

The 4D Decision Tree

Your System for Deciding What Matters

WORKSHOP

Reclaim Your Workweek Workshop

EVENT

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PRESENTED BY

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The 4D Categories

DELETE: Does this need to happen at all?

The core question: Would anything break if you stopped doing this today?

- Does this move the business forward?
- What actually happens if I stop? (Most likely: nothing.)
- Am I doing this from habit, fear, or because it's real work?

The Test:

If you stopped doing it and no one noticed within 2 weeks, it was DELETE.

Real Example

Stopped sending weekly internal status emails no one read >> 2 hrs/month back
Deleted Monday morning 'standup prep' reports >> 3 hrs/week back

DELEGATE: Can AI or someone else handle this?

This is where most time gets reclaimed. Not everything needs your brain.

- Can AI do this entirely? (categorizing, drafting, organizing)
- Can AI + human do this better? (AI summarizes, you decide)
- Does this truly need MY judgment, or am I gatekeeping?

The Test:

If you can describe the process in 5 steps, AI can probably do it.

Real Example

AI filters 200 daily emails: sorts by urgency, archives 85%, flags 15 VIPs >> I respond only to top 15 >> 10 hrs/week saved (no more)
AI drafts client follow-ups with templates >> I personalize 5-10 key ones >> 4 hrs/week back

DELAY: Can I batch this?

Scattered task-switching is expensive. Batching is free.

- Does this need to happen NOW or just feel urgent?
- Can I group all similar tasks into one time block?
- What's the real deadline vs. the perceived deadline?

The Test:

If it can wait 48 hours without consequences, it's a DELAY.

Real Example

Batched all invoicing to Friday afternoons >> 30 min total vs. scattered = 3 hrs/week saved
All social posting done Tuesday + Thursday instead of 5x daily = 2 hrs/week back

DO: Important + Only I can do it

Your rarest resource is your judgment. DO is the only category where you can't be replaced.

- Is this truly important AND truly only I can do it?
- If your DO list is >20% of tasks, re-evaluate.
- Even then: Can I template it? Set a time limit? Remove friction?

The Test:

If you were hit by a bus, could anyone else figure this out? If yes, it's not really DO.

Real Example

Client strategy calls: DO (only you have the relationships + context)
But AI generates agenda + notes + follow-up >> This makes you more effective, not busier

The 11-Minute Exercise

Do this every Monday morning. It's your admin budget.

- 1 Brain dump every task you did last week. Don't filter. Just write. (5 min)
- 2 Next to each task, write one letter: D / DL / DY / DO. Be honest. (3 min)
- 3 For anything marked DELEGATE -- write WHO or WHAT tool can do it. (2 min)
Examples: ChatGPT for drafting. Zapier for routing. VA for scheduling.
- 4 For anything marked DELAY -- write WHEN you'll batch it. (1 min)
Example: 'All admin Fridays 2-3pm' or 'Email batch check at 9am & 2pm only'
- 5 Circle your top 3 DELETE items. Stop doing them this week. (1 min)

That's it. 11 minutes. Do this every Monday as part of your Weekly Admin Audit. After 4 weeks, you'll have reclaimed 5-10 hours per week without hiring anyone.

Next: Weekly Tracking Companion (Page 5)

Same Tasks, Different Decisions

The framework is universal. Your answers depend on YOUR business model, revenue, and goals.

Task	Freelancer	Agency Owner	Service Biz
Email Mgmt	DELETE most	DELEGATE to VA	DELEGATE to AI
Invoicing	DELAY batch	DELEGATE all	DELAY weekly
Social Posts	DELAY batch	DELEGATE team	DELETE
Scheduling	DELETE async	DELEGATE tool	DELEGATE VA
Follow-ups	DO personal	DELEGATE tmpl	DELEGATE + tmpl

Notice: There's no universal right answer. A freelancer's DELEGATE might be another business's DELETE. The key is making the decision consciously, not defaulting to 'just do it.'

Real move: Map your top 20 tasks across DELETE/DELEGATE/DELAY/DO. You'll likely find 30-40% of your week is pure waste. That's not personal failure -- that's a decision you haven't made yet.

The Decision Tests: Going Deeper

DELETE: The 'But What If' Test

If you're afraid to delete, ask: What's the WORST that happens?

- Worst case: mild inconvenience >> DELETE
- Worst case: someone complains >> Check if it's truly important
- Worst case: you miss an opportunity >> Keep it, but batch it instead

DELEGATE: The 80% Rule

If someone can do it 80% as well as you, delegate. Perfection is the enemy of freedom.

