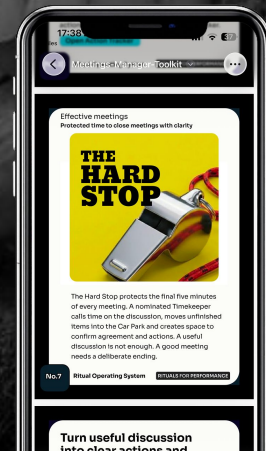


3 PROVEN LEADERSHIP RITUAL SYSTEMS

38 pages of rituals, guides & coaching

High-performance habits for leaders
under pressure. Built from science,
tested in the field.

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE



Common leadership challenges

Solved by these
3 Proven Ritual Systems

Meetings end without clear actions, owners or deadlines



The loudest voices dominate while quieter insight gets missed



Meetings run over and accountability becomes vague



People leave meetings with different interpretations of what was agreed



Teams drift into the week unclear on priorities or blockers



People suffer silently instead of asking for help early



Busy work crowds out focused work



People keep saying yes because they lack a constructive way to challenge



Unrealistic deadlines or asks create silent frustration



Managers delay feedback until small issues become big problems



Tough conversations feel personal, risky or awkward



People feel ambushed because concerns are raised too late or without context



Managers lack a clear structure for difficult conversations



Expectations, ownership and next steps are unclear after 1-1s



THIS IS OUR FREE GIFT TO YOU

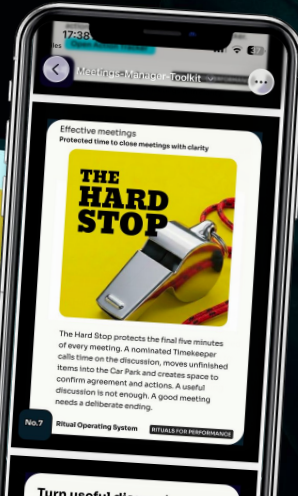
38 PAGES of rituals, guides and coaching

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

We put 1000's of hours into creating these systems, so you can plug and play



Inside: 9 proven performance rituals, 6 plug-and-play templates and trackers, and 10 field-tested coaching guides.



RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Built from thousands of hours of real manager challenges

Over the last few years, we've worked inside fast-moving organisations to understand where performance really breaks down. The pattern is consistent.

Managers are expected to create clarity, give feedback, build trust, run better meetings and hold people accountable, often without a practical system for doing it well.

So we built one.

The Manager Rituals Toolkit turns our in-market work into simple, repeatable rituals managers can use immediately to improve the conversations, meetings and habits that drive performance.

A practical toolkit for better management, stronger teams and clearer accountability.



Ekimetrics.



O STREET




The Audience Group

Medialab

 **PAYALLY**

NHS



Trusted by the leaders of forward thinking businesses

Why this matters: Management quality becomes inconsistent as businesses grow

THE PROBLEM

Good management conversations are left to personal style

Trust, clarity and accountability depend on the individual manager

- Meetings end without clear ownership.
- Feedback is delayed, softened or avoided.
- 1-1s depend on confidence and personality.
- Leaders get pulled into firefighting.
- Employees experience uneven standards across teams.

Result: unpredictable management experience and inconsistent team performance.



THE SOLUTION

A simple ritual system that makes better management repeatable for everyone

Shared tools for meetings, feedback and 1-1 conversations

- Step-by-step rituals managers can use straight away.
- Clear sequences, roles and prompts for real conversations.
- Common language across the management population.
- Coaching support to embed the toolkit into workflow.
- Templates, meeting agendas, presentation documents and guides to ensure better behaviours hold up when pressure rises.

Result: better relationships and performance becomes consistent

THE FULL MANAGER RITUALS TOOLKIT + YOUR 3 FREE SYSTEMS

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Built by experts from 1000's of hours of in market development with leaders, managers and teams

MORE EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Clarity and accountability in every meeting

- 1 Reduce the Meeting Load
- 2 Design Meetings for Outcomes
- 3 Open Meetings Well
- 4 Run Inclusive and Accountable Meetings
- 5 Close the Loop **Your free sample system**
- 6 Cascade with Clarity
- 7 Meeting Templates

MORE CONFIDENT FEEDBACK

Confident and continuous feedback culture

- 8 Create the Conditions for Feedback Culture
- 9 Vulnerability: Turn Mistakes into Shared Progress
- 10 Role Modelling: Ask for Feedback First
- 11 Give Clear Feedback for Tasks and Behaviour
- 12 Clarify Outcomes, Not Just Tasks **Your free sample system**
- 13 Prioritise to Focus Effort **Your free sample system**
- 14 Recognise and Share What Good Looks Like

TRUST-BUILDING 1-1 CONVERSATIONS

Handle tough conversations early and effectively

- 15 Master Your Mindset
- 16 Create genuine trust
- 17 Coach, Don't Rescue
- 18 Clarify the Real Issue
- 19 Face into Tough Conversations **Your free sample system**
- 20 Turn Conflict into Collaboration
- 21 Repair Misunderstandings and Relationship Fallout
- 22 Agree Commitments and Follow Up

**These 3 free systems are our gift to you.
The full Toolkit has 22 sections packed with proven tactics.**

MORE EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Clarity and accountability in every meeting

5. CLOSE THE LOOP

End meetings with clear decisions, owners, deadlines, questions, contributions and next actions.

CLOSE THE LOOP

End meetings with clear decisions, owners, deadlines, questions, contributions and next actions.

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Inefficient meetings are the number one productivity disruptor

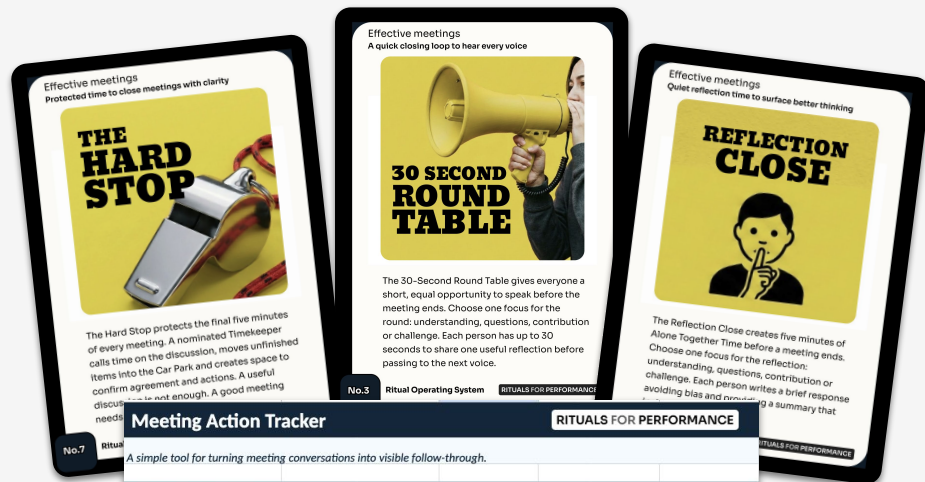
Source: Microsoft's 2023 Work Trend Index

CLOSE THE LOOP is part of the solution.

This sample section from the Manager Rituals Toolkit gives you three simple Meeting Closer rituals and an action tracker you can use straight away.

Start with The Hard Stop, then add a spoken or written loop when the meeting needs it.

These will help you have clearer endings, better contribution and more visible ownership.



