



**Purple Bird
Technology**



Say no to Eisenhower,
say yes to SPEED

Chris West
Thomas Maier
06.03.2025

Say no to Eisenhower, say yes to SPEED

The Eisenhower Matrix is considered the standard framework for prioritizing tasks. However, the framework has some weaknesses, as tasks are only prioritized according to importance and urgency and other relevant factors are disregarded. In addition, the Eisenhower Matrix is only suitable for managers who can delegate tasks to their team. To address these weaknesses, the so-called SPEED framework was developed. With SPEED, tasks of managers and employees without authority can be evaluated in a differentiated manner and prioritized accordingly based on the factors of synergies, personal importance, efficiency, effectiveness and delegation. Find out here how the framework works in detail and how you can use it in your company.

To this day, the Eisenhower Matrix is the standard framework for prioritizing tasks. No job interview goes by in which the Eisenhower Matrix is not used to answer the question of how applicants prioritize their tasks. Because: The relatively simple classification of tasks according to importance and urgency according to the matrix seems to make sense and can be used well in the sometimes hectic everyday work. The Eisenhower matrix is one of the most studied prioritization methods. In 2018, the University of Zurich came to the conclusion in the study "Effectiveness of the Eisenhower Matrix in Task Management" that users of the matrix completed 40% more important tasks and reduced procrastination by 25%.

¹

The framework goes back to former US President Dwight D. Eisenhower, although it is unclear whether Eisenhower himself taught the matrix named after him.² At least he lays out the main features of the idea in a speech in the mid-1950s.³ However, a conceptualization in its current form most likely did not take place until the 1980s.

Despite its long history of success, it can be said that the basic idea of the matrix dates back to around 70 years ago. It is therefore high time to critically question whether the concept is still up-to-date – or whether further development is now appropriate. Spoilers in advance: That's exactly the case. This makes the question

¹ Effectiveness of the Eisenhower Matrix in Task Management, Universität Zürich (2018)

² [Eisenhower Principle - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

³ [Eisenhower Principle - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

of what a modern and sustainable successor could look like.

		Urgency	
		urgent	not urgent
Importance	important	Do the job yourself	B Terminate and do it yourself
	not important	Delegate competent employees	D Don't Edit (Trash)

The Eisenhower Matrix – THE standard framework for prioritization

As can be seen in the graph above⁴, tasks are prioritized according to the Eisenhower principle on the one hand according to their importance, and on the other hand according to their urgency. Depending on the prioritization, it is then decided whether, when and who should complete the respective tasks. That sounds plausible. However, the Eisenhower Matrix doesn't make sense to most employees in a company: Why is that? The following factors are responsible for this:

First: Tasks in quadrant C should be delegated according to the matrix. It is noteworthy that employees want to prioritize according to Eisenhower, even though no employees report to them. Thus, a management framework has been adopted by employees without

managerial responsibility, although it is not at all suitable for it, as the resources to apply the Eisenhower matrix are not available at this level.

Secondly, why is something unimportant done just because it is urgent? This is not logical if – as in sector D – you don't do important and non-urgent things at all. Although logically wrong, this is often quite expedient in practice. Unimportant and non-urgent tasks are usually forgotten. Urgent and unimportant to-dos also tend to cause disputes and disputes with stakeholders. In other words, in practice, this approach works well with regard to stakeholder management, but rather less so with regard to the effective and efficient use of resources.

Third: Nowhere is it shown which characteristics make a task an important one. The question "important for whom?" is also not included. What is unimportant for one's own department can be very relevant for another. What may be important for the individual in terms of his

⁴ [Eisenhower Principle - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

or her career is not necessarily important for the team.

Fourth: With regard to the important tasks, the procedure also seems questionable: Do I have to do something myself just because it is important or could a competent employee not also take over? The conclusion of the matrix only comes about because the Eisenhower Matrix does not evaluate how easy or difficult it is to delegate tasks. There are numerous factors influencing this: skills of the available employees, effort of onboarding, frequency of the task, etc.

Fifth: It also remains open how to proceed according to the framework if the scheduled tasks from quadrant B have to be processed at some point and then collide with urgent and important tasks.

It can be said that the Eisenhower Matrix provides good clues to prioritize tasks. However, the framework also reveals some weaknesses, which on the one hand result from logical errors and on the other hand hide the personal perception of the employees and their role (manager vs. employee without management responsibility). This raises the question: How could it be done better? To address

the weaknesses just mentioned, we at Purple Bird Technology have developed an alternative prioritization approach that is equally suitable for managers and employees without personnel responsibility.

