

Before every interaction, clarify the purpose

Why do it?

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"Listen, I'm no expert, but I still want you to listen to me ramble on about this for a while."

When you start each project, meeting, or conversation by identifying where you want to end up as a result, you'll create clarity for yourself and others — and increase your chances of achieving your desired outcome. And if you can't relate the purpose of an interaction to one of your most important goals? That's a sign that you should revisit how you're spending your time.

Next steps:

1. Before your next project, meeting, or conversation, write out *The purpose of X is to Y.*

For example:

- *The purpose of this project is to streamline our tracking system.*
- *The purpose of this meeting is to decide how to solve this client issue.*
- *The purpose of this conversation is to seek feedback on my draft report.*

If you struggle to write out a clear statement of purpose, then consider: Are you trying to do too much in a single interaction? Or is it possible that you don't need the interaction after all?

2. Share the purpose with others as appropriate.

Knowing your purpose will help them understand exactly what to expect and help them contribute more effectively. This doesn't mean that you are ordering people around — some purposes put others in the driver's seat (e.g., "*The goal of this conversation is for you to get the answers you need in order to move forward*").

3. If others have a different purpose in mind, align on the goals of the interaction.

Someone disagrees with your purpose? That's important to surface! Once you hear their perspective, you can figure out what really needs to happen in this particular interaction.