Vaden**

Why it’s worth watching: Introduces the idea of using significance, not just urgency or importance, to decide what deserves your time. A must-watch for anyone feeling overwhelmed by choices.

**Day 2**

**Cognitive traps 1 of 2**

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| 1. **Residual attention stuck on previous tasks**   **Strategies:**   1. **Design ‘cognitive gateways’ between tasks:** Before switching tasks, jot down a “next step” for the one you’re leaving. This eases closure and reduces mental drag. 2. **Use ‘closed loop’ blocks for task types**: Group similar work (e.g., writing, calls, data) into distinct time blocks to minimise switching. Even 30-minute focus blocks reduce attentional lag. 3. **Schedule 5-minute buffer resets:** After mentally demanding work, use a micro-reset: a walk, breathwork, or desk reset, to let your brain clear before starting something new. 4. **Eliminate ‘middle work’ clutter:** Don’t keep half-started tabs or documents open “just in case.” Working memory holds ~4–5 chunks. Free it deliberately. 5. **Build ritualised shut-off cues:** Use physical cues to close focus time, e.g., turn off music, close the laptop lid, move seats. These help signal completion to the brain. | 1. **Prioritising small wins over big impact**   **Strategies:**   1. **Use a “3 before inbox” habit:** Complete three high-impact actions before opening your email. This combats the dopamine hit of trivial completion tasks. 2. **Display your ‘biggest bet’ visually:** Keep your most valuable task physically visible: a sticky note, whiteboard, or planner. It counteracts the pull of quick wins. 3. **Log value, not just volume:** At the end of the day, write down one “value contribution” you made, not how much you finished. Shift the feedback loop. 4. **Use time-gating for admin:** Set fixed windows for small tasks (e.g., email from 11:30–12:00) so they don’t cannibalise strategic work. 5. **Apply the ‘Impact Ratio’ test:** Ask: “What’s the impact-to-effort ratio of this task?” Only pursue low-ratio tasks if your big rocks are already moving. | 1. **Mentally stuck on incomplete tasks (Zeigarnik Effect)**   **Strategies:**   1. **Write it down to close the loop:** Externalising the task onto paper or a tool tells the brain it’s being managed, reducing mental load. 2. **Finish the first 5%:** Start large, intimidating tasks with a micro action, even just naming the goal and blocking time, to release mental tension. 3. **Use a ‘parking lot’ method:** When mid-task ideas interrupt you, jot them into a holding space. Your brain can relax knowing the idea won’t be lost. 4. **Declare your ‘next step’ aloud:** End work sessions by stating your next move out loud or to a teammate. This improves re-engagement later. 5. **Set a “wrap rule” at day’s end:** Spend 10 minutes logging what’s incomplete and what’s next. This primes the mind to let go after work. |

Cognitive traps 2 of 2

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| 1. **Focusing on urgency over importance**   **Strategies:**   1. **Visually sort your daily list:** Use coloured dots (e.g., red for urgent, green for important) to see which tasks are worth your energy. Don’t let urgency blind you. 2. **Start with ‘non-urgent important’ work:** Block morning hours for strategic actions, not just fast-turn tasks. This builds real momentum and slows the urgency treadmill. 3. **Use a Task Triage Rule:** Ask: “If this wasn’t urgent, would I still do it?” If not, it may not be valuable. 4. **Add deadlines to important work:** To compete with urgency bias, give high-value tasks real deadlines and checkpoints — even self-imposed ones. 5. **Silence urgency triggers:** Mute non-critical notifications during core focus hours. Urgency often starts with interruption, not importance. | 1. **Lower-quality decisions as the day goes on**   **Strategies:**   1. **Front-load high-stakes choices:** Schedule strategic thinking or important decisions before 11 am when cognitive fuel is highest. 2. **Use a defaulting system for low-stakes choices**: Pre-decide small things (e.g., lunch, templates, tool use) to conserve energy for real decisions. 3. **Batch decisions together:** Make similar decisions at once to minimise context switching and conserve cognitive resources. 4. **Insert energy renewal checkpoints:** After ~90 minutes, reset with movement, hydration, or exposure to natural light. This help restore mental stamina. 5. **Delay non-urgent decisions:** If your brain feels tired, name the decision and schedule it for your next high-energy window instead of deciding poorly. | 1. **Brain is overwhelmed with too many inputs**   **Strategies:**   1. **Use a “one tab, one task” rule:** Keep only the resources open that relate to your current task. Every extra tab tax working memory. 2. **Chunk tasks into micro-goals:** Break work into 20–30-minute segments with specific micro-outcomes. This aligns with working memory limits. 3. **Reduce information firehoses:** Turn off push notifications from news feeds, chat apps, or dashboards during focused work blocks. 4. **Do a Friday ‘input purge’:** Weekly, clear your workspace, desktop, notes, and tabs. It’s a reset ritual that creates fresh capacity. 5. **Build ‘task cues’ into your environment:** Use visual prompts (e.g., folders, sticky notes) to reduce memory burden, let your environment do more remembering. |

