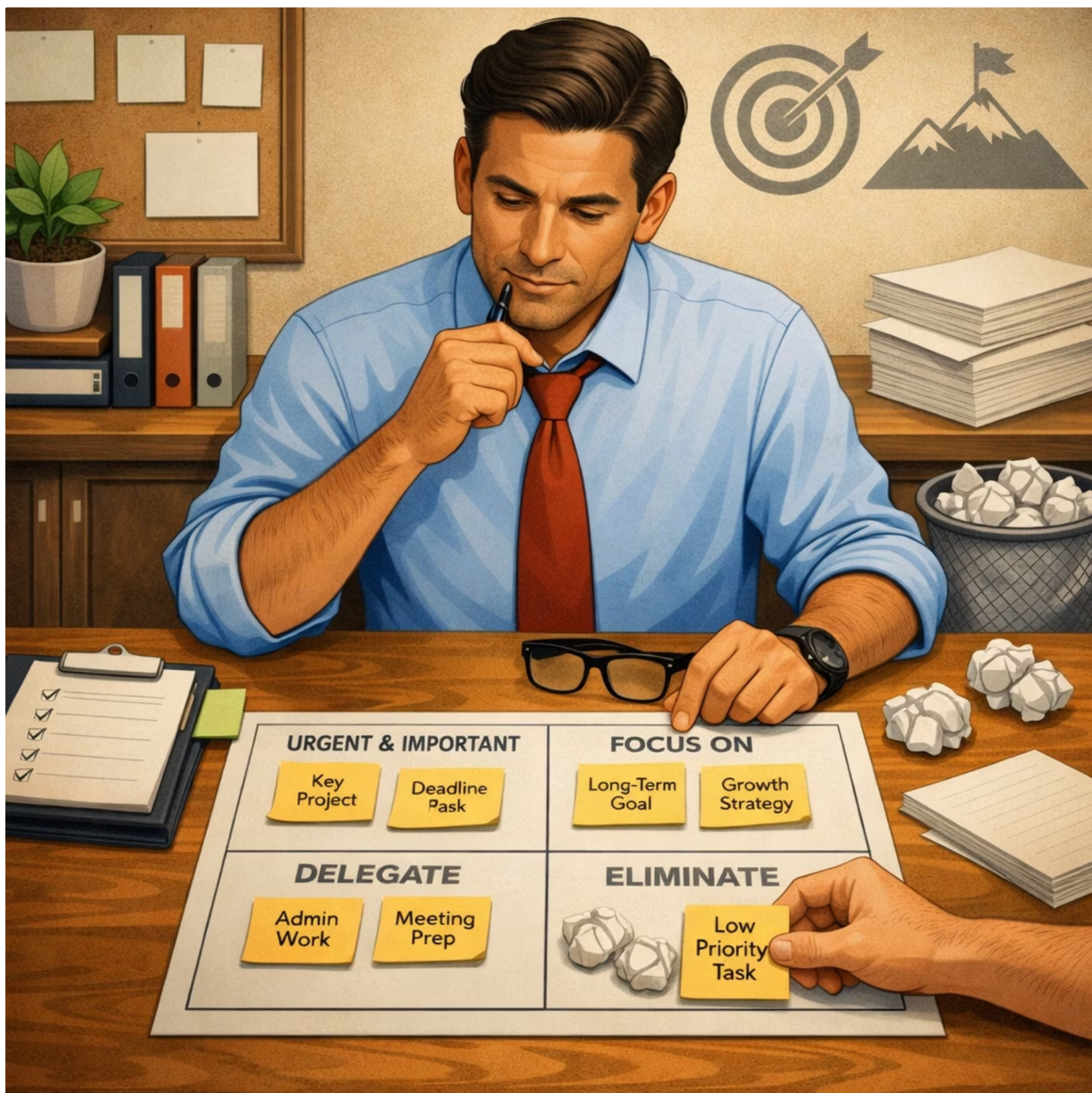




Leadership Priority Setting Worksheet

A structured, actionable resource for mid- to senior-level leaders who need to cut through the noise, focus on what truly matters, and drive results with clarity and confidence.

Leadership is not about doing more — it is about doing what matters most. This worksheet walks you through a proven, step-by-step process to audit your current priorities, eliminate low-value work, and align your daily decisions with your most important leadership goals.



SECTION 1

Why Priority Setting Matters for Leaders

Every leader faces the same fundamental challenge: more demands than available time. Without a deliberate system for setting priorities, leaders default to urgency over importance — constantly firefighting, attending every meeting, and responding to whoever speaks loudest. The result? Strategic work gets pushed aside, teams lose direction, and leaders feel perpetually behind.

