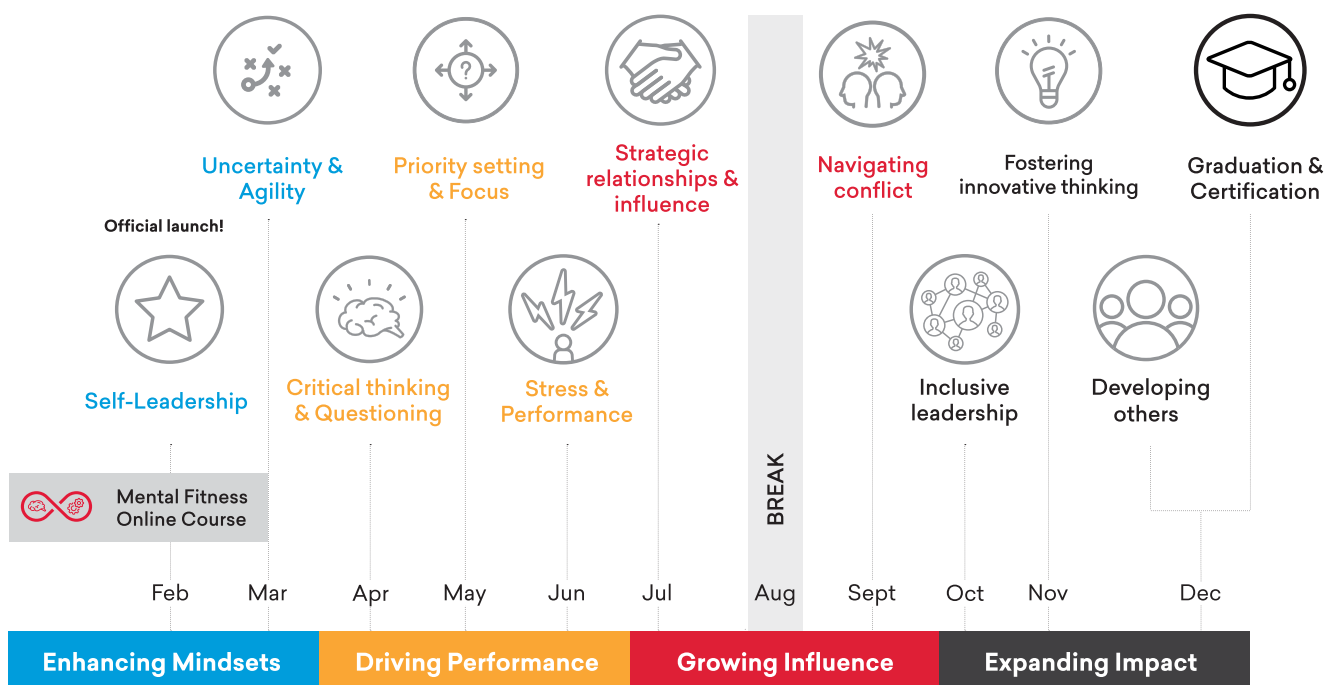


# The **EDGE**

## Welcome to The EDGE recap for zone 2

### Driving Performance

#### Session 4: Priority Setting & Focus



This module helps you understand what drives **motivation, momentum and productivity**. You'll enhance your ability to cut through the clutter of our always-on world with its endless urgencies and priorities. Why? Because the way to accomplish more isn't to do more—it's to do strategically less.

**Ready to get behind the wheel of your success? Hop into the driver's seat and crank up the engine—it's time to drive performance!**

# Driving performance



## Driving performance

### Critical Thinking and Questioning

Move from executing requests to uncovering the why that drives them

### Priority Setting and Focus

Gain clarity on what really matters and optimize your capacity

### Stress and Performance

Capitalize on positive stress and thrive in chaos

## Session 4: Priority Setting & Focus

**Date:** 17th May 2023

**Trainer:** Samantha Kiani

Priorities, priorities! We showed up to this session to proactively **manage our focus**. We loaded up on ways to **unload our workloads** so that we can step in the helicopter and **prioritise meaningfully**.

**Stop starting, start finishing** may have become your mantra. Minimising **context switching**, setting ourselves up for a **win, not back to backing meetings** and taking time to **get our head in the game** so we can be **effective** in meetings.

Also getting better outcomes with **delegation** by adding **boundary conditions** and **asking how** they will do the work, and **better managing conflicting priorities** by bringing all our stakeholders together so they can see the problem and together agree were just some of the areas we covered...

## A nudge

In this post-pandemic time where we are all figuring out distributed working, we realise it's not really time, in fact **Energy is our Currency**.