Meeting Action Tracker

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

A simple tool for turning meeting conversations into visible follow-through.

WHAT THIS TRACKER IS FOR

Use this tracker during the final minutes of a meeting to capture the actions that matter: what needs to happen next, who owns it and by when. Keep the Action Tracker focused on commitments. Move unfinished discussion into the separate Car Park tab so the meeting can close cleanly.

WHY IT MATTERS

A useful discussion is not enough. Microsoft's 2023 Work Trend Index shows that 78% of surveyed people said next steps at the end of a meeting are often unclear.

HOW TO USE THE ACTION TRACKER

1. During the Hard Stop, ask: What actions are we committing to?
2. Add one action to the tracker.
3. Update the tracker as the meeting progresses.
4. Use the Car Park to capture unfinished discussion.

HOW TO USE THE CAR PARK

Use the Car Park to capture unfinished discussion.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

- One action per row

Action Tracker

Capture commitments during the Hard Stop. One action. One owner. One deadline.

Open actions		Blocked		
7		2		
Date added	Action	Owner	Deadline	Status
06-Jun-2026	Estimate effort for automating the monthly reporting pipeline	Tom Reeves	11-Jun-2026	Not started
06-Jun-2026	Share the revised assumptions log with the client sponsor	Priya Shah	08-Jun-2026	Blocked
05-Jun-2026	Draft the model validation approach for the pricing project	Owen Brooks	10-Jun-2026	On track
05-Jun-2026	Clarify whether the weekly client update needs a written summary	Amira Khan	06-Jun-2026	Complete
04-Jun-2026	Run quality checks on the latest CRM data extract	Grace Liu	07-Jun-2026	On track
04-Jun-2026	Create a simple dashboard mock-up for the client workshop	Nina Patel	09-Jun-2026	Not started
03-Jun-2026	Prepare first draft of churn-model feature list	Priya Shah	06-Jun-2026	On track
03-Jun-2026	Book stakeholder interview with the Head of Operations	Leo Martin	04-Jun-2026	Complete

MEETING CLOSING RITUALS

Use them this week

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

A quick-start slide for introducing the three meeting closing rituals in a live meeting this week.

ONE ACTION. ONE OWNER. ONE DEADLINE.

1 Before the meeting

Choose a Timekeeper. Add a five-minute Hard Stop to the agenda. Open the Action Tracker before the meeting starts.

2 With five minutes remaining

Pause the discussion. Move unfinished topics into the Car Park rather than allowing the meeting to overrun.

3 Close with clarity

Ask: What did we agree? What actions need to happen next? Who owns each action? By when? Does anyone understand it differently?

4 After the meeting

Review open actions at the next agreed follow-up point. Keep the tracker focused on live commitments only.

Choose the right close

Start with The Hard Stop. Add one spoken or written loop only when the meeting needs it.



Default close: protect the final five minutes.



Spoken loop: hear every voice briefly.



Written loop: create quiet thinking time.

Team intro line:

"We're going to protect the final five minutes so we leave with clear actions and ownership."

Effective meetings
Protected time to close meetings with clarity

THE HARD STOP



The Hard Stop protects the final five minutes of every meeting. A nominated Timekeeper calls time on the discussion, moves unfinished items into the Car Park and creates space to confirm agreement and actions. A useful discussion is not enough. A good meeting needs a deliberate ending.

No.7

Ritual Operating System

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Turn useful discussion into clear actions and ownership.

1. Decide who is the Timekeeper

Before the meeting begins, agree who will call the Hard Stop. Usually not the Host.

2. Call the Hard Stop

With five minutes remaining, pause the discussion. Move unfinished topics into the Car Park so they can be revisited separately.

3. Close with clarity

What did we agree?

What actions need to happen next?

Who owns each action and by when?

4. Capture the actions

Record each action, owner and deadline in the Action Tracker. Ideally run meeting recording software to make this a cut and paste task.

[Open Action Tracker](#)

No.7

Ritual Operating System

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Challenge:

Meetings often run over and discussion ends up taking the place of actions and ownership

Solution:

Introduce a 5 minute standing agenda point to all meetings. Run the Hard Stop Ritual.

Results:

Clarity of actions and ownership become normal

[DOWNLOAD MOBILE CARD PACK](#)



It starts before the meeting begins, by creating clear shared roles. Nominate a Timekeeper and an Action Taker.

Coaching notes

To ensure better meetings, best not to hold all the responsibility of running them smoothly, The Hard Stop is a simple way to start sharing it. Most meetings do not fall apart because the discussion is bad. They fall apart because the ending is rushed.

The meeting runs right up to the wire. People jump to the next call. Actions are half-captured. Ownership is vague. Then the manager is left afterwards trying to chase commitments, clarify decisions and work out who is doing what.

The Hard Stop changes that pattern. But it does not really start with the final five minutes.

It starts before the meeting begins, by creating clear shared roles. Nominate a Timekeeper and an Action Taker.

The Timekeeper protects the final five minutes and calls the Hard Stop.

The Action Taker captures decisions, actions, owners and deadlines in the Action Tracker.

Those two roles are powerful because they turn the meeting from something the manager is carrying alone into a shared team event.

That shared responsibility creates more ownership and buy-in. When the Hard Stop is called, the team pauses the discussion. Anything unfinished moves into the Car Park. Then the group confirms:

What did we agree?
What actions need to happen next?
Who owns each action?
By when?

Ideally, the Action Taker works with meeting recording software, so capturing the actions becomes quick, accurate and easy to paste into the tracker.

The aim is not to add process for the sake of it.

The aim is to make accountability visible before people leave the meeting.

Talk it through with your team. Explain that you are trying a simple way to make meeting endings clearer and more useful.

Then test it in one meeting.

Choose the Timekeeper. Choose the Action Taker. Protect the final five minutes.

You may be surprised how quickly this changes the sense of ownership in the room.

HOW TO USE THE ACTION TRACKER

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Capture actions, owners and deadlines during the meeting. Use meeting recording software to support full capture.

Use the action tracker during the Hard Stop so decisions turn into visible follow-through.

RUN IT IN 4 SIMPLE MOVES

- 1 Open it before the meeting**
Have the Action Tracker ready so capture happens live, not afterwards.
- 2 Capture clear commitments**
Write one action per line. Each action needs a named owner and deadline.
- 3 Use the Car Park separately**
Move unfinished discussion or unresolved questions into the Car Park tab.
- 4 Sort and review**
Use Date added to keep newest items at the top. Review open actions next time.

RECORD DATE, ACTION, OWNER, DEADLINE

Action Tracker				
Capture commitments during the Hard Stop. One action. One owner. One deadline.				
Open actions 7		Blocked 2		
Date added	Action	Owner	Deadline	Status
Right click row and + insert 1 row above to add new entries				
06-Jun-2026	Estimate effort for automating the monthly reporting pipeline	Tom Reeves	11-Jun-2026	Not started
06-Jun-2026	Share the revised assumptions log with the client sponsor	Priya Shah	08-Jun-2026	Blocked
05-Jun-2026	Draft the model v			
05-Jun-2026	Clarify whether the summary			
04-Jun-2026	Run quality checks			

KEEP IT SIMPLE

One action. One owner. One deadline.

OPEN ACTION TRACKER

Use this after every Hard Stop to make follow-through visible.