Research consistently shows that high-performing leaders spend the majority of their time on activities only they can do — strategic thinking, people development, and decision-making. Low-priority tasks, by contrast, consume time that could be invested in work that multiplies team output. Priority setting is not a time management trick; it is a fundamental leadership discipline.

What Happens Without Clear Priorities

- Reactive leadership replaces proactive strategy
- Teams lack clarity on what matters most
- High-value work is perpetually deferred
- Leader energy is spread thin with low ROI
- Burnout accelerates among leaders and teams

What Great Priority Setting Delivers

- Focused execution on highest-impact goals
- Aligned teams who understand strategic direction
- Confident decision-making under pressure
- More time for coaching, thinking, and leading
- Sustainable leadership performance long-term

📌 **The Core Truth:** You cannot do everything. Exceptional leaders make deliberate trade-offs — they say no to good things so they can say yes to great ones.

SECTION 2

Step 1 — Conduct Your Leadership Audit

Before you can set better priorities, you need an honest picture of where your time is actually going. Most leaders are surprised when they audit a typical week. Use the prompts below to complete your leadership audit. Be brutally honest — this exercise only works if you reflect accurately.

Reflection Prompts — Answer Each Question

1



Time Audit

List your top 5 activities from last week. Next to each, write the approximate hours spent. Then mark each: **Strategic (S)**, **Operational (O)**, or **Administrative (A)**.

Write your answer here: _____

2



Impact Audit

Of everything you did last week, which 1–2 activities moved the needle most for your team or organisation? Which activities, if eliminated, would have made no significant difference?

Write your answer here: _____

3



Delegation Audit

Which tasks are you currently handling that a team member could do at 70–80% of your quality? What is stopping you from delegating these today?

Write your answer here: _____

4



Energy Audit

When during the week did you feel most energised and doing your best thinking? When did you feel most drained? What were you working on in each case?