- You spend 2 hours >> AI spends 30 min + you spend 15 min editing = 45 min total
- You're not losing quality. You're compounding time.
- Document the expectation once. Automate forever.

DELAY: The Batching Matrix

Group similar tasks by type, not urgency. Process all invoices Tuesday. All emails Friday.

- Email check: 9am + 2pm only (not all day)
- Admin tasks: Friday 2-3pm (all of them, once a week)
- Social posting: Tuesday + Thursday (set and forget)
- Weekly review: Monday 9am (only this time)

DO: The 2-Minute Rule (Turbo Edition)

If it takes less than 2 minutes AND only you can do it, do it NOW. Otherwise, it's not DO -- it's blocking.

- Important calls: DO (schedule deep time, not scattered)
- Strategic decisions: DO (but have AI write the brief first)
- Client relationships: DO (but delegate the follow-up)
- Hiring: DO (delegate the screening to AI first)

The goal: DO should never be >20% of your week. If it is, you're not delegating enough. You're gatekeeping.

Weekly Tracking Companion

Use 4D weekly. After 4 weeks, you'll see patterns. Here's the tracking template:

How to Use This Template

- Week 1: Track every decision. Be honest. You're baseline.
- Week 2-3: Patterns emerge. Notice what repeats?
- Week 4: Permanent resolutions. 'Every email is DELEGATE, so I'll automate.' Or 'Social is DELETE.'

Task	This Week	Week 4 Pattern?	Permanent Resolution
Status emails	DELETE	Always DELETE	Stop sending (save 2 hrs/mo)
Email sort	DELEGATE	Always DELEGATE	Zapier automation (save 3 hrs/wk)
Invoice batch	DELAY	Always DELAY	Every Friday 2-3pm (save 1.5 hrs/wk)
Client calls	DO	Always DO	AI agenda + notes (prep faster)

Pattern insight: Once you see the same decision 4 weeks in a row, you have a system. Build automation or SOP around it.

Month 2 and Beyond: Building Systems

By month 2, you're not deciding per-task anymore. You're building SYSTEMS.

What Changes

Week 1-4: You make decisions task-by-task.

Week 5+: You see patterns and automate the pattern.

Example Evolution:

- Month 1: 'Every invoice gets DELAYED to Friday.' (Manual batching)
- Month 2: 'Invoices auto-generate and send on Friday via Zapier.' (Automation)
- Month 3: 'Invoices are in the system. I check the summary on Monday.' (System)

Building the Systems

DELETE Systems

- Auto-delete rules: Emails from low-priority senders go to a folder, never touch inbox
- Calendar blocks: 'Meetings without agendas don't happen'
- Policy: 'No meeting under 15 people gets my time'

DELEGATE Systems

- AI playbooks: ChatGPT prompt saved as template for every recurring task
- Tool automation: Zapier for email routing, Slack for notifications, Make for handoffs
- VA workflows: Same 5 tasks every week? Give them a checklist.

DELAY Systems

- Batching calendar: Recurring blocks for email (Mon/Wed/Fri), admin (Friday), review (Monday)
- Queue management: Tasks go into a 'pending' list, not your daily inbox
- Async protocols: No interrupts during DO time. Async updates at batch times.

DO Systems

- Deep time blocks: 2 hours uninterrupted on your most important work
- Agenda prep: AI drafts + you refine (30 min prep instead of 2 hours scrambling)
- Decision gates: Only decisions >\$10k or >10 hrs/week cross your desk

By month 3, you're not 'busy.' You're operating a system. The 4D framework became infrastructure.

4 Traps That Kill This Framework

Trap 1: Everything Feels Urgent

Your brain is bad at urgency assessment. Use the 48-hour test: If it can wait 2 days, it's not urgent. Most of what feels urgent is just visible.

- Real question: 'What's the actual consequence if this waits until Friday?'
- Answer: Usually nothing. This is a DELAY.

Trap 2: 'I Can Do It Faster Myself'

True. You probably can. But calculate the annual cost:

- Task takes 30 min/week × 52 weeks = 26 hours/year
- Setup time: 5 hours (AI prompt, tool config)
- Break-even: 10 weeks. Next 42 weeks you're stealing from your life.

Trap 3: 'What If the AI Gets It Wrong?'

Start with low-stakes tasks (email categorization, draft summarization). Let AI prove itself on easy wins first. You'll delegate bigger things naturally once trust builds.

- Week 1: AI sorts emails. You check. 95% correct.
- Week 2: You skim the 5% errors. Still faster than sorting all.
- Week 3: You stop checking. You trust it.

