WORKSHEET + WORKED EXAMPLE

Urgent or Important?

A sorted work list and a real next step for something important.

10 minutes | Eisenhower · Urgent-important matrix

Use it in three moves

1. Choose the period you are planning. Important means it serves a meaningful outcome or obligation; urgent means a real time consequence.

2. Place each item, including work you are not yet sure about. Check who would bear the cost if it waits.

3. Give important, non-urgent work a date. For other requests, agree a smaller response, a different owner, or a respectful no. Moving it to someone else does not make it costless.

Which period are you planning?

One important thing to protect

Choose from the quieter work. What will you do, and when?

Who needs to know what will change?

Renegotiate commitments before silently dropping them.

One item at a time

Copy this page for additional items. Use one row, option, task, or possibility per copy. The web tool handles calculations and comparisons where included.

Piece of work

Important?

Choose: Unclear / Yes / No

Urgent?

Choose: Unclear / Yes / No

Consequence and evidence

What happens if it waits?

Next step, owner, and date

A question for me

What important work disappears when urgency makes every decision?

See one way through

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE / NOT THE ANSWER TO YOUR SITUATION

Which period are you planning?

This working week

One important thing to protect

Prepare the new colleague's first week on Thursday morning.

Who needs to know what will change?

Ask the deck sponsor what decision the new format would help.

Example item 1

Piece of work: Restore the broken booking service

Important?: Yes

Urgent?: Yes

Consequence and evidence: People cannot book today.

Next step, owner, and date: Lee coordinates recovery now.

Example item 2

Piece of work: Prepare the new colleague's first week

Important?: Yes

Urgent?: No

Consequence and evidence: A supported start needs preparation before Monday.

Next step, owner, and date: Protect 45 minutes Thursday; Sam owns it.

Example item 3

Piece of work: Reformat an internal deck

Important?: No

Urgent?: Yes

Consequence and evidence: Requested for this afternoon; current version is readable.

Next step, owner, and date: Ask the sponsor whether the existing format is enough.

The thinking behind it

Nic asks what an organization's actual choices reveal about what it values. A calendar is one place to look. Does care, preparation, or maintenance ever receive time before it becomes a crisis?

Often called the Eisenhower matrix, this tool separates urgency from importance. In a 1954 speech, Eisenhower quoted a former college president making that distinction; the speech did not introduce a four-box worksheet. The matrix is a later planning convention, also familiar through Stephen Covey's time-management work.

Read Eisenhower's 1954 speech

Read Your Company's God is Showing by Nic Payne