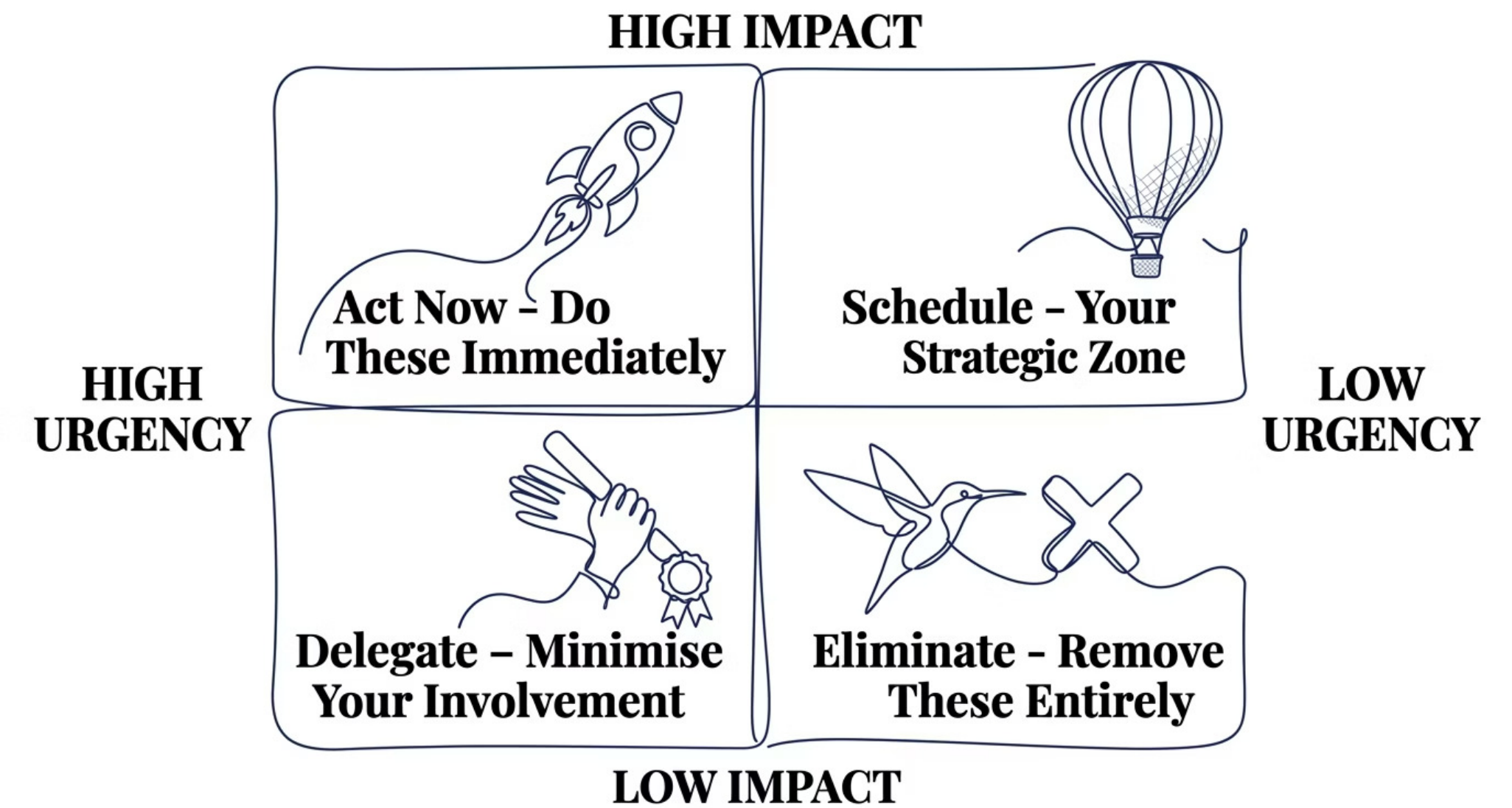
Write your answer here: _____

 **Pro Tip:** Block 30 minutes every Friday to repeat this audit. Pattern recognition across four weeks reveals your biggest priority traps.

SECTION 3

Step 2 — Define Your Leadership Priorities

With your audit complete, it is time to define what your actual priorities should be — not what feels urgent, but what genuinely drives results. Use the Priority Matrix below as your primary framework, then complete the structured prompts to lock in your top priorities for the next 30, 60, and 90 days.



The most important insight from this matrix: Q2 — Low Urgency, High Impact — is where transformational leadership happens. This is strategy, team development, process improvement, and innovation. Most leaders under-invest here because Q1 always feels more pressing. Your goal is to systematically protect more time for Q2 work.

Priority Definition Prompts

Priority Horizon	My #1 Priority	Why It Matters	Success Metric
Next 30 Days	_____	_____	_____
Next 60 Days	_____	_____	_____
Next 90 Days	_____	_____	_____

SECTION 4

Step 3 — The Priority Setting Checklist

Use this checklist every time you need to evaluate a new commitment, project, or demand on your time. Run every major request through these checks before committing. A "No" on three or more items is a strong signal to decline, defer, or delegate.

1

Strategic Alignment Check

- ☐ This directly supports one of my top 3 organisational goals
- ☐ My leadership is specifically required — it cannot be delegated
- ☐ This creates measurable value for my team or business unit
- ☐ It is consistent with where we are heading in the next quarter

2

Resource Reality Check

- ☐ I have sufficient time to do this well without sacrificing other priorities
- ☐ The team has bandwidth to support this if required
- ☐ Required budget or tools are available or can be sourced
- ☐ The deadline is realistic given current workloads