Trap 4: 'I Don't Have Anyone to Delegate To'

AI is your first hire. Not your last. A \$20/month ChatGPT subscription handles 80% of what delegation means. Use it before hiring humans.

- AI first: Handles 70% of work
- VA second: Handles 20% (the human-touch 20%)
- You focus: On the 10% only you can do

These traps are real. Most people fail 4D at one of these four points. Knowing them is half the battle.

Apply 4D to Your Whole Team

The 60-Minute Workshop. Run this with your team. Alignment + momentum.

The Flow (60 minutes)

- 1** Teach the framework (20 min)
Walk through all 4Ds. Show examples from YOUR business. 'Here's what we DELETE as a company. Here's what we DELEGATE. Here's what we protect as DO.'
- 2** Individual exercise (15 min)
Everyone gets a sheet. Brain dump their top 10 tasks. Categorize them. Be honest. No one's watching.
- 3** Small group shares (15 min)
Teams of 3-4. 'What did you DELETE? What surprised you?' Pattern matching starts here.
- 4** Team decisions (10 min)
As a company, what are we committing to? 'We DELAY all non-urgent emails to batch times.' 'We DELETE status updates.' 'We DELEGATE all coding to AI first.'

Outcomes (What You Get)

- Alignment: Everyone knows what 'done' looks like in your culture
- Permission: People feel OK deleting low-value work
- Systems: Team builds playbooks instead of doing ad-hoc
- Time back: 5-15 hours per person per week (no hiring needed)

A team that does 4D together compounds faster. Everyone's time is leverage. Do this one workshop and watch what happens.

How 4D Connects to Everything Else

This framework doesn't live in isolation. It's the operating system for all your other productivity tools.

4D + Your Calendar

Block time for each D. DELETE shouldn't need a calendar block (stop doing it). DELEGATE gets a weekly review slot. DELAY gets batch time slots. DO gets your prime hours -- protect it.

4D + Your Tools

DELETE: Remove tool subscriptions. DELEGATE: Build Zapier/Make automations. DELAY: Calendar automation. DO: Protect calendar from scheduling tools.

4D + Your Hiring

Your first hire does everything you DELEGATE. Your second hire does everything you DELAY at scale. Your third hire does everything except your DO. By then, you're running the business, not doing the work.

4D + Your Meetings

Apply it: Delete bad meetings (no agenda, no decision). Delegate note-taking (AI or VA). Delay routine syncs (batch them). Protect strategic meetings (DO time).

4D + Your Systems

Each system you build is a DELAY pattern that becomes automated. 'Email batching' becomes Zapier. 'Invoicing' becomes accounting software. 'Client follow-ups' becomes CRM.

4D is meta. It's not a system -- it's the framework for building systems. Use it to audit everything.

The 4D Decision Tree: One-Page Summary

Print this page. Post it on your wall. Use it every Monday.

The 4 Decisions

DELETE: Does this need to happen at all?

Test: If you stopped, would anyone notice in 2 weeks? If no >> DELETE.

DELEGATE: Can AI or someone else do it?

Test: Can you describe it in 5 steps? If yes >> DELEGATE.

DELAY: Can I batch this?

Test: Can it wait 48 hours? If yes >> DELAY to a batch time.

DO: Important + only I can do it?

Test: If you were hit by a bus, could anyone else do it? If no >> DO.

The 11-Minute Monday Process

- 1 Brain dump all tasks (5 min)
- 2 Mark each D/DL/DY/DO (3 min)
- 3 Write WHO or WHAT for DELEGATE (2 min)
- 4 Write WHEN for DELAY (1 min)
- 5 Circle top 3 DELETE items (1 min)

Result: 5-10 hours reclaimed per week. After 4 weeks, you have a system.

Start Here, Not There

Don't try to 4D your entire workweek at once. You'll get analysis paralysis. Do this instead:

- 1** Tomorrow morning, pick ONE task that feels like busy work.
Write it down. Ask the DELETE question: 'What happens if I stop?' Answer honestly. Do it.
- 2** Find ONE task that's repetitive and low-stakes.
This is your DELEGATE pilot. Set up one tool (ChatGPT, Zapier, Make, whatever). Run it for 1 week.
- 3** Find ONE category of similar tasks that scatter your day.
This is your DELAY batch. Block one time slot on your calendar. Do all of them there.
- 4** Protect your DO time.
Block it. Guard it. Don't let the urgent steal from the important.

Do this 4 times in the next month. You'll have reclaimed your workweek.

Questions? Find Reu at localnerds.co or via the workshop.