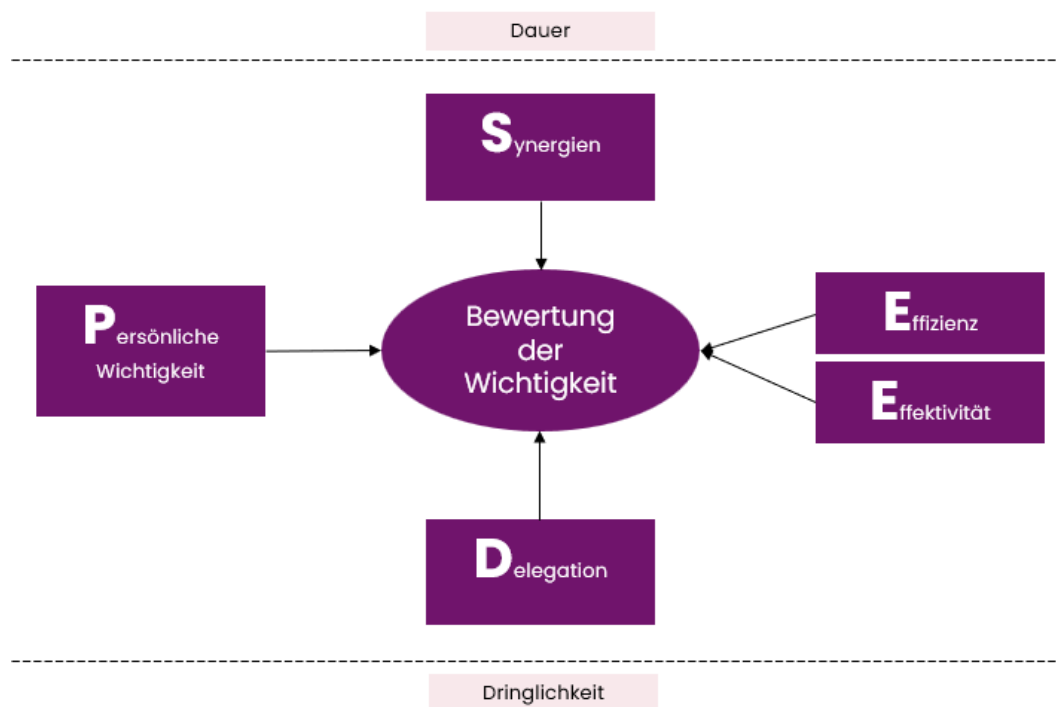
Success with SPEED – the new framework for prioritization

The SPEED framework deals with the differentiated prioritization of tasks. The name is an acronym and is composed of:

- **Synergies**
- **Personal importance**
- **Effectiveness**
- **Efficiency**
- **Delegation.**

SPEED optimizes the trade-off between different goals in order to increase the speed of the organization as well as the personal speed in prioritizing and completing tasks.

The following diagram shows the process flow of SPEED:



SPEED in practice

How can organizations and employees apply SPEED in practice? To do this, prioritize your tasks in a to-do list or a KANBAN board,⁵ taking into account the characteristics of SPEED. The necessary steps are explained below.

How long does it take to complete a task?

Whether a task goes through the SPEED process at all and thus the task is prioritized depends on the anticipated completion time. There are two things to keep in mind here: First, consider how long

it will take you to complete a task. For example, if you only need a few minutes, work on the task together with other short tasks "time boxed". This means: Plan fixed times in which "little things" are done quickly in one go. Consider that what is done quickly for you (even if it is not important to you) can ensure that others can continue to work. It is said to have happened that interns are stuck with their tasks for weeks because they are waiting for feedback. The tasks of interns are rarely critical. They are still supposed to work on the task they have been given. By working through these (small) tasks, organizations usually turn faster. It is hardly worth checking the importance or

⁵ Explanation of the simplest version of a KANBAN board: A KANBAN board is a visual management tool that organizes tasks into columns (e.g., "To Do," "In Progress," "Done") to

streamline workflow and identify bottlenecks early.

Atlassian (2022): Internal study on increasing productivity by reducing unnecessary tasks



added value of a task if there is very little effort required to complete it.

The second aspect: If it takes longer to reject the task than it does to complete it – for example, due to lengthy discussions with stakeholders or escalations – do it yourself. In most cases, fundamental discussions are not worthwhile, even in the case of repetitive tasks. Swallow your pride. It's hard to imagine how many escalation meetings I've seen as a consultant, where four managers spent half an hour discussing which department would take on a 30-minute task. But since it's the stupid filling of an Excel spreadsheet, no one wants to take it over. Organizations lose a lot of money due to this form of incorrect prioritization.

