

## Experiment 5

Make sure you are reacting to the right things.

How often do we have the assumption of urgency? We use words like 'soon', 'quickly' or 'by Friday' without really understanding what that timing means. Even the phrase 'we have plenty of time' means different things to different people.

People set arbitrary deadlines like 'close of business' when it actually could be delivered at 10 am the next morning. 'Close of business' is a mental time stamp that lets people feel like the day is closed off and completed, like a full stop to the day.

Remember, if it's 3 pm and someone says, 'I need you to do this urgently', you may not be in the best frame of mind to get it finished. Making a start and reviewing it in the morning might be a more accurate and productive way of dealing with the work.

Over the next couple of weeks, test your 'urgency' assumptions by:

- asking people for a specific time they want something by. Don't accept 'ASAP', as that can be just as meaningless as 'soon'.
- asking people for context around what will happen with the work afterwards — for example, 'Who is waiting on this?', or 'How will what I'm doing affect the work of others, or the project overall?'
- responding, if they say 'I need it by close of business today', by asking 'What would happen if I wasn't able to meet that deadline?', or 'What would happen if I gave it to you by 10 am tomorrow?'