

# Manager Operating System

## Active Reviewing Booklet

*Weekly management rhythm that drives accountability and follow-through*

### Purpose of this booklet

This is a practical learning resource created from the Manager Operating System workshop slides.

It is designed to help managers revisit the session, make sense of the key ideas, and turn the learning into visible weekly management habits.

Use it as a working document. Add notes, highlight what matters, test the experiments, and revisit the questions with your team.

Created for workshop follow-up and active reviewing



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## How to use this booklet

- Read each theme to reconnect with the key learning from the session.
- Use the reflection questions individually, in pairs, or in team meetings.
- Choose one practical experiment each week rather than trying to change everything at once.
- Use the Monday, midweek and Friday rhythm to make accountability visible and manageable.
- Return to the review pages after 30 days and ask what has actually changed.

### The active reviewing principle

The aim is not simply to remember the content. The aim is to review it actively, connect it to real work, and use it to shape better management behaviour.

**Ask yourself:** What did I notice, what does it mean for me, and what will I do differently this week?

## What the workshop was about

- Installing a simple weekly management rhythm, not adding more management admin.
- Creating clarity, accountability and follow-through week by week.
- Understanding why follow-through breaks down, even when people care and are trying hard.
- Using energy, time estimation and accountability to reduce friction.
- Building a Monday, midweek and Friday rhythm for priorities, blockers and review.

### The three words to remember

**Clarity:** What matters this week, and what does done look like?

**Commitment:** Who owns what, by when?

**Cadence:** When will we check progress, unblock work and review learning?

## Theme 1: Routine creates stability

The session began by exploring why routine matters. The focus was not on rigid perfection, but on creating enough predictability for managers and teams to use their energy well.

### What they did

- Reflected on daily routines and whether they are followed consistently.
- Linked routine to stability, decision fatigue and biological regulation.
- Explored the idea that rhythm can reduce the amount of effort needed to follow through.

### What they looked at and explored

- Routine as a support for mental health and performance.
- How repeated habits reduce uncertainty.
- Why managers should not rely on memory, urgency or heroic effort alone.

### Key learning

- Routine helps people know what to expect, which can reduce friction and uncertainty.
- Repeated rhythms make important behaviours easier to repeat.
- A weekly management rhythm creates a container for priorities, support and review.

### Practical takeaway

Choose one small routine that would make your management week easier.

Keep it visible. Put it in the diary, name it clearly, and protect it as a management habit.

Start small enough that it can survive a busy week.

### Try this in the next seven days

Put one recurring management routine in your diary.

Make it short, specific and linked to a real outcome.

At the end of the week, ask whether it made follow-through easier.

## Active review questions

**What part of my week currently relies too much on memory or good intentions?**

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**Where would a simple routine reduce pressure for my team or me?**

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**What is one routine I could make visible this week?**

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## Theme 2: Prime time and energy management

Managers explored when they are at their best. This moved the conversation away from simply managing time and towards managing energy, focus and interruptions.

### What they did

- Reflected on when energy is highest during the day.
- Considered when distractions and interruptions are lowest.
- Identified when focus time could realistically be scheduled.

### What they looked at and explored

- The idea that people have different energy patterns.
- How biology, role demands and working environment influence focus.
- The need to match demanding work with higher energy periods where possible.

### Key learning

- Not all hours are equal. A low energy hour and a high energy hour do not produce the same quality of thinking.
- Managers need to protect time for work that requires judgement, planning and decision-making.
- Understanding your own prime time helps you plan more honestly and lead more sustainably.

### Practical takeaway

Identify your best 60 to 90-minute window for complex thinking.

Use that time for planning, decision-making, preparation or important conversations.

Avoid filling your best thinking time with low-value admin where possible.

### Try this in the next seven days

Block one prime time slot this week.

Name the task before the slot starts.

Remove one avoidable distraction before beginning.

## Active review questions

**When am I usually at my best?**

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**What type of work deserves my best energy?**

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**What currently steals my prime time, and what boundary could I set?**

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## Theme 3: Ultradian rhythm and deep work

The workshop introduced the idea that energy moves in cycles. People can often work with intensity for around 90 to 120 minutes before focus starts to reduce. The practical message was simple: work with energy, not against it.

### What they did

- Explored productive zones and rest zones.
- Discussed the pitfalls of pushing through tiredness.
- Looked at deep work as a method of focused, distraction-free activity that creates value.

### What they looked at and explored

- How energy drops can lead to procrastination, mistakes, stress and rework.
- Negative coping strategies such as excess caffeine, sugar, pushing through and sacrificing sleep.
- The ingredients of a deep work routine: location, duration, structure and requirements.

### Key learning

- Deep work needs protecting because it rarely happens by accident.
- Pushing through tiredness can create more activity without better progress.
- Short recovery moments can improve the quality of the next work block.

### Practical takeaway

Create a 60 to 90 minute deep work block for one important piece of work.

Decide the location, duration, rules and requirements before you start.

Treat breaks as part of performance, not as a lack of commitment.

### Try this in the next seven days

Schedule one deep work block.

Write down the rules for that block before starting.

Afterwards, review what helped and what got in the way.

## Active review questions

**What stops me from doing deep work?**

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**Where do I mistake being busy for being effective?**

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**What would make focused work easier for my team?**

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## Theme 4: Estimating how long things take

The group explored why people regularly underestimate how long work will take. This was linked to the planning fallacy, optimism bias and the habit of committing too early before thinking through complications.