The 80:20 rule is universal. Managing our energy well is a path of mastery, we can't possibly master our energy if we are not prepared to rest... remember NASA and the principle of small, regular **micro-rests** which keep our cognitive function at its best...



'Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes.'

## Defend your focus

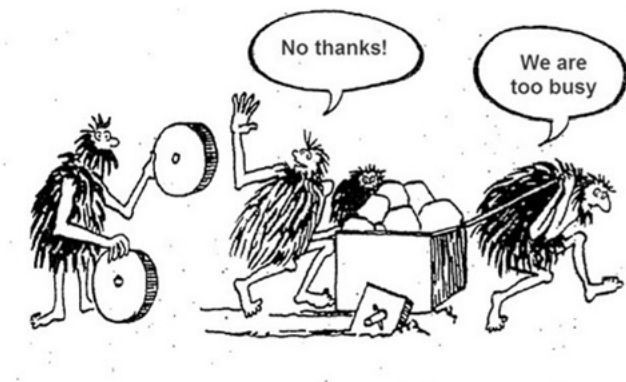
Prioritisation starts with **intention!**

The time we spend upfront strategically discussing and **deciding on our priorities, planning our time & defending our focus** is directly correlated to our performance

We looked into the traps we fall into....

We looked in to the traps we all tend to

## The 'busy' trap...



*"I'm too busy to slow down and think!  
I'll just get my head down, get it done  
and then it will go away..."*



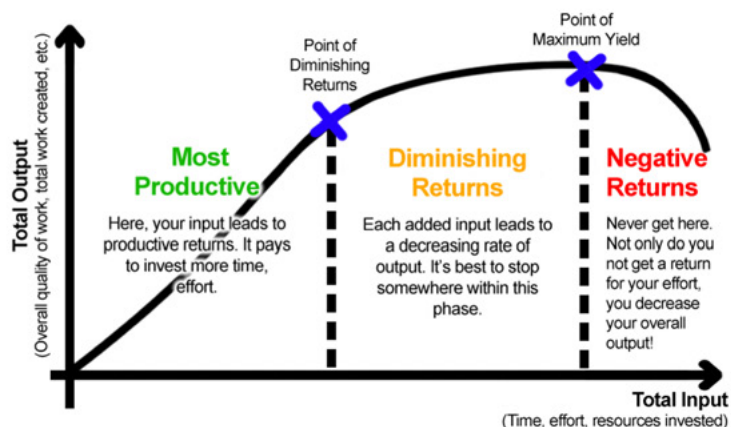
When we feel 'too busy' to take stock that's exactly the red flag you need to stop and check if you're on the right trajectory

**The 'more is more' fallacy:** The equation doesn't add up. **Diminishing returns** every time.

## The fallacy that 'more is more'

The more work we take on the less work we get done **well**.

The law of **diminishing returns**.



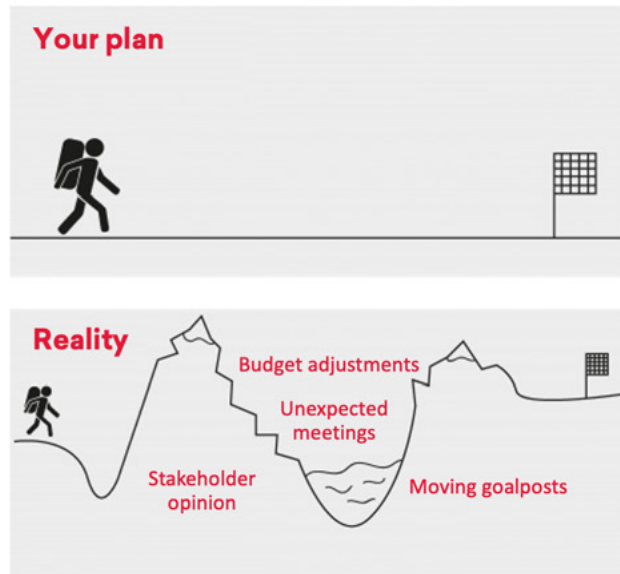
**The optimism trap:** No matter how efficiently we work, we forget that **life can still get in the way.**

### The 'optimism trap'...

Giving more weight to the subjective confidence we have in our ability to achieve against short deadlines.

Then becoming frustrated and disappointed when it doesn't go to plan.

