



EPISODE 9

The Strategic No

Every yes is a no to something else — the only question is whether you're choosing. Research shows scattered focus costs up to **40% of productive time**, and the leaders who advance aren't the ones who take on the most. They're the ones who choose.

KEY STRATEGIES & IDEAS

Saying no isn't refusal. It's the highest form of prioritization — and senior leaders read it as judgment.

1. Practice Strategic Refusal

Reframe every no as a yes to what matters most: "to do this well, we'd need to pause that." You're not refusing the person — you're protecting the priority.

2. Make the Cost of Yes Visible

Context-switching taxes up to 40% of productive time, and 94% of service professionals work 50+ hours a week. When trade-offs are visible, the no sells itself.

3. Publish a Not Doing List

Name publicly what you will not invest in — like Buffett's 25/5 rule: circle your top five goals and avoid the other twenty at all costs. Clarity here signals you think like an owner.

ACTION & REFLECTION STEPS



Write your Not Doing List. Three to five things you will not invest in this quarter — and share it with your team.

My Not Doing List:



Install the pause. For the next two weeks, don't say yes in the moment. Take at least a day, ask what gets deprioritized, then decide.

SKIP LEVEL

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP FOR LEADERS
READY TO THINK TWO LEVELS UP



JOE DUTKIEWICZ

SKIP LEVEL

strategic leadership for leaders ready to think two levels up

EPISODE 9 · WORKSHEET



Practice one strategic no this week, tied to a visible yes: "to do this well, we'd need to pause that."



Run the 25/5 exercise on your own goals: list twenty-five, circle five, name the twenty you're avoiding on purpose.

My top five / the twenty I'm avoiding:

Think two levels up. — Maya & Marcus

Joe Dutkiewicz

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