Effective meetings
A quick closing loop to hear every voice



The 30-Second Round Table gives everyone a short, equal opportunity to speak before the meeting ends. Choose one focus for the round: understanding, questions, contribution or challenge. Each person has up to 30 seconds to share one useful reflection before passing to the next voice.

No.3

Ritual Operating System

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Hear every voice and surface what might otherwise be missed.

1. Choose the focus

Understanding: What is your key takeaway and what happens next?

Questions: What is still unclear or unresolved?

Contribution: What would you add, build on or suggest?

Challenge: What risk, assumption or blind spot should we test?

2. Round Table 30 seconds each

The Timekeeper starts the timer. Each person has up to 30 seconds to share one useful reflection. It is always acceptable to pass..

3. Keep time, close the loop

Respect the 30-second limit. Capture anything that needs more time in the Car Park. Confirm actions, owners & deadlines in the Action Tracker.

[Open Action Tracker](#)

No.3

Ritual Operating System

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Challenge:

The most confident voices can dominate meetings. Useful questions, contributions and risks may remain unspoken

Solution:

Add a 30-second closing Round Table. Choose one focus and give each person equal time to contribute or pass.

Results:

Every voice is heard and important insight surfaces before the meeting ends.

[DOWNLOAD MOBILE CARD PACK](#)



As a leader or manager, it is your responsibility to create the environment that helps your team do their best thinking.

Coaching notes

The 30-Second Round Table is one of the simplest ways to make meetings more inclusive.

We have used versions of this for years because it gives every person a clear, equal opportunity to speak. That matters because many meetings are shaped by the most confident voices in the room, while quieter questions, useful contributions or important challenges stay unspoken.

As a leader or manager, it is your responsibility to create the environment that helps your team do their best thinking. It is not enough to say, “Any questions?” and hope people speak up.

Most people will only contribute when the structure makes it feel safe, expected and useful. The 30-Second Round Table does that.

At the end of a meeting, choose one focus for the round. You might choose Understanding if you want to check what landed. You might choose Questions if you want to surface anything unclear. You might choose Contribution if you want to hear useful additions or ideas. You might choose Challenge if you want the team to test risks, assumptions or blind spots before you move forward.

These four areas help build what we think of as progressive contribution confidence.

First, people feel that they belong.

Then they feel able to ask questions.

Then they feel able to contribute.

Then they feel able to challenge.

Challenge is often the hardest behaviour to normalise, but it is one of the most valuable. Teams make better decisions when people can respectfully say what might be missing, what might not work or what needs to be tested. The 30-Second Round Table gives people a contained way to practise that.

The Timekeeper protects the pace and stops the round becoming another open discussion. This is important. The power of the ritual is the constraint.

It gives everyone a chance to speak without allowing one or two people to take over.

It is excellent at the end of a meeting, but it can also be used at other moments: before a decision, after a proposal, during a review or when you sense that some voices have not yet been heard.

Start simply. Choose one meeting. Give it a go.

Effective meetings
Quiet reflection time to surface better thinking

REFLECTION CLOSE



The Reflection Close creates five minutes of Alone Together Time before a meeting ends. Choose one focus for the reflection: understanding, questions, contribution or challenge. Each person writes a brief response avoiding bias and providing a summary that includes all voices equally.

No.9

Ritual Operating System

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Create space for quieter, more considered thinking to emerge.

1. Choose the focus

Understanding: What is your key takeaway and what happens next?

Questions: What is still unclear or unresolved?

Contribution: What would you add, build on or suggest?

Challenge: What risk, assumption or blind spot should we test?

2. Start the reflection

Timekeeper start the timer. Everyone writes silently for 5 minutes in the agreed place: a shared document, meeting notes or individual cards.

3. Capture & close the loop

Thank the team. Review and share the reflections after the meeting. Add actions and owners in the Action Tracker.

[Open Action Tracker](#)

No.9

Ritual Operating System

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Challenge:

Fast-moving meetings can favour people who think out loud. Quieter or more considered perspectives may be missed.

Solution:

Add five minutes of Alone Together Time. Choose one focus and ask everyone to write a brief reflection before closing.

Results:

Better-quality thinking and a more inclusive view of what the team needs next.

[DOWNLOAD MOBILE CARD PACK](#)



It starts before the meeting begins, by creating clear shared roles. Nominate a Timekeeper and an Action Taker.

Coaching notes

The Reflection Close is a simple way to create better thinking before a meeting ends. It uses a practice we often bring into workshops and product development environments: Alone Together Time.

The idea is simple. Everyone is in the same space, working quietly on the same question at the same time. That structure matters because group conversations can easily be shaped by the loudest voice, the most senior person or the first opinion that lands in the room.

Once that happens, other people may start editing their thoughts around what has already been said. The Reflection Close helps reduce that problem. Instead of asking people to respond immediately out loud, it gives everyone five minutes to think and write.

This creates a different kind of contribution. Some people think best by speaking. Others think better when they have time to process, reflect and put their ideas into words.

If you only rely on verbal contribution, you may miss some of the best thinking in the team.

The Reflection Close gives those quieter or more considered voices a way in.

At the end of the meeting, choose one focus.

Then set the timer for five minutes. Everyone writes silently. That silence is important.

Do not rush it. Do not fill it. Do not explain over it. The quality of the ritual depends on respecting the time and respecting the quiet.

At first, some teams may find it unusual. That is normal.

Many teams are used to meetings being dominated by live discussion, quick reactions and the people most comfortable thinking out loud. But with practice, Alone Together Time can become one of the most valuable habits in the room.

It helps reduce bias.

It creates more equal contribution.

It gives people time to think before responding.

And it gives the manager a richer picture of what the team has understood, noticed or needs next. Once the reflections are written, capture what matters. Use a AI tool to synthesise and share summary, insights and actions with the team.

Start simply.

Choose one meeting. Choose one focus. Set the timer. Respect the silence.

The rewards are worth the discipline.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT MEETING CLOSE

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

A quick guide to ending meetings with clarity, contribution and accountability.

Use these closing rituals to protect the ending, hear what matters and create visible follow-through.

1 START WITH THE HARD STOP



THE HARD STOP

Protect the final five minutes, move unfinished topics into the Car Park and confirm actions, owners and deadlines in the action tracker.

What did we agree?

What actions happen next?

Who owns each action?

By when?

Different understanding?

2 THEN CHOOSE THE RIGHT CLOSING RITUAL



30-SECOND ROUND TABLE

A fast verbal close that gives everyone equal airtime and surfaces what might otherwise be missed.

HEAR EVERY VOICE AND BUILD CONTRIBUTION CONFIDENCE



REFLECTION CLOSE

A written close that creates quiet space for more considered thinking to emerge.

CREATE RESPECTFUL THINKING SPACE AND UNBIASED CONTRIBUTION

SIMPLE AGENDA PLANNING DECISION FLOW

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Choose one closing ritual that fits the meeting need.

USE THIS FLOW DURING AGENDA PLANNING



ONLY NEED TO CONFIRM ACTIONS AND OWNERSHIP?

USE →

THE HARD STOP



WANT TO HEAR BRIEFLY FROM EVERYONE IN THE ROOM?

ADD →

THE 30-SECOND ROUND TABLE



NEED QUIETER, MORE CONSIDERED THINKING?

ADD →

THE REFLECTION CLOSE

REMEMBER Choose one closing ritual and one focus. The aim is to close the meeting well, not create another meeting inside the final few minutes.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT FOCUS

Both the 30-Second Round Table and the Reflection Close use one chosen prompt.