**Cognitive traps – supporting resources**

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| **1. Residual attention stuck on previous tasks (Attentional Residue)**  Book: Deep Work – Cal Newport  Offers a compelling framework for focused work, including strategies to reduce switching costs and eliminate shallow distractions.  Podcast: HBR Ideacast – “The Case for Deep Work” (with Cal Newport)  Provides digestible insights into the dangers of task switching and how to structure your day for focus.  TED Talk: How to Get Your Brain to Focus – Chris Bailey  Bailey explains the neurological impact of distraction and shares evidence-based tools for reclaiming attention. | **2. Prioritising small wins over big impact (Completion Bias)**  Book: Make Time – Jake Knapp & John Zeratsky  Written by two former tech leads, this book helps readers focus on high-impact work instead of being consumed by quick tasks.  Podcast: The Productivity Show – “Why You Do Low-Value Work (and How to Stop)”  Breaks down behavioural patterns like completion bias and offers specific productivity routines.  TED Talk: Inside the Mind of a Master Procrastinator – Tim Urban  Humorous but insightful talk on why we default to easier, quicker tasks and how to fight it. | **3. Mentally stuck on incomplete tasks**  **(Zeigarnik Effect)**  Book: Getting Things Done – David Allen  Groundbreaking in showing how writing down open loops frees up cognitive capacity and reduces mental stress.  Podcast: Hidden Brain – “The Zeigarnik Effect: Why the Mind Clings to Unfinished Business”  Explores the original psychology and how it applies to daily life, with real-world stories.  TED Talk: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity – David Allen  Allen shares how externalising tasks and setting clear next actions helps prevent unfinished-task anxiety. |
| **4. Choosing urgency over importance**  **(Mere Urgency Effect)**  Book: The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People – Stephen R. Covey  Introduces the Urgent–Important Matrix and teaches readers to prioritise quadrant 2 activities, important but not urgent, to break free from reactivity.  Podcast: HBR Ideacast – “How to Manage Your Time with the Urgent-Important Matrix”  Offers tactical advice on recognising urgency bias and reshaping how you plan your time at work.  TED Talk: How to Gain Control of Your Free Time – Laura Vanderkam  Vanderkam explains how to stop letting urgency run your schedule and instead make space for what matters most. | **5. Mental depletion from too many decisions (Decision Fatigue)**  Book: Willpower – Roy Baumeister & John Tierney  Based on Baumeister’s foundational research, the book explains why decision fatigue happens and how to counteract it with routines, structure, and rest.  Podcast: The Life Scientific (BBC) – “Roy Baumeister on Self-Control”  Offers a fascinating look into the science behind mental energy, decision-making, and self-regulation in everyday work.  TED Talk: The Paradox of Choice – Barry Schwartz  Explores how too many decisions can overwhelm us, and how simplifying choices can lead to better focus and satisfaction. | **6. Too much information at once**  **(Cognitive Load Overload)**  Book: The Organized Mind – Daniel Levitin  Blends neuroscience and productivity, showing how to reduce mental clutter and make space for meaningful work.  Podcast: Freakonomics Radio – “Too Much Information”  Examines how the brain processes information and how overload affects decision-making, with insights from behavioural science.  TED Talk: How to Stay Calm When You Know You’ll Be Stressed – Daniel Levitin  Levitin explains how preparation and systems reduce mental overload and improve clarity under pressure. |

**The science behind why we say yes**

We often say yes before we’ve truly thought it through. This is not a personal weakness, it’s often the result of deep psychological, emotional, and social forces.

Understanding the science behind over-yes’ing helps us spot the patterns and make more intentional choices.

Use this handout to explore the hidden drivers that influence your instinct to agree, even when it may not be the right decision.