- Get crystal clear upfront on what's truly being asked
- Are you the best person for the job?
- Can the need get met in a different way?
- Prepare for setbacks and adjust timescales



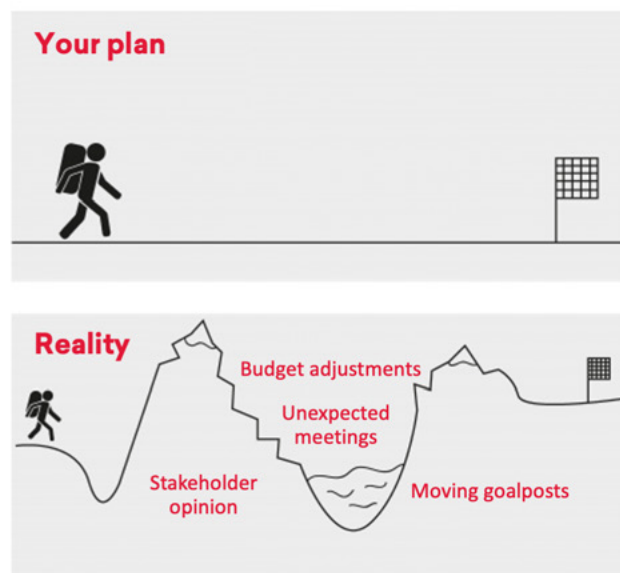
**The capability trap:** Just because you can, **doesn't mean you should.**

### The 'optimism trap'...

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## Expect to manage expectations

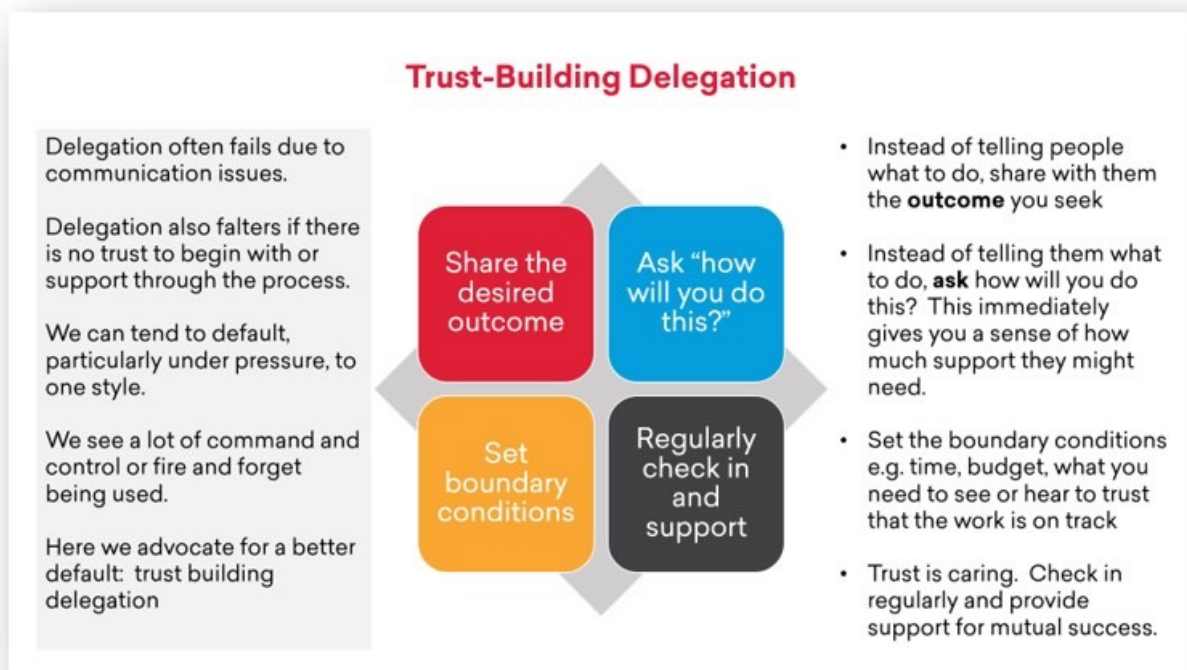
Surprise: managing expectations requires intentionality too, and a proactive mindset. But its infinitely preferable to **mismanaging expectations**.

We're not **superheroes**—just people.

## Delegate and relegate

We always want a fast solution. Putting effort upfront in delegation does take time and resources.

You need to **train people** and invest in **coaching** them. What's the solution? **Play the long game**. Delegation will pay off over time!



Remember: when we say yes to more work, we're saying **no to all the other things** in our lives.



# Your workload map

We're continuously **navigating our workload**. And we need a map for that!