CHOOSE ONE CLOSE. CHOOSE ONE FOCUS.

Select the prompt that best suits the meeting. Do not try to use all four.

U

UNDERSTANDING

Check that the same meaning landed for everyone.

Prompt: What is your key takeaway and what happens next?

Q

QUESTIONS

Surface anything unclear or unresolved.

Prompt: What question still needs an answer?

C

CONTRIBUTION

Invite useful additions or improvements.

Prompt: What would you add, build on or suggest?

C

CHALLENGE

Test assumptions and identify risk.

Prompt: What risk, assumption or blind spot should we test?

WHEN TO USE WHAT

Use this as a quick starting point. The best close depends on the meeting, the team and the quality of thinking you need.

MEETING SITUATION AND RECOMMENDED CLOSE

MEETING SITUATION	RECOMMENDED CLOSE
Weekly team meeting with clear next steps	The Hard Stop
Project meeting where several teams need to act	Hard Stop + Round Table for Understanding
Decision meeting where the room agreed too quickly	Round Table for Challenge
Complex planning meeting with a quieter team	Hard Stop + Reflection Close for Contribution
Sensitive discussion with strong power dynamics	Reflection Close for Questions or Challenge
Hybrid meeting where remote voices may be missed	Reflection Close or Round Table

MATCH THE ROOM Some teams speak best. Others think better when they write. Use the ritual that improves the quality of the close.

FACILITATION TIPS

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Keep the close protected, simple and useful.

1

PROTECT THE CLOSE

Do not reopen discussion. Move anything substantial into the Car Park.

2

CHOOSE ONE FOCUS

A useful closing loop is simple. One prompt is enough.

3

MATCH THE ROOM

Some teams speak best. Others think better when they write.

4

USE THE ACTION TRACKER

Capture actions, owners and deadlines during the meeting — not afterwards.

[OPEN ACTION TRACKER](#)

Move unfinished discussion into the separate Car Park sheet on the Action Tracker so it stays visible without allowing the meeting to overrun.

Date added

Action

Owner

Deadline

Status

Blocker

Follow-up

ONE ACTION. ONE OWNER. ONE DEADLINE.

**MORE CONFIDENT
FEEDBACK**

Confident and continuous feedback culture

13. PRIORITISE TO FOCUS EFFORT

Use feedback to protect priorities, surface blockers and make trade-offs visible.

PRIORITISE TO FOCUS EFFORT

Use feedback to protect priorities, surface blockers and make trade-offs visible.

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

41% of workers' time is spent on work that doesn't contribute to the value their organisation creates

Source: Deloitte 2025 Global Human Capital Trends

PRIORITISE TO FOCUS EFFORT is part of the solution.

This sample section from the Manager Rituals Toolkit gives you three simple rituals and practical templates you can use straight away.

Start with Blockers and Asks, then use Prioritise This or Yes, but... when work needs to be prioritised or challenged.

These will help everyone protect focus, reduce low-value activity and course-correct before performance drifts.



Manager Rituals Toolkit:
<https://www.ritualsforperformance.com/managers-ritual-toolkit>

Blockers and Asks Agenda

Meeting roles

Meeting Lead	Timekeeper	Action Taker

Purpose

Manager Rituals Toolkit:
<https://www.ritualsforperformance.com/managers-ritual-toolkit>

Priority Map

A simple way to sort what must be protected, what can flex, and what we can say no to.

Work / Ask	Must protect	Should do	Could do	Won't do	Trade-off / note
Client proposal due Friday	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Protect this because it is revenue/client-critical. Move internal reporting to next week
Extra slide polish for Monday leadership update	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Useful, but not essential. Use the current version unless the core message is unclear. Do not take time away from client delivery.
New request from senior leader for analysis by tomorrow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Important, but timing needs checking. Trade-off: either deliver a quick top-line view tomorrow or move another committed task.
New meeting that has no clear decision or owner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Say no or pause until there is a clear outcome. Trade-off: reclaim 60 minutes for higher-priority work.
Fixing a blocker that is holding up two other team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Must protect because it unblocks others. Trade-off: delay lower-value admin or ask for support to clear the blocker

PRIORITISE & FOCUS RITUALS

Use them this week

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

A quick-start slide for introducing the three focus rituals in a live team rhythm this week.

No one suffers quietly. Team strengths are shared

1 Before the week starts

Choose a meeting lead and action taker. Open the Blockers and Asks agenda and agree the main priority for the week.

2 At the weekly kick-off

Set context, then ask each person for no help needed, one blocker, or one ask. Rebalance each item as you go.

3 When work feels too much

Use the Priority Map to sort what must be protected, what can flex and what you can say no to.

4 When the ask cannot be met

Run a quick Yes, but... session. Bring options and a recommendation, not just the problem.

Implement the system

Start with Blockers and Asks. Add Priority Map or Yes, but... only when the work needs it.



Weekly rhythm: Surface blockers early.



Priority pressure: Sort what matters.



Unrealistic ask: Bring options upward.

Team intro line:

"We're going to protect focus this week by naming blockers early and making trade-offs visible."

Confident feedback
Weekly alignment and expertise sharing

BLOCKERS AND ASKS



Team Lead kicks off the week with context & clarity of priorities. We then circle the room and name any blockers making asking for expertise and decision making support normal. Then together we move forwards as one team.

No.14

Ritual Operating System

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Turn blockers into quick fire strength sharing.

1. 'Team lead' set the weeks context

Clarity and context on what must be achieved by the end of the week. Then open the floor for visibility of blockers and asks for expertise ahead of any crisis point.

2. Blockers & asks: Round table

Each person states

- No help needed
- OR
- I have [something] blocking my way
- I need expertise/decisions on [something]

3. Fast rebalance from 'Team lead'

For each ask/blocker team lead asks.

- Who can help this?
- Or appoints team member to help with this

4. Each person capture their changes

Actions, support, and follow-ups are captured.

[Open Agenda Template](#)

No.14

Ritual Operating System

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Challenge:

People can drift into the week unclear on priorities, blockers or the expertise they need. Problems surface too late.

Solution:

Add Blockers and Asks to the weekly kick-off. Set the week's context, then rebalance each person's blocker or ask as it is raised.

Results:

Shared focus, faster support and fewer hidden blockers before work gets stuck.

[DOWNLOAD MOBILE CARD PACK](#)

BRING BLOCKERS AND ASKS YOUR TEAM

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

A quick guide to protecting priorities, surfacing blockers and challenging workload constructively.



Manager Rituals Toolkit:

<https://www.ritualsforperformance.com/managers-ritual-toolkit>

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Blockers and Asks Agenda Template

Meeting roles

Meeting Lead	
Timekeeper	
Action Taker	

Purpose

A weekly alignment meeting to protect focus, surface blockers and share expertise before work gets stuck. We use this at the start of the week to create shared focus and make blockers visible early.
NOTE: This is not a full status update. We do not share a to do list. Only blockers and asks

Agenda

Time	Section	Preparation notes
0-5 mins	Set the context	[Name] will share the main priority for the week, key deadlines, known risks and any context the team needs before naming blockers or asks.
5-25 mins	Blockers and asks round table	Everyone comes ready with: [1] no help needed, [2] one blocker, or [3] one ask. After each person, we will quickly clarify the support, decision or priority shift needed before moving on.
25-30 mins	Close the loop	[Name] takes the role of action taker and confirms what is moving, who is helping, and what needs communicating after the meeting.