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| **1. Desire to be liked (affiliation bias)**  We say yes to feel accepted and maintain social harmony. Humans are wired to belong, and agreeing with others is often seen as the smoothest way to keep relationships positive. This is especially strong in group or team settings.  **2. Fear of conflict or disapproval**  We say yes to avoid tension or being seen as uncooperative. For many, saying no feels like a confrontation — something to avoid. This can lead to chronic overcommitment in the name of keeping peace.  **3. Impostor syndrome**  We say yes to prove our worth and avoid being “found out.” People who experience impostor feelings may overextend themselves to compensate for internal doubts or fear of inadequacy.  **4. Helper’s high (dopamine & oxytocin)**  We say yes because helping triggers feel-good brain chemicals. Acts of kindness release dopamine and oxytocin, which reinforce the behaviour and make it feel rewarding, even when it's draining.  **5. Norm of reciprocity**  We say yes because we feel obligated to return favours or kindness. This is a deeply ingrained social rule — if someone has helped us, we feel we owe them, even at our own expense. | **6. Decision fatigue**  We say yes when we’re mentally tired and can’t evaluate requests clearly. As the day wears on and decision-making capacity depletes, it becomes easier to default to agreement rather than assessing priorities.  **7. Cognitive dissonance**  We say yes to stay consistent with past help or shared values. If we’ve supported someone or something before, refusing now creates psychological discomfort — so we override our limits to preserve internal harmony.  **8. Politeness norms & face saving**  We say yes to protect others’ feelings and avoid seeming rude. Cultural and workplace norms often prioritise agreeableness, making no feel socially risky, especially in hierarchical or high-context environments.  **9. False consensus effect**  We say yes because we wrongly assume everyone expects us to. We overestimate how much others need or expect our help, leading us to agree unnecessarily out of imagined obligation.  **10. Ambiguous requests**  We say yes when we’re unclear on the ask and default to being agreeable. Vague language or unclear boundaries make it harder to assess the real cost of a request, so we commit before understanding. |

**Which of these drivers do you recognise in yourself most often?**

**What would change if you paused before saying yes?**

**What topics are on your plate right now that you may be edging towards a YES, when really it should be a NO or defer/delegate?**

**Saying no effectively 🡪Acknowledge • Pause • Respond**

In fast-paced, high-pressure environments, saying yes can feel easier than saying no. But without boundaries, even capable professionals end up overextended, underperforming, or burned out. Research shows that many of us say yes not out of clear choice, but because of social pressure, habit, or fear of conflict. The key to sustainable performance is not just knowing what matters, it's having the language and confidence to protect it.

**Step 1: Acknowledge -** Start by showing appreciation or recognition of the request. This small act builds connection and lowers defensiveness, even when you're planning to say no.

Why it works: Social psychology and workplace communication research consistently show that acknowledging the other person’s intent protects the relationship, even if you're not fulfilling their request. According to politeness theory, when you show positive regard (e.g. "Thanks for thinking of me"), it reduces the threat of rejection and increases psychological safety. It signals that you see the person and respect their need, even as you hold your own boundary.

Gratitude also has a physiological effect: it activates the prosocial network in the brain, encouraging empathy and cooperation. This makes your response feel like part of a partnership, not a shutdown.

Examples

* “Thanks for thinking of me.”
* “I really appreciate you asking.”
* “Glad you brought this up, it’s important.”

**Step 2: Pause -** Don’t respond immediately. Take a brief mental or verbal pause to check your capacity and intention.

Why it works: Saying yes quickly is often a stress response. A short pause, even just a breath or a moment to reflect, gives the prefrontal cortex time to re-engage, improving decision-making. This helps interrupt people-pleasing autopilot or fear-driven compliance.

Decision fatigue research shows that our ability to make wise choices declines over time, especially when overloaded. Pausing reduces the chance of an emotional or impulsive yes, and increases the likelihood of a values-aligned response. In assertiveness training, pausing is often taught as a boundary buffer, a moment that allows you to take ownership of your time rather than surrendering it automatically.

Examples

* “Let me check what I’m already committed to.”
* “Can I come back to you on that later today?”

🡪Pause, deep breath, then a thoughtful response

**Step 3**: **Respond:** Use one of the following eight strategies, based on context and tone. These are all grounded in behavioural science and assertiveness research, and each one helps you protect your priorities while maintaining respect and professionalism.

