# Managing your team's workload

One of the biggest challenges managers and leaders face is accurately prioritising and allocating the work of their teams. Nobody in your team should be working on "yesterday's priorities", the focus should always be on what will move us forward right now.

Here are some steps to help you prioritise and allocate workload in order to meet deadlines and maintain focus.
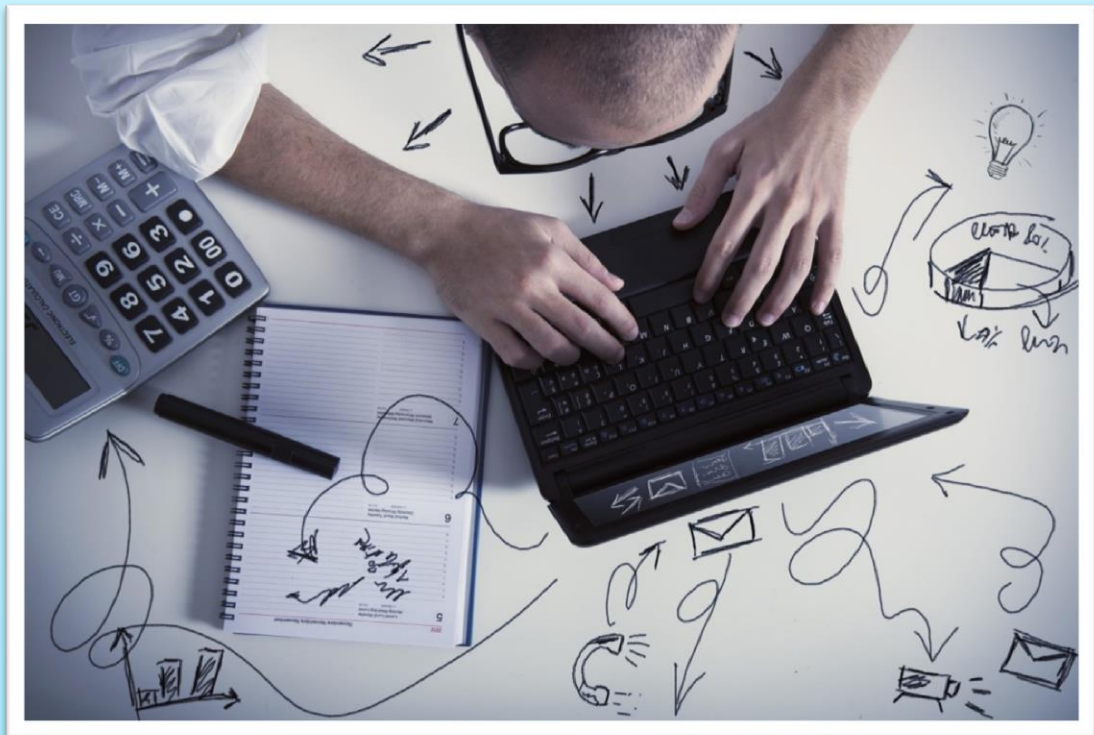
Prioritising Work

All projects need clear **outcomes** – *where you're trying to get to* – and clear **priorities** which will achieve those outcomes – *how you're going to get there*. Being really clear with your team about these outcomes and priorities is hugely motivating in making sure objectives are met.

Below are some steps you can use to prioritise work for yourself and your team

1. List *all* your tasks

Take time to pull together all the tasks required to achieve your outcome and your priorities. This does not need to be in any specific order – it's just about identifying what's on your plate.

2. Identify what's urgent v what's important

Use the urgent/ important grid below to classify tasks. **Urgent** and important tasks are those which would have seriously negative consequences if not completed within a specific timescale. **Do** them first. Consider whether urgent but not important could be **delegated** to someone else. For tasks in the non-urgent, non-important box – consider whether these could be **deleted**.

	URGENT	Not urgent
IMPORTANT	Urgent and important	Important but not urgent
Not important	Urgent but not important	Not urgent and not important

3. **Assess the value**

Tasks identified as **important** are tasks which are key to your overall outcome. Identify which have priority over others. One way of assessing the value would be to look at the dependencies of each task – ie what impact does completion of this task have on the completion of other tasks which contribute to your overall outcome. Another would be to look at how many people are impacted by the work. In general, the more people who will be impacted or involved, the higher the stakes.

4. **Order tasks by estimated effort**

If tasks "tie" in terms of priority, check their estimates. Start on whichever task will take the most effort to complete. Experts suggest starting with lengthier projects first. However, if you feel you can't focus before completing shorter tasks, complete these first. Many people find it motivating to check off a smaller task before delving into a larger project.

5. **Be flexible**

As circumstances changes priorities may change Be prepared to adapt!

6. **Know when to cut**

It is unlikely your team will be able to get to everything you initially planned within a specific period, revisit your urgent v important grid. Reclassify what you can and make sure that the real priorities are the ones you focus on.

Allocating Work to individuals

*An effective allocation of work within your team should **ideally** be:*

- ✓ **Fair** *– in terms of quantity and degree of challenge; and*

- ✓ **Justified** *– in terms of the individual's skills, motivation and capability to achieve the task.*

While in reality sometimes it's a case of 'all hands to the pump' below are some questions you would **ideally** use for planning work allocation.

1. **What's the priority?**

Priority should drive everything. Start at the top of your priority list and begin allocating work from there. This has to be the first consideration in terms of how you distribute your work.

2. **Who's got the skills?**

Next, look at skill set of the people you're distributing the work to. If the employee has the correct skill set, you should achieve a high quality result. At the same time you'll also be building their self-esteem and confidence by providing them with something they can succeed at!

3. **Who's available?**

Once you've established priority and skill set, identify who is actually free to do the work. Who has the time and capacity to take on the task.

4. **Who's got the interest?**

If someone is passionate and interested in a project this will mean that they are motivated, excited to carry out the task and hopefully high performance will follow!

5. **Could this be a development opportunity**

Could the project create a development opportunity for a team member. You'll want to balance building confidence by giving people tasks they can succeed at with providing stretch and challenge. Developing individual's knowledge and skills increases the skill set of the team as a whole.

The above information is only one way you could allocate and prioritise work. You can find various other techniques online!
Examples include: https://www.nerdfitness.com/blog/productivity/ ;
https://www.americanexpress.com/us/small-business/openforum/articles/productivity-tips-from-incredibly-busy-entrepreneurs/ ;
http://www.robinsharma.com/blog/09/become-the-most-productive-person-you-know/