Kotter's 2 types of urgency

and what each one does to your team's judgement.

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Harvard's John Kotter described two kinds of urgency.

From the outside, they look the same.

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/ Type 1

False urgency

Driven by anxiety and anger.

Packed calendars. Back-to-back meetings. No time to think.

> Kotter's verdict:
>
> *"Activity, not productivity."*

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Anxiety and anger pull judgement in opposite directions.

Anxiety makes risks look

bigger.

Anger makes risks look

smaller.

A falsely urgent team can catastrophise and charge ahead at the same time.

/ Type 2

True urgency

> "A deep determination to win, not anxiety about losing."

Focus on the few issues that matter.
Real progress, every day.

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How to tell

	False urgency	True urgency
Meetings	Updates, decks, "we need to move faster"	Decisions: who does what, by when
Calendar	Back-to-back, no space to think	Space for what matters most
End of the day	Anxious, frustrated, tired	Can be tired, but clear on what moved
Focus	Everything feels important	The critical few

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The difference is in how pressure is perceived.

As a threat:
something that could harm us.

As a challenge:
a stretch worth meeting.

Research repeatedly links a challenge state to better performance.

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Under threat, the brain changes what we see.

Threats look closer.

Even mild stress, when it feels out of our control, can rapidly reduce our capacity for clear thinking.

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Try this

01 Ask: what's on your calendar that doesn't clearly move things forward?

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02 End every meeting with who does what, by when.

Simple. The hard part is doing it consistently.

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True urgency sharpens focus.

False urgency skews judgement.

Next: the third way we read pressure, and why it can wear teams out.

Follow Progression for part two.

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