**Step 3: Respond with an appropriate “no”**

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| **1. The decisive no**  Short, clear, unapologetic refusal.   * Why it works: direct refusals signal confidence and boundary clarity. Assertiveness research shows brief, neutral “no”s are respected more than overly soft responses. * Ravi: “No, I can’t take that on this week. My schedule’s full.” * Sandra: “No, I’m not available to help with that handover today.”   **2. Values-based refusal**  Say no by linking to your goals, values, or purpose.   * Why it works: when a no supports meaningful work, it’s more respected and reinforces motivation. * Ravi: “To meet our quality goals for this release, I need to decline anything outside the backlog.” * Sandra: “To protect our service-level standards, I’m saying no to any additional accounts this quarter.”   **3. Ask for trade-offs**  Agree only if priorities are visibly adjusted.   * Why it works: makes invisible overload visible and increases shared responsibility. * Ravi: “Happy to troubleshoot. Should I pause the network stability testing?” * Sandra: “I can do that, but which client outreach task should I delay?”   **4. The “because” effect (justified no)**  Provide a calm reason after saying no.   * Why it works: people are more accepting of refusals when paired with a justification. * Ravi: “I can’t take that on because I’m locked into sprint delivery tasks this week.” * Sandra: “I’m not able to help because I’ve committed this time to high-priority renewals.” | **5. Pre-emptive clarity**  Set a boundary in advance before requests come in.   * Why it works: prevents future pressure and sets expectations early. * Ravi: “Just a heads-up, I’m at capacity this week outside release testing.” * Sandra: “I won’t be able to support extra campaign calls this week due to month-end reporting.”   **6. Name the commitment (not the refusal)**  Say yes to your current priority, which means no to the new request.   * Why it works: anchoring your no in an existing commitment maintains credibility and autonomy. * Ravi: “I’m focused on the handover protocol this week, so I can’t pick up the Jakarta site issue.” * Sandra: “I’m prepping for the quarterly customer review, so I can’t handle that today.”   **7. Use assertive “I” statements**  Clearly state your position using calm, direct language.   * Why it works: “I” statements reduce defensiveness and increase clarity. * Ravi: “I don’t have the capacity to take that on right now.” * Sandra: “I need to protect this time for escalations already in my queue.”   **8. Say no without saying no (redirect clearly)**  Decline by pointing the requester to someone more suitable.   * Why it works: protects your focus while still supporting the request’s progress. * Ravi: “I’m not the right person for the SIM issue. Anika’s team would be quicker.” * Sandra: “That billing query’s best handled by Rahul’s team. They’ve got full access.” |

**Saying no effectively: supporting resources**

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| **Articles**  1. “How to Say No at Work Without Feeling Guilty” – Rebecca Knight (Harvard Business Review)   * Offers practical scripts and framing strategies, backed by behavioural psychology, for declining requests respectfully but firmly.   2. “The Right Way to Say No to a Request from Your Boss” – Dorie Clark (Harvard Business Review)   * Provides guidance for power-sensitive contexts like saying no to senior stakeholders, with tips on how to maintain visibility and respect.   3. “The Science of Saying No” – Melissa Dahl (The Cut)   * Draws on psychological studies (e.g. decision fatigue, social pressure) to explain why no is so difficult, and how to practice it with less guilt. | **Books**  1. The Power of a Positive No – William Ury   * A foundational negotiation book teaching the Yes–No–Yes model: say no while affirming your values and relationships.   2. Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less – Greg McKeown   * Makes a powerful case for saying no to anything that doesn’t align with your highest priorities and how to do it without shame.   3. Radical Candor – Kim Scott   * Teaches how to challenge directly while caring personally, ideal for those who fear saying no will damage relationships. | **Podcasts**  1. The Art of Saying No – The Happiness Lab with Dr. Laurie Santos   * Breaks down the social psychology behind why we say yes too often and how to use small behaviour shifts to protect our boundaries.   2. How to Say No Without Feeling Guilty – The Mel Robbins Podcast   * Offers emotionally intelligent, real-world strategies for overcoming guilt and people-pleasing habits.   3. The Science of Boundaries – Ten Percent Happier with Dan Harris   * Combines mindfulness, neuroscience, and practical advice to help listeners pause and respond more intentionally. | **TED Talks**  1. “The Power of No” – Kenny Nguyen   * Explores how saying no strategically leads to better decisions, stronger teams, and personal growth.   2. “How to Gain Control of Your Free Time” – Laura Vanderkam   * Highlights how time is a choice, and saying no is a tool for aligning your time with what matters most.   3. “The Art of Being Yourself” – Caroline McHugh   * While not just about saying no, this talk empowers assertiveness and self-definition, essential precursors to confident boundary-setting. |

**Assertive WANTS**

**Why direct wants matter**

Many people hesitate to say what they really want. They soften the message, explain too much, or hope others will guess. This often leads to frustration, misunderstandings, or unmet needs.

Being clear and direct with “I want…” statements is important because:

* **It reduces confusion** – others know exactly what you mean.
* **It builds respect** – being honest signals confidence and fairness.
* **It saves time and energy** – less room for misinterpretation or negotiation games.
* **It strengthens relationships** – clarity helps avoid resentment and hidden expectations.

Directness is not the same as aggression. Assertive wants are firm, respectful, and focused on behaviour — not blame.

**Quick Reminders**

✔ Use “I want…”

✔ Keep it short

✔ Match words with body language

✔ Aim for clarity, not justification

✔ Look and sound confident