

Protecting Your Focus Under Pressure

STOP · SORT · SHIELD - a short practical tool for keeping your priorities intact when workload spikes

WHY WE'RE SHARING THIS

We've been sharing something lately around protecting your focus during busy periods. Many people find that the skills from the course start slipping exactly when workload spikes. This is a short practical tool rather than theory. It's designed to be used on a morning as needed.

Use **STOP · SORT · SHIELD** every morning - or any time things start to feel reactive and out of control:

1

STOP

Before you start - pause for five minutes

Before opening email or picking up the phone, stop. Write down, not just think, actually write the three things that matter most today. Not the three most urgent. The three most *important*. If everything is urgent, nothing is. This five-minute investment saves hours of reactive drift and gives your day a backbone before anyone else has had the chance to set your agenda for you.

2

SORT

Split everything into three buckets

Do today - high value, only you can do it, has a genuine deadline. **Defer** - real work, but not today: block time for it now, before someone else fills the slot. **Decline or delegate** - someone else's urgency that has landed in your lap. The sorting is not the hard part. Committing to the decision and holding it is. Write it down.

3

SHIELD

Protect the time you've allocated - visibly

Block your focus time in your calendar. Mark yourself as busy. Close the tabs. For urgent interruptions in the moment: *"I'm in the middle of something - can I come back to you at 2pm?"* That is not rude. That is professional time management. The people who get the most done are not the ones who say yes to everything; they are the ones who protect the time for what matters.

YOUR DAILY FOCUS CHECK — FOUR QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU START

- What are my three most important tasks today - before I open my inbox?
- Have I blocked focus time in my calendar for them?
- Is there anything on my list that should actually be someone else's?
- If the workload spikes today - what will I choose not to do?

HINTS & TIPS FOR MANAGERS

- **Say no to protect your yes:** Every time you agree to something low-value, you are saying no to something high-value. Make the trade-off explicit and deliberate.
- **Batch reactive tasks:** Set two fixed times per day for emails and messages. Constant checking damages productivity,
- **Protect your first hour:** The first hour often sets the tone for the day. Use it for your most important task; before the world has a chance to interrupt.