Good practice

Don't let anyone suffer silently

Many weekly meetings and kickoffs start with good intent, but quickly become a long list of what everyone is working on. That can create activity, but not much clarity.

Blockers and Asks keeps the conversation focused on what the team actually needs to move forward:

“I’m clear.” “I’m blocked by...” “I need help with...”

The purpose is to make sure no one suffers in silence, gets stuck alone, or waits too long before asking for support. The Team Leader's role is not to solve everything in the meeting. It is to spot where support, expertise, a decision or a priority shift is needed — then move the team forward.

Used well, this turns the weekly kick-off from a status update into a practical support ritual. Less to-do list. More clarity, support and momentum.

[OPEN AGENDA TEMPLATE](#)

Confident feedback
Supported confidence to say "No, but..."

Prioritise **THIS**



When it can't all get done this is what we do.
Grab 5 minutes with a senior/lead and bring
your suggestions to re prioritise and jointly
agree priorities to make trade-offs explicit so
the right work gets done and we get better at
saying "No, but" trade offs.

No.15

Ritual Operating System

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Get support for some 'no, but...' trade offs.

1. Prepare priority mapping first

- What's critical vs. nice-to-have
- Which you think could be delayed or dropped
- What "No but" trade offs will help get it done

2. Calendar the ask. Keep it consistent

Title: Priority Regroup

Description: Add your priority mapping ahead of the meeting.

3. Meet & agree decisions/priority

"No, but we can do X if Y moves."

"No, but this is realistic by Friday."

"No, but if i can get help with 'X'."

4. Align & communicate actions

What's staying, moving or being dropped

Who owns actions and support. Communicate to all clearly while in this meeting so it's done.

[Open Priority Map](#)

No.15

Ritual Operating System

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Challenge:

Busy work can crowd out focused work. People may keep saying yes because they do not have a shared way to prioritise.

Solution:

Use the Priority Map before a short regroup. Sort what must be protected, what can flex and what can be delayed or dropped.

Results:

Clearer trade-offs, better support and more confidence to say "No, but..." constructively.

[DOWNLOAD MOBILE CARD PACK](#)

USING THE PRIORITY MAP WITH YOUR TEAM

A quick guide to protecting priorities, surfacing blockers and challenging workload constructively.



Manager Rituals Toolkit:

<https://www.ritualsforperformance.com/managers-ritual-toolkit>

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Priority Map

A simple way to sort what must be protected, what can flex, and what we can say no to.

Work / Ask	Must protect	Should do	Could do	Won't do	Trade-off / note
Client proposal due Friday	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Protect this because it is revenue/client-critical. Move internal reporting to next week
Extra slide polish for Monday leadership update	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Useful, but not essential. Use the current version unless the core message is unclear. Do not take time away from client delivery.
New request from senior leader for analysis by tomorrow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Important, but timing needs checking. Trade-off: either deliver a quick top-line view tomorrow or move another committed task.
New meeting that has no clear decision or owner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Say no or pause until there is a clear outcome. Trade-off: reclaim 60 minutes for higher-priority work.
Fixing a blocker that is holding up two other team members	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Must protect because it unblocks others. Trade-off: delay lower-value admin or ask for support to clear the blocker faster.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

MoSCoW Prioritisation - How to use it

Must protect	Should do	Could do	Won't do (No, but.. Trade offs)
This is the work we need to protect. It is critical to the outcome, deadline, client, risk, revenue, team wellbeing or agreed priority. If this moves, there is a real consequence.	This work matters, but there may be some flexibility. It should happen if possible, but the timing, scope or owner may need to change if capacity is tight.	This work is useful, but it is not essential right now. It should only happen if there is enough time, energy and capacity after the higher-priority work is protected.	This work is not for now. It may be out of scope, too low-value, badly timed, or not connected closely enough to the current priority. Saying no here protects focus.
Examples: Client-critical delivery. Regulatory or legal requirement. Work needed to	Examples: Useful project work that could move by a week. A meeting or task that still matters	Examples: Extra polish. Additional research. Nice-to-have reporting. A	Examples: Duplicate work. Work that no longer supports the priority. A request with no clear owner or

Help your team get better at prioritisation

The Priority Map helps team members get better at prioritising for themselves, not just waiting for the manager to decide.

At first, the manager may run through the template with the team member. Over time, the structure trains people to think more clearly about what must be protected, what can flex, and what can be delayed or dropped.

The aim is to arrive at a short timeboxed conversation with a point of view already formed:

“Here is what I think matters most. Here is what I think can move. Here is the trade-off I need help deciding.”

This reduces bottlenecks at manager and leader level because people are not just bringing workload problems upward. They are bringing options, recommendations and clearer decisions.

[OPEN PRIORITY MAP](#)

Confident feedback
Constructive challenge to protect delivery

**YES,
but...**



Yes, but... helps us proactively respond when an ask simply cannot be met. It makes challenge constructive, visible and useful. Looking at the facts, to bring back clear options, trade-offs and a recommended way forward.

No.16

Ritual Operating System

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

A proactive approach to challenge workload

1. Call it & Clarify the ask

When it lands, call a quick Yes, but... session. Agree what is being requested, by when. Check what is fixed, what is flexible, and who needs the decision.

2. Check the reality

Look honestly at capacity, timing, risk, dependencies and impact on other priorities. Do not debate feelings. Bring facts.

3. Create the options

Bring back choices, not just problems. For example: do less now, move something else, deliver later, add support, or accept the risk.

4. Share the recommendation

Agree the best route and who will take it forward. The message is:
"Yes, we want to support the outcome. But here are the choices."

Use escalation template

No.16

Ritual Operating System

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Challenge:

Sometimes an ask lands with a deadline, scope or expectation that simply cannot be met properly.

Solution:

Run a quick Yes, but... session. Clarify the ask, check the reality, create options and share a recommendation.

Results:

Better decisions, visible trade-offs and less silent frustration when expectations need to change.

INTRODUCE THE YES BUT WITH YOUR TEAM

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

A quick guide to protecting priorities, surfacing blockers and challenging workload constructively.



Manager Rituals Toolkit:

<https://www.ritualsforperformance.com/managers-ritual-toolkit>

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Yes, but... escalation template

A simple way to challenge unrealistic asks without sounding negative.

Yes, but...

Is how we provide options when the ask simply cannot be met

"Yes, we want to support the outcome. But based on what we know, it cannot happen in the way it has currently been asked. Here are the choices."

The outcome is better conversations, better decisions and less silent frustration.

This is how - Business Technology and Change - stand together with a clear view of the options, trade-offs and consequences. So that Exec has a clear, practical view to decide on.

The ask	What have we been asked to do?
The outcome understood	What is the business trying to achieve?
The issue	Why does the current ask not work?
The evidence	What do we know about timing, capacity, risk or resource?
The options	<p>Option 1: Stop something else "We can do this, but these other priorities will need to move."</p> <p>Option 2: Do less now "We can deliver a smaller version by the deadline, then phase the rest."</p> <p>Option 3: Do it later "We can deliver the full version, but not by the current date."</p>

Reduce frustration with clearer challenge routes

Yes, but... helps delivery teams challenge unrealistic demands without sounding negative or resistant. This is especially useful when work is being pushed down through the business with little room to discuss priority, resource or trade-offs.