## Using your workload map



### With yourself

- To help prioritise and manage the week's tasks and beyond
- To get a better understanding of how much time you need for certain tasks or activities
- To see how much you can realistically take on in a day or week



### With your line manager & colleagues

- To align on, prioritise, or explain why you can't take more on
- To help see where your time is being focused
- To create a common language with the people you work with –
  - "I have a few 'large' tasks I need to focus on this week but I may have time to help with some XS & S things."
  - "Next week I'll have time to take on another 'large' "

## Heads-Up: You'll Need to Plan Ahead!

To prioritise, you need to 1) focus on the **things that matter**, 2) **delegating, postponing or eliminating**, and 3) knowing **what to say 'no' to**.

### Planning ahead

#### Focus on the big rocks

Crunch times are intense periods of work. **Be mindful of project timelines** and prioritise the 'right' things.

#### Delegate, postpone, or eliminate

**Assess each task** on your list by asking:

- Is the work/task important to you?
- Does it help you deliver against the strategy?
- Will it relieve pressure working on it?
- Does it help you move forward?

If not, delegate, postpone or eliminate the tasks.

#### To Don'ts are as important as To Dos

What are you spending time on that might actually be unnecessary or a distraction?

## Focus is key

To deliver against your priorities, focus is absolutely key. Why? Because when you pursue multiple priorities, you **dilute your goals** and **diminish the quality** of your work.

So:

- Don't dilute your focus **without good cause**.
- More is less!
- Delegating or asking for help isn't being weak. It's **working smarter**.

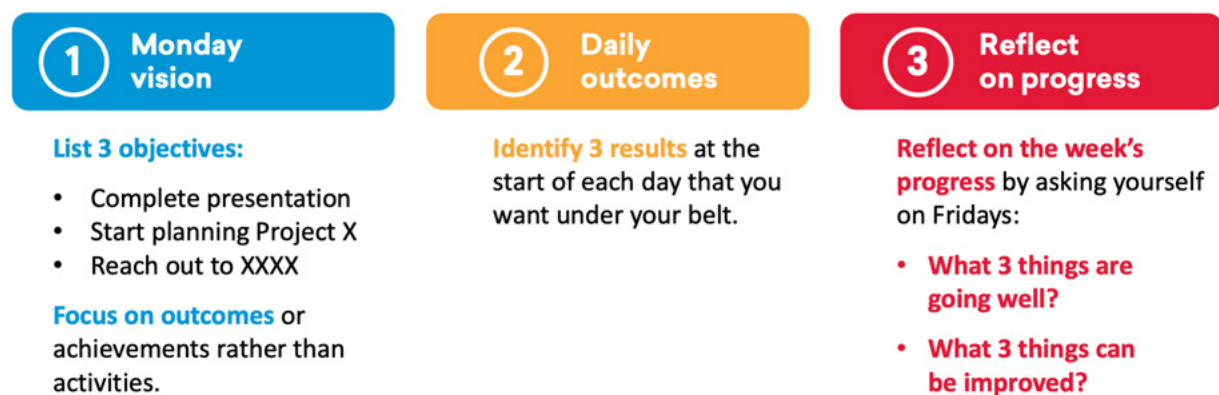
## Summary: Priority Setting & Focus

Setting priorities means when we move from executing requests to **uncovering the why that drives them**.

## Rule of 3: Three's the charm

We follow this rule at Symbia: never go **above 3 things**! Pick 3, do them well, and report on your progress.

### The rule of 3





## Enter the matrix

If you were a fan of the Matrix before, apply this priority-setting tool and you'll become a **superfan**. Remember: your **time is your currency**.

### Tool: Covey's Matrix



## Batching: a simple way to organise tasks

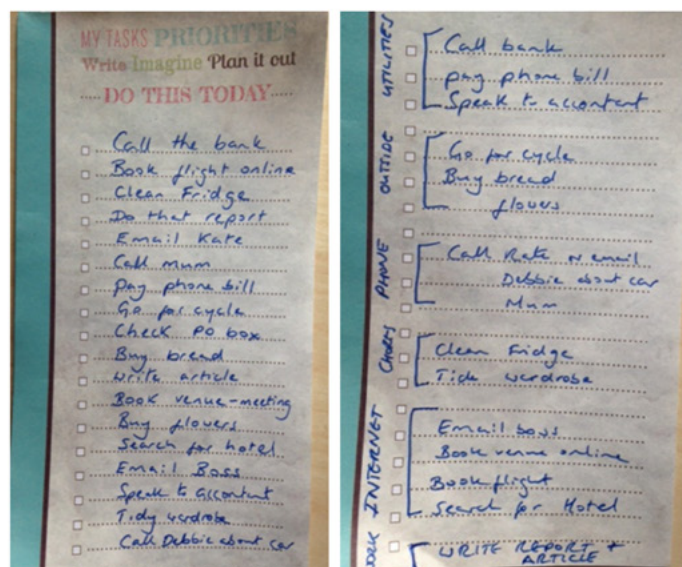
Chunk your to-do's **by category**. It's the **ultimate focus hack** because it saves you from spotlighting your focus.