3

Opportunity Cost Check

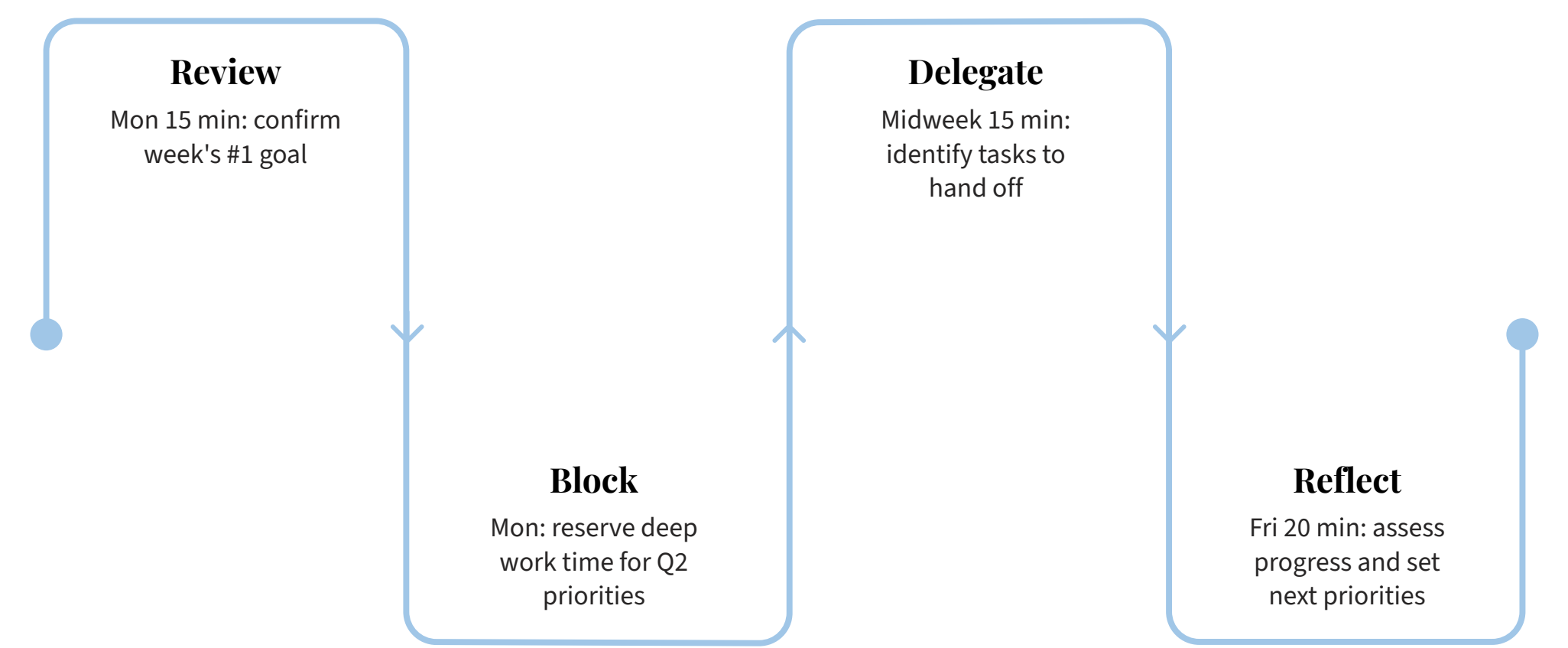
- ☐ Saying yes to this does not require saying no to a higher-priority item
- ☐ The trade-off is clearly worth making at this point in time
- ☐ I have considered what I will stop doing to accommodate this
- ☐ This passes the "only I can do this" leadership test

- ☐ **Real-World Scenario:** A senior marketing director is asked to join a cross-functional taskforce. Running the checklist reveals it does not align with current OKRs and requires 5 hours per week. Result: she requests a delegate from her team attend instead, freeing herself for a critical product launch review.

SECTION 5

Step 4 — Weekly Priority Planning Routine

Setting priorities once is not enough. The most effective leaders have a repeatable weekly rhythm that keeps their priorities sharp, their calendar aligned, and their team focused. The routine below takes 45–60 minutes every week and pays compounding dividends over time.



This four-step rhythm creates a sustainable cadence that prevents priority drift — the gradual creep of low-value work back into your schedule. The key discipline is protecting your Monday calendar blocks before others fill them. Treat deep work time as non-negotiable meetings with yourself.

Weekly Planning Template — Fill In Each Monday

Planning Element	This Week's Answer
My single most important outcome this week	_____
Blocked deep work hours (days + times)	_____
Top 3 tasks only I can do	_____
Tasks I will delegate and to whom	_____
Meetings I can decline or shorten	_____
One thing I will stop doing this week	_____

SECTION 6

Common Priority-Setting Mistakes to Avoid

Even experienced leaders fall into predictable traps when managing their priorities. Awareness of these patterns is the first step to breaking them. Review this list and honestly mark any that currently apply to you — then use the reflection prompt at the end to create a targeted action plan.

1

Urgency Addiction

Treating every urgent request as a priority. Urgency is a feeling, not a priority framework. Most urgent tasks are someone else's emergency — not your strategic obligation.

Fix: Ask "What happens if this waits 24 hours?" before reacting.

2

The "Yes Habit"

Saying yes to maintain goodwill or avoid conflict. Every uncritical yes is an implicit no to something more important. Leaders who cannot say no are not leading — they are serving everyone else's agenda.

Fix: Use "Let me check my priorities and come back to you" as a default response.

3

Perfectionism on Low-Stakes Tasks

Spending disproportionate time perfecting work that does not require it. Good enough at 80% quality on low-priority tasks frees capacity for excellence where it counts.

Fix: Assign explicit quality standards — "A-level", "B-level", or "C-level" — to each task before starting.

1

Delegation Avoidance

Holding onto tasks because "it is faster to do it myself." This creates a bottleneck, stunts team growth, and keeps leaders trapped in the weeds. Delegation is a leadership investment, not a shortcut.