The point is not simply to "push back". The point is to respect the expertise of the people closest to the work and involve them in shaping the best route forward. When teams can bring clear options, leaders get better decisions:

"We can support the outcome, but not in the way it has currently been asked. Here are the choices."

Used well, this reduces frustration because people are not trapped between silent acceptance and difficult escalation. It creates a better collaboration channel where delivery reality, business priorities and smarter thinking can meet before commitments are made.

[OPEN YES BUT TEMPLATE](#)

IMPLEMENT THE SYSTEM

A quick guide to protecting priorities, surfacing blockers and challenging workload constructively.

Use these rituals to create weekly clarity, redirect energy and make trade-offs visible before performance drifts.

1 START WITH WEEKLY ALIGNMENT

BLOCKERS AND ASKS



BLOCKERS AND ASKS

Set the week's context, hear blockers and asks, then rebalance each item before moving on.

Who needs support?

One blocker

One ask

Team members buddy up to mitigate blockers

Move confidently into the week

2 ENCOURAGE TEAM MEMBERS TO USE THE RIGHT TACTICAL RITUAL

Prioritise THIS



PRIORITISE THIS

Sort critical, important and nice-to-have work before asking for support.

PROTECT FOCUS AND BUILD CONFIDENCE TO SAY "NO, BUT..."

YES, but...



YES, BUT...

When the ask cannot be met, bring clear options and a recommendation upward.

MAKE TRADE-OFFS VISIBLE BEFORE DECISIONS ARE MADE

WHEN TO USE WHAT

Use this as a quick starting point. The best move depends on the work, the pressure and the decision needed.

TEAM SITUATION AND RECOMMENDED MOVE

TEAM SITUATION	RECOMMENDED MOVE
Weekly team meeting with shared priorities	Blockers and Asks
Someone is overloaded but can bring options	Prioritise This + Priority Map
A deadline is unrealistic	Prioritise This
Useful work is crowding out priority work	Priority Map
A blocker is holding up other people	Blockers and Asks + named follow-up
A senior ask conflicts with agreed priorities	Yes, but... with sponsor
MATCH THE PRESSURE	Some problems need weekly visibility. Others need priority mapping or a constructive challenge upward. Use the ritual that improves the quality of the next decision.

TRUST-BUILDING

1-1 CONVERSATIONS

Handle tough conversations early and effectively

19. FACE INTO TOUGH CONVERSATIONS

Raise concerns early, clearly and respectfully before trust, expectations or performance drift

FACE INTO TOUGH CONVERSATIONS

Raise concerns early, clearly and respectfully before trust, expectations or performance drift

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

80% of employees who received meaningful feedback in the past week are fully engaged.

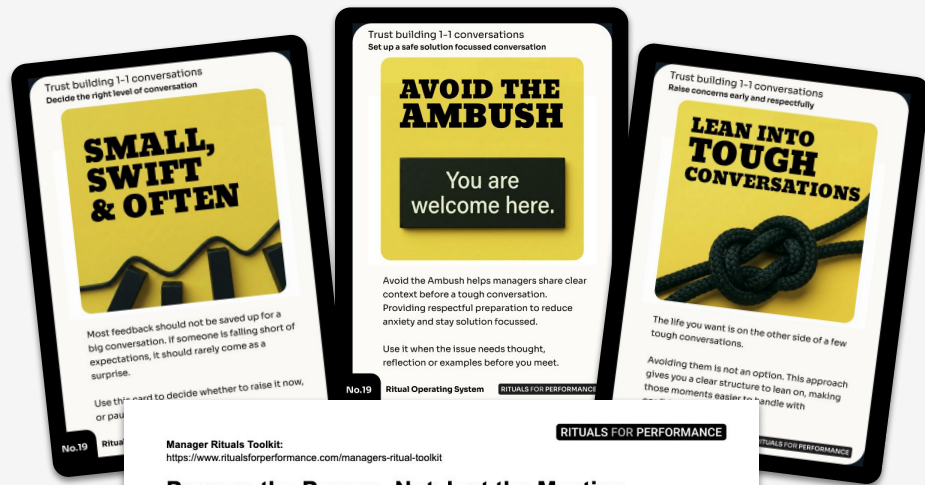
Source: Gallup, 2024

FACE INTO TOUGH CONVERSATIONS is part of the solution.

This sample section from the Manager Rituals Toolkit helps managers raise concerns before small issues become bigger patterns.

Start with Small, Swift & Often to decide whether the conversation should happen now, or needs more preparation. Use Avoid the Ambush when the issue needs context, reflection or examples before you meet.

Then use ISIR to hold the conversation with clear intent, specific facts, shared impact and a practical request.



Manager Rituals Toolkit:
<https://www.ritualsforperformance.com/managers-ritual-toolkit>

Prepare the Person, Not Just the Meeting

A pre-send email and agenda template for more considered conversations.

Most feedback should come as a surprise.

Use a pre-send only when repeated, carries strong emotion, or is complex. Send it close enough to the day or the day before it happens.

Manager Rituals Toolkit:
<https://www.ritualsforperformance.com/managers-ritual-toolkit>

Missed Deadlines and Late Escalation

Scenario purpose: Practise using ISIR to keep a tough conversation clear, specific and collaborative.

Role-play setup	Details
Situation	Sam is a capable project lead who is well-liked by the team. Recently, Sam has missed two internal deadlines and only flagged the issue once the deadline had already passed.
Roles	Manager: Priya Report: Sam
Manager worry	The manager worries Sam will feel criticised or become defensive because Sam is usually reliable and committed.
Common trap	Over-softening the message: "It's probably not a big deal, but I wanted to check in." Or making it too blunt: "You keep missing deadlines."

ISIR worked script

Step	Manager line	Report response	Coaching note
1. Notice	When you notice the behaviour or moment clearly.		
2. Act	Find the most relevant, timely opportunity to explain and deliver the feedback.		

FACE INTO TOUGH CONVERSATIONS

Use them this week

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

A quick-start guide for raising concerns early, safely and clearly.

1 Decide to be swift or prepare

Use the matrix and examples to choose the right conversation level, so managers avoid overreacting, avoiding, or over-formalising small issues.

2 Small, Swift & Often

Use the 'Say it now, best practice guide' to raise recent, specific concerns close to the moment, so expectations stay clear and people course-correct earlier.

3 Prepare the person, not just the meeting

Use the Pre-Send Email templates + Agenda Template to share context before meeting, so people arrive ready to reflect, not just react.

4 ISIR. Make tough conversations productive

Use the ISIR Guide, Manager checklist, Clarity is Kindness and Role-Play Scenarios to keep conversations clear, respectful, practical and focused on growth.

The life you want is on the other side of a few tough conversations

Use the System and coaching guides

Start with Small, Swift & Often. Add Avoid the Ambush when the issue needs preparation. Use ISIR when the conversation needs structure.

**SMALL,
SWIFT
& OFTEN**

For recent, specific concerns to course correct quickly.

**AVOID THE
AMBUSH**

You are
welcome here.

Pause and prepare when the issue has repeated or needs context before you meet

**LEAN INTO
TOUGH
CONVERSATIONS**

Use intent, situation, impact and request to keep the conversation clear.

Team intro line:

"We're going to make feedback small, swift and useful, so expectations stay clear and tough conversations don't become a surprise."

Trust building 1-1 conversations
Decide the right level of conversation

SMALL, SWIFT & OFTEN

Most feedback should not be saved up for a big conversation. If someone is falling short of expectations, it should rarely come as a surprise.