### What they did

- Reflected on tasks that are commonly underestimated.
- Explored why estimates are often too optimistic.
- Looked at practical ways to create more realistic estimates.

### What they looked at and explored

- Using historical data rather than guessing.
- Asking someone else to estimate.
- Estimating in ranges and building in delay.
- Using three-point estimates: best case, most likely and worst case.
- Calculating a personal fudge ratio.
- Estimating during a lower energy point to reduce over-optimism.

### Key learning

- Poor estimates create pressure later, even when the original intention was positive.
- People often forget how long similar work took before and assume there will be no interruptions.
- Better estimating is a management discipline, not a personality trait.

### Practical takeaway

Before committing to a deadline, pause and ask what similar work took last time.

Use a range when the work is uncertain.

Add space for interruptions, review, rework and dependencies.

### Try this in the next seven days

Choose one task this week and estimate it three ways.

Best case, most likely, worst case.

Compare your estimate with what actually happened.

## Active review questions

**What task do I regularly underestimate?**

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**Where do I commit too quickly and manage disappointment later?**

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**What data could help me estimate more honestly?**

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## Theme 5: Why follow-through fails

The session explored the gap between intention, action and result. The key learning was that failure to follow through is often a pattern, not a lack of care.

### What they did

- Discussed what people are struggling to follow through on and why.
- Explored automatic thoughts, short-term relief, deadlines, instant gratification and weak routines.
- Recognised that intent alone is not enough.

### What they looked at and explored

- The gap between what people mean to do and what actually happens.
- How unclear commitments and weak rhythms create drift.
- Why self-blame is less useful than improving the system.

### Key learning

- Follow-through improves when the system makes the right behaviour easier.
- People do not need more shame. They need clearer commitments, better rhythm and visible review.
- A small practical rhythm is more useful than a big vague promise.

### Practical takeaway

Turn vague intentions into visible commitments.

Define who owns what, by when, and what done looks like.

Review slippage without blame so learning can happen.

### Try this in the next seven days

Pick one delayed task.

Write the next visible action.

Ask someone to check in with you by a specific date.

## Active review questions

**Where is the biggest gap between intent and action in my management week?**

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**What automatic thought gives me permission to delay?**

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**What would make follow-through easier, not just more pressured?**

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## Theme 6: The Manager Operating System

The Manager OS idea brings the workshop together. It is a simple rhythm that turns intention into action through prioritising, committing, supporting and reviewing.

### What they did

- Looked at the Manager OS as a basic system rather than a complex model.
- Connected weekly rhythm to clarity, accountability and follow-through.
- Explored how managers can avoid relying on memory, heroics or casual check-ins.

### What they looked at and explored

- Prioritise: what matters this week?
- Commit: who owns what, by when?
- Support: what blockers need attention?
- Review: what happened and what did we learn?

### Key learning

- A system reduces the need for constant chasing.
- Good rhythm gives pressure somewhere useful to go.
- The aim is not micromanagement. The aim is clear expectations, visible support and honest review.

### Practical takeaway

Use the Manager OS as your weekly operating rhythm.

Keep it simple enough to repeat.

Make commitments visible and review them consistently.

### Try this in the next seven days

Choose one part of the Manager OS to strengthen this week.

Tell the team what you are trying.

Review whether it created more clarity or less confusion.

## Active review questions

**What part of my management rhythm is currently strongest?**

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**What part is weakest: prioritise, commit, support or review?**

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**What would my team notice if I improved one part of the rhythm?**

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## The weekly management rhythm

Use this as a simple weekly cadence. It should reduce surprises and make accountability easier to talk about.

Moment	Purpose	Questions to ask	Manager output
<b>Monday morning</b>	Priorities and commitments	What matters this week? Who owns what? What is the definition of done?	A short list of visible commitments.
<b>Midweek morning</b>	Blockers and support	What is stuck? What help is needed? What needs escalating?	A clear support plan and fewer hidden blockers.
<b>Friday afternoon</b>	Review and learning	What got done? What slipped? What will we change next week?	Learning without blame and better planning next week.

### Manager prompt

Do not wait until Friday to discover what was already stuck on Tuesday.

A rhythm does not remove pressure. It gives pressure somewhere useful to go.

## One-week experiment

This is not about completely redefining your week. Choose one small action that will better support follow-through and test it for seven days.

**My one small action this week is:**

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**The behaviour this is designed to improve is:**

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**The person or team who will notice this change is:**

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**The moment I will review it is:**

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**What happened:**

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**What I will keep, adapt or stop:**

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## Team active review

Use this section in a team meeting or manager huddle. The aim is to check what is working, what is stuck and what needs to change.

### 1. Clarity

What are our most important priorities this week and what does done look like?

Notes: .....

### 2. Commitment

Who owns what, by when, and how will we know it has moved forward?

Notes: .....

### 3. Support

What blockers need attention and where do we need to help each other?

Notes: .....

### 4. Review

What did we learn from last week that should shape this week?

Notes: .....

### 5. Accountability

Where are we on the Accountability Ladder, and what would move us up one rung?

Notes: .....

## Things to take away

- Follow-through improves when the system makes the right behaviour easier.
- Clarity beats hope.
- Rhythm beats heroics.
- Review beats blame.
- Accountability becomes easier when commitments, blockers and learning are visible.
- Managers do not need a perfect system. They need a simple rhythm they can actually use.

### Final reflection

**What is the one thing I will do differently from this session?**

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**What support or accountability do I need?**

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