Fix: Ask daily: "Is this the best use of my leadership time right now?"

2

No Single Priority

Listing five or more "top priorities" simultaneously. When everything is a priority, nothing is. A list of priorities is just a to-do list with ambitious language.

Fix: Force-rank your list and commit to one #1 priority per week. Everything else is secondary.

3

Skipping the Weekly Review

Treating priority setting as a one-time exercise rather than an ongoing discipline. Without a regular review, priorities drift and old habits return within two weeks.

Fix: Schedule a recurring 30-minute "Priority Review" block every Friday — and protect it as sacred.

SECTION 7

Best Practices from High-Performing Leaders

The habits and practices below are drawn from patterns consistently observed in high-performing senior leaders across industries. These are not theories — they are observable, repeatable behaviours that any leader can adopt immediately.

→ **Protect Your Peak Hours**

Identify the 2–3 hours each day when your thinking is sharpest and guard them aggressively. Schedule deep, strategic work during these windows — never routine meetings or administrative tasks. Most leaders find their peak hours are in the morning before 11 AM.

→ **The "MIT" Discipline**

Identify your Most Important Task (MIT) before opening email each morning. Complete at least 50% of your MIT before reacting to anything else. This single habit, practised daily, compounds into extraordinary output over a quarter.

→ **Calendar as Priority Signal**

Your calendar is a public declaration of your priorities. Audit it monthly — if it does not reflect your stated priorities, something is wrong. Block time proactively for strategic work, team development, and thinking time before reactive requests fill every slot.

→ **Communicate Priorities to Your Team**

Share your top 3 priorities with your team every quarter. When your team understands what you are focused on, they make better decisions, surface the right information, and stop escalating issues that are not truly strategic. Transparency multiplies alignment.

→ **Build a "Not-Do" List**

Alongside your to-do list, maintain an active "not-do" list — a written record of activities, meeting types, and commitments you have deliberately eliminated. Reviewing it monthly reinforces your boundaries and prevents priority creep from recurring.

QUICK REFERENCE

Priority Setting Cheat Sheet

Use this single-page reference before your weekly planning session, during high-pressure decision moments, or any time you feel pulled in too many directions. Pin it somewhere visible.

The 5-Question Priority Filter

1. Does this align with my top 3 goals this quarter?
2. Am I the only one who can do this well?
3. What high-value work will I sacrifice to do this?
4. What is the cost of not doing this?
5. Can this be delegated, deferred, or deleted?

The 4 Priority Actions

- **Do** — High impact, only you can do it
- **Delegate** — Important but can be owned by someone else
- **Defer** — Low urgency, schedule for later
- **Delete** — Low value, remove entirely

Weekly Non-Negotiables

- ☐ Monday: Set #1 priority for the week
- ☐ Daily: Protect peak hours for deep work
- ☐ Wednesday: Delegation check-in
- ☐ Friday: Review, reflect, and plan ahead

1

Priority at a Time

Commit to one #1 priority per week. Everything else is secondary.

3

Deep Work Blocks

Minimum three protected focus blocks per week for strategic work.

80%

Strategic Time Target

Aim to spend 80% of your time on Q1 and Q2 work combined.

30

Minutes to Plan

Weekly planning review takes 30 minutes and returns hours of focus.

☆ KEY TAKEAWAYS

Summary & Next Steps

Priority setting is the highest-leverage leadership skill you can develop. Leaders who master it consistently outperform their peers — not because they work more hours, but because they invest their time where it creates the most value. This worksheet has given you the tools, prompts, and frameworks to make this shift immediately.

1

Complete Your Leadership Audit

Answer all four audit prompts honestly this week. Identify your single biggest time sink and make a concrete plan to reduce it.

2

Define Your 30/60/90 Day Priorities

Fill in the priority definition table and share it with your direct manager or a trusted peer for accountability.

3

Run the Checklist This Week

Apply the Priority Setting Checklist to the next three commitments or requests you receive before saying yes.

4

Block Your Weekly Planning Time

Schedule a recurring 45-minute Monday planning block and a 30-minute Friday review in your calendar — starting this week, not next.

5

Build One "Stop Doing" Habit

Identify one recurring task, meeting, or commitment you will eliminate or delegate in the next seven days. Write it down and act on it.

"The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do." — **Michael Porter**

The leaders who rise to the top are not those who say yes to everything — they are those who have the discipline, clarity, and courage to relentlessly focus on what matters most. Start this week. One priority at a time.