Use this card to decide whether to raise it now, or pause and prepare.

No.19

Ritual Operating System

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Raise it now, pause or prepare?

A. Small, Swift & Often

Use this when the issue is recent, specific and easy to course-correct. Raise it close to the moment. Keep it calm, brief and useful.

“Can I quickly flag something from that meeting?”

“When X happened, the impact was Y.”

“What could we try next time?”

B. Pause

If it is the first time, you can wait and see if it repeats, then raise it small, swift & often. Go with benefit of the doubt for small isolated issues.

C. Prepare (Avoid the Ambush)

The issue has repeated after earlier feedback.

The concern is becoming more serious.

You have already tried small, swift & often.

The conversation needs clearer structure and follow-up.

Open Coaching Guide

No.19

Ritual Operating System

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Challenge:

Managers often save up small feedback until it becomes a bigger, heavier conversation. By then, the issue feels more personal, more surprising and harder to course-correct.

Solution:

Use Small, Swift & Often as the default. Pause and prepare only when the issue repeats or needs clearer structure and follow-up.

Results:

Expectations stay clearer, people can adjust earlier, and performance concerns become less surprising, less emotional and easier to resolve.

[DOWNLOAD MOBILE CARD PACK](#)

BEST PRACTICE CHEAT SHEET FOR TIMELY FEEDBACK

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Use small, swift feedback to make clarity normal, reduce surprise and support growth.



RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Manager Rituals Toolkit:

<https://www.ritualsofperformance.com/managers-ritual-toolkit>

Small, Swift Feedback, Best Practice

We often avoid feedback because we fear conflict or consequence. But respect is built through clear intent. When the other person knows your focus is their growth, their contribution and their relationship with the team, clarity becomes kindness.

Be swift, be courageous. Say the useful thing clearly and timely, before a small issue becomes a bigger one and make small, swift feedback a normal practice in your team.

Use this simple approach

1. Notice	2. Act	3. Impact	4. Commitment
When you notice the behaviour or moment clearly.	Find the most relevant, timely opportunity to explain and deliver the feedback.	Explain what it affected and encourage reflection.	Collaborate on an adjustment or agreement for next time.

Example: "Can I quickly flag something from that meeting? When you jumped in before Sarah had finished, we lost part of her point. Next time, would you commit to leaving a little more space before coming in?"

Remember

Be specific, not personal.	Focus on process, not character.	Use messages for clarity. Use conversation for care.
----------------------------	----------------------------------	--

Instead of saying	Say
You were a bit much in that meeting.	When you jumped in twice before others finished, it became harder to hear their view.
You need to be more professional.	The update was missing the agreed detail, so the team could not make the decision.
You're not showing enough ownership.	When the blocker came up, I needed you to flag it earlier and suggest a next step.
This keeps happening.	This is the second time this week the deadline moved without warning.
Don't do that again.	Next time, pause, check the impact, and agree the next step before moving on.

Use a verbal or written message?

Use verbal when:	Use a message when:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the issue is sensitive• tone could be misread• you need their perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the correction is simple• you are clarifying an expectation• you are following up on a verbal conversation

Clarity is kindness

It is normal to avoid direct feedback. We worry about conflict, consequence, saying the wrong thing or damaging the relationship. But delayed feedback often creates more surprise and tension later.

Small, swift feedback is course correction, not criticism. It helps people understand what needs to change while the issue is still small and useful to act on.

The mindset shift is from avoidance to courageous clarity. When your intent is clear, supporting their growth, contribution and relationship with the team, feedback becomes an act of respect. Don't be afraid of repeating that in your own words with team members.

The more you practise these conversations, the more trust you build. Clarity becomes kindness.

[OPEN BEST PRACTICE GUIDE](#)

USE THIS GUIDE TO CHOOSE FEEDBACK TYPE

Use small, swift feedback to make clarity normal, reduce surprise and support growth.



RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Manager Rituals Toolkit:

<https://www.ritualsofperformance.com/managers-ritual-toolkit>

Raise it Now or Prepared and Structured?

Decide whether to raise it straight away or prepare a structured conversation.

Most feedback should be small, swift and often. The goal is minimal surprise. If someone is falling short of expectations, they should not first hear about it in a serious conversation weeks later.

If the issue is recent, specific and easy to course-correct, raise it close to the moment. Do not save it up. Gentle, direct feedback given early is usually kinder than delayed feedback that arrives when the problem has become bigger.

Some concerns do need more care, preparation and structure, especially when there is a repeated pattern, stronger impact or potential consequence. But preparation should not become avoidance.

Do not hint that "we need to talk" and leave someone anxious for days. If the conversation matters, move swiftly, communicate directly and create a clear, respectful space to discuss it.

Use this guide to decide whether to raise it now or prepare a more considered conversation.

Situation	Best move	Why
A small behaviour happened in a meeting	Raise it now	It is recent, observable and easy to adjust.
A deadline slipped once with a reasonable explanation	Pause and watch	Give benefit of the doubt, but stay alert.
A deadline slipped twice in two weeks	Raise it small, swift and often	A pattern may be forming.
Feedback has already been given and nothing has changed	Prepare a structured conversation	The issue now needs clarity and follow-up.
The issue affects trust, team confidence or delivery	Prepare a structured conversation	The impact is wider than one moment.
The person may feel embarrassed or exposed	Prepare with care	They may need context and a safer frame.
The issue is urgent and blocking others	Raise it now	Speed matters, but keep it factual and calm.
The issue may become formal performance territory	Prepare properly	Evidence, intent and documentation matter.

Route 1: Now	Route 2: Next
Use when the issue is small, recent, observable and correctable quickly. Format: Brief, verbal if possible, close to the moment. Mini-structure: 1. Name what you noticed. 2. Explain the immediate impact. 3. Collaborate and ask for the adjustment. 4. Move on cleanly.	Use when the issue is repeated, sensitive, consequential or needs proper reflection. Format: Planned 1:1 conversation, with pre-send where useful. Main structure: 1. Avoid the Ambush / Pre-Send. 2. Intent First. 3. Situation. 4. Impact. 5. Request.

Choose the right level of conversation

Managers often make one of two mistakes with feedback. They either turn a small moment into a heavy conversation, or they treat a repeated pattern like a quick comment.

This guide helps you choose the right route. Use Raise it now when the issue is recent, specific and easy to correct. Keep it calm, brief and useful.

Use Pause and watch when it may be a one-off, but stay alert. Benefit of the doubt should not become avoidance. Use Prepare a structured conversation when the issue has repeated, carries stronger impact, or needs context, evidence and care.

The goal is not to make every feedback moment formal. The goal is to make sure people are never surprised by serious feedback.

Small issues deserve speed. Patterns deserve preparation.

[CHOOSE TYPE TEMPLATE](#)

Trust building 1-1 conversations
Set up a safe solution focussed conversation

AVOID THE AMBUSH

You are
welcome here.

Avoid the Ambush helps managers share clear context before a tough conversation. Providing respectful preparation to reduce anxiety and stay solution focussed.

Use it when the issue needs thought, reflection or examples before you meet.

No.19

Ritual Operating System

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Prepare the person, not just the meeting.

1. Reassure the Intent (Set the stall)

Make it clear it's a conversation, not a verdict.

"My aim is for us to understand this together, support your growth & agree a useful way forward."