Pro tip: **combine batching with Covey's Matrix** to go full beast with your prioritisation! It's batchin'.

### Tool: Batching for Energy Matching

Use this simple method to organise your tasks by similar categories or type (calls to make, emails to write, home, etc.)

Once you have your list in batches or chunks, it will be easier to tackle them and get them all done in bulk!



# Pushing back is really pushing forward

Is it time to **reframe** your understanding of pushing back?

## Reframe what you think about 'pushing back'



By instinctively saying yes to a work commitment you don't have time or space to take on, **you've often inadvertently said 'no' to several other really important things:**

- **Doing an excellent job** on your other deliverables – because you are now more thinly spread
- **Proper headspace to think:** because you've taken on too much
- **Opportunity to role model focus:** because your team are watching and learning from you
- To **spending the evening with your family** or having a work free weekend
- To the exercise you wanted to do
- To a **properly balanced** life

## Boundaries: Do not cross

Here are some useful ways to communicate your boundaries for better focus.

### Top tips for setting your limits with others

1

**Compliment and thank** the person asking for the opportunity and demonstrate that you **understand this is important to them**, this will let them know you empathise even though you can't necessarily help.

2

**Offer them an alternative approach** to answering their query. If possible, give them choices. Offer them a 'yes but' with a different timeline. Again, this will demonstrate empathy, a practical approach to solution finding and a desire to help.

3

**Tap into useful alternatives** e.g. if they ask X team they might produce the outcome they need with more efficiency or speed or for free/less money.

## Ways to set limits without saying the word 'no'

If the request is coming  
from someone more senior...



If this is not your line manager, explain that you'll need to double **check the new priority list with your manager before agreeing**. Let them know you will get back to them in 48hrs (so they aren't left 'hanging')

If the person **compliments your ability** to do the job well...



**Don't be tricked into saying yes just because of that.** Thank them for the compliment and say you'd love to help them, but the parameters will need to change for you to support them (change in timing/depth/quality of output)

If your fear is that saying no might  
damage your relationship...



You can **express enthusiasm for the opportunity**, but explain that the timing isn't right for everyone to get the best outcome if you take it on.

If it's your boss leaning on you to  
take on extra commitments...



**Create your work map or draft a list of your projects and ask them to help you prioritise and reconfigure your time.**

Doing this also gives visibility to your workload and may lead to a different or better outcome.

## What to do when you feel squeezed

Communication is key to **getting out of a pinch**.

### When you are being **unfairly** pressured:

**"I understand** that this is really important to you and we will try everything to get you the answers you need. But please remember, while this has been on your agenda for weeks, we were briefed only yesterday. We would appreciate the time required to get up to speed."

**"I recognise** that this is a priority for you and we want to give you what you want. But we need to make choices and I would like us to make them together. Which is more important to you, speed or depth of insight? Budget or robustness? (etc. etc.)"

**"As you can imagine, everyone's project is a priority.** Perhaps if I showed you our current delivery plan you could help me understand what really is a priority and what can be relegated?"

**"It's worth remembering** that this information is new to us. We need time to process it, cross reference it against our current plans and get back to you with a recommendation on the way forward."

## Summary: Priority setting and focus

**Focus means staying the course on the things that matter to you—priorisation powered by intention can be your superpower.**

### Notes from The EDGE

- When planning your life: Plan as many **to don't's** as **to do's**!
- Are you a **neurosurgeon**? If not, you won't put anyone's life at risk by turning down work! Life will go on.
- To get more done (including your 3 things) consider **starting your day offline**.

### Resources

- Reading for more tips on **influence and negotiation**: **Never Split the Difference: Negotiating as if Your Life Depended on It. Chris Voss**  
- **Get a taste** before you read the book
- Ready to reclaim your stolen focus? **Here's how**. (Johann Hari, NYT)
- 5 ways you can protect yourself mentally and stay focused in **fast-paced work environments** (Jodie Rogers, **The Hidden Edge of Team Performance** podcast)
- **'Flight Levels' by Klaus Leopold podcast**. Flight levels regarding the different **levers you have for change** in an organisation
- A recommendation from an EDGE participant (thanks Emily!) relatable for everyone working for **global business**: **The Culture Map: Breaking Through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business. Erin Meyer**