2. Topic and context (Be specific)

Be clear about what the conversation is about and why it matters. Avoid vagueness and emotions. Use facts, be concise and stay neutral.

3. Examples & Reflective Questions

A specific example often helps. Then help them prepare their view. "What do you think is getting in the way? What support or change would help?"

4. Share the solution focussed agenda

Let them know there will be space for their view, impact and next steps. "We'll look at what's happened, hear your perspective and collaborate on ideas for what support or change might help."

Open Coaching Guide

No.19

Ritual Operating System

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Challenge:

People can drift into the week unclear on priorities, blockers or the expertise they need. Problems surface too late.

Solution:

Add Blockers and Asks to the weekly kick-off. Set the week's context, then rebalance each person's blocker or ask as it is raised.

Results:

Shared focus, faster support and fewer hidden blockers before work gets stuck.

[DOWNLOAD MOBILE CARD PACK](#)

INTRODUCE THE YES BUT WITH YOUR TEAM

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Use small, swift feedback to make clarity normal, reduce surprise and support growth.



Manager Rituals Toolkit:

<https://www.ritualsforperformance.com/managers-ritual-toolkit>

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Pre-Send Email + Agenda Template

Use this template when a conversation needs context, reflection or examples before you meet. Keep the note brief, objective and neutral.

Copy-and-paste template

Subject: Time to talk through [topic]

Hi [Name],

I'd like us to use our next 1:1 to talk through [topic].

My aim is for us to understand what is happening from your point of view, support your growth, and collaborate with you on some ideas for a useful way forward.

The reason I want to discuss this is [brief context / impact].
A couple of examples we can look at are [example 1] and [example 2].

Before we meet, it would be useful to think about:

- What do you think is getting in the way?
- What impact do you think this is having?
- What support or change would help?

In the conversation, we'll look at what has happened, hear your perspective, discuss the impact from a few angles, and then agree a solution-focused way forward that supports you and the team goals.

Thanks,
[Name]

What not to send

Avoid	Why	Better
"We need to talk."	Creates panic.	"I'd like us to talk through [topic] in our next 1:1."
"I have concerns about your performance."	Too broad and alarming.	"I'd like us to discuss the recent missed deadlines and what may be getting in the way."
"Several people have raised issues."	Feels anonymous and unsafe.	"I want to focus on two examples so we can understand the pattern clearly."
A long list of evidence.	Feels like prosecution.	"A couple of examples we can look at are..."

Prepare the person, not just the meeting

A good pre-send reduces surprise without creating panic. Use it when the conversation needs context, examples or reflection before you meet. This is especially useful when the issue has repeated, carries stronger impact, or could feel sensitive.

Do not use it to delay a conversation that should happen quickly. If the issue is small, recent and easy to course-correct, raise it verbally and close to the moment. The aim is not to soften the message. The aim is to make the conversation fairer.

Be clear about the topic, explain your intent, share one or two useful examples, and give the person questions to reflect on. Avoid vague warnings like "we need to talk." That creates mystery and anxiety.

The best pre-send helps the person arrive ready to understand, share their perspective and collaborate on a useful way forward.

[OPEN PREP TEMPLATE](#)

Trust building 1-1 conversations
Raise concerns early and respectfully

LEAN INTO TOUGH CONVERSATIONS



The life you want is on the other side of a few tough conversations.

Avoiding them is not an option. This approach gives you a clear structure to lean on, making those moments easier to handle with confidence and care.

No.19

Ritual Operating System

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

ISIR. A clear way to say what matters.

1. Intent first (Set the stall)

Show care, growth and shared success.

“You have great potential here and I want to support your growth so let’s address this together.”

2. Situation (Be specific)

On Tuesday this week you missed a deadline and others had to pick up the re work. Let’s understand this from your point of view first.

3. Impact (Explore together)

Connect the issue to work, trust, growth or the team. Be objective. “How do you think this affects the wider team?”

4. Request and Follow up

Invite ownership before prescribing the answer.

“Given this, what commitment can you make?”

Book a short check-in and summarise what was agreed in a few clear bullets.

Open Coaching Guide

No.19

Ritual Operating System

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Challenge:

Managers often delay tough conversations because they do not want to damage trust, trigger conflict or say the wrong thing. Small issues then become bigger patterns.

Solution:

Use ISIR to structure a safe and collaborative conversation. Use the Pre-Send ritual first, so no one feels ambushed

Results:

Expectations become clearer, and people leave with ownership, support and a practical next step

[DOWNLOAD MOBILE CARD PACK](#)

ROLE PLAY SOME TOUGH CONVERSATIONS

Use small, swift feedback to make clarity normal, reduce surprise and support growth.



Manager Rituals Toolkit:

<https://www.ritualsforperformance.com/managers-ritual-toolkit>

RITUALS FOR PERFORMANCE

Missed Deadlines and Late Escalation

Scenario purpose: Practise using ISIR to keep a tough conversation clear, specific and collaborative.

Role-play setup	Details
Situation	Sam is a capable project lead who is well-liked by the team. Recently, Sam has missed two internal deadlines and only flagged the issue once the deadline had already passed.
Roles	Manager: Priya Report: Sam
Manager worry	The manager worries Sam will feel criticised or become defensive because Sam is usually reliable and committed.
Common trap	Over-softening the message: "It's probably not a big deal, but I wanted to check in." Or making it too blunt: "You keep missing deadlines."

ISIR worked script

Step	Manager line	Report response	Coaching note
Intent	Priya: "Sam, I want to talk to you through because I value the impact you have on the team, and I want to support your growth as a project lead. My intent is to understand what is happening, be clear about the impact, and agree a better way forward together."	Sam: "Okay, I know a few things have slipped recently."	Sets safety without avoiding the issue. The purpose is growth, impact and collaboration.
Situation	Priya: "There are two examples I want to look at. Last Thursday, the client draft was due by 3pm, but we did not know it was at risk until Friday morning. This week, the launch plan timeline moved again, but the team only found out after the deadline had passed."	Sam: "I had a lot on and did not want to make it look like I could not handle it."	Uses facts, not character judgement. Keeps the focus on late escalation, not Sam's intent.
Impact	Priya: "What impact do you think it has on the team when deadline risk is flagged after the deadline has already moved?"	Sam: "People have to react quickly. It probably creates more pressure."	Invites reflection before adding the wider impact on trust, planning and team confidence.
Request	Priya: "Given that, what commitment can you make around flagging risk earlier?"	Sam: "I can flag it as soon as I think something might slip, rather than waiting until I am sure."	Invites ownership first, then shapes the commitment into something specific.
Follow-up	Priya: "Let's check in for 15 minutes next Friday to see whether this is helping you."	Sam: "That works."	Creates accountability without making the follow-up punitive.

Practise the conversation before it matters

Role play helps managers build confidence before a real tough conversation.

Some managers like to prepare a few thoughts under each part of the ISIR structure, then keep the actual conversation natural and free-flowing.

Others use the card directly in the meeting. Sharing the structure can help the report understand how the conversation will run: intent first, then situation, impact and request.

That structure matters. It shows the conversation is not a surprise, a trap or a telling-off. It is a supportive, clear and collaborative space to understand what is happening and agree a better way forward.

The goal is not to memorise a script. The goal is to practise courageous clarity, so managers can stay calm, specific and useful when the conversation gets real.

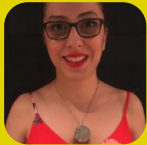
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