And yes – the disadvantage of the above points is that you are doing tasks that you are "not responsible for" or that the other person could have done themselves. You will still save time and nerves, because the discussions are not worth it.

However, most tasks cannot be completed directly and quickly and end up on the to-do list. The aim of the SPEED Framework is to evaluate the importance of tasks and to show in which order they should ideally be completed.

Synergies: Can tasks be bundled?

It may sound banal, but it is often neglected in the work practice of many companies, namely to use synergies of tasks. In other words, if the opportunity

arises, bundle tasks that belong together. Multi-tasking is the death of efficiency. Deviate from this only in emergencies. Keep in mind that you will pay for this "fire brigade mode" with even more stress in the long run. So avoid multi-tasking if possible.

Personal importance: How important is the task for you?

Ask yourself the question of the importance of a task for your interests. For example, a task is important for your advancement on the career ladder, but less so for your organization. Or you owe a favor to a colleague and don't want to lose his favor. In such cases, it is worth taking this into account when prioritizing. You should therefore weigh up the extent to which it is important for you personally to complete each task. This doesn't mean that you should always prioritize your own interests, but neither should your interests take a back seat to those of your organization. As is so often the case in life, it is important to find a middle ground. So don't be too selfless, but don't be too selfish either. Neglecting this in prioritization would mean lying to yourself. As with a plane crash, if you don't ensure your own safety and put on the breathing mask, you can't help anyone else put on the mask.



Efficiency and effectiveness

If personal importance previously represents one side of the coin, importance to your organization is the other side. In the interest of your organization, you should complete tasks effectively and efficiently. To do this, you should first evaluate the importance of the tasks for your organization. Two perspectives are important here, as they influence the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization:

- How great is the added value of the task in terms of: cost reduction, sales, process improvements, external impact (of the team / organization), relevance for the management and strategic importance for the overall organization.
- Dependencies: Are others waiting for the result and need it to continue working?

You can proceed intuitively here. As your professional experience increases, this will become easier and easier for you.

Why do we consider how important a task is for management? Firstly, there is a risk of friction if we do not take into account the priorities of management, as the boardroom will react if you do not address their issues.

Secondly, it must always be taken into account that management has information that makes tasks appear in a different light or that managers weigh certain factors (e.g. influence of a task on sales) differently. By considering the importance of a task to management, you

don't know information and your manager's experience flow into the prioritization.

If you are unsure about a task, consider the consequences of not performing the task.

Interim conclusion: Synergies form task bundles from individual tasks. You can then rate the importance of these task bundles according to personal importance, efficiency and effectiveness. You already have an order for the tasks.

Delegation: How well can you delegate a task?

Especially if you're managing a team or department, it's important to keep in mind that your team members are part of your workforce. To manage your own labor and that of your employees sensibly, you should delegate tasks according to the following rules:

- Do your employees still have free capacity?
 - Free working hours
 - They work on tasks that are less important than those you want to delegate.
- Does a colleague have the right skills to take on the task? Consider the risk of delegation.
- How much time does onboarding take for the task?
- Building up the necessary skills if no colleague has them yet?

If you don't have employees, you may still be able to delegate:

- Can a colleague help you out?
- Is there a department that is responsible for the corresponding task?
- Can the person who approaches you with the task possibly do it himself if you support him?

The decisive factor is that the importance of the tasks does not play a role in the question of delegation. The only decisive factor is whether you have a suitable colleague available for the task or not.

With SPEED, urgency is secondary

While the urgency of tasks is central to the Eisenhower matrix, it is only secondary in the SPEED framework. It only serves to finally check the risks of your prioritization again. See the urgency of a task solely from the perspective of deadlines. How far can the task be at the bottom of the to-do list before it is not processed in time and there are consequences?

Are the consequences of an uncompleted task so serious that the tasks at the top can wait longer? Then you have to adjust the order of the tasks if the deadlines of the tasks classified as more important allow this (reprioritization). If the deadlines of the more important tasks do not allow for reprioritization, you can cancel the task, as it will not be completed in time anyway. Communicate this to the stakeholder so that they can look for

another solution or help you get more resources and thus enable editing.

How can organizations benefit from the SPEED framework?

In order for organizations to benefit from this framework, it must first be known in the organization. Experience has shown that all employees react to this by commenting that they prioritize tasks anyway. In practice, however, it is observed that this is not the case. Many tasks are processed according to the chronological order of their arrival or depending on the pressure (= urgency). Therefore, the framework should ideally be presented as part of a reflection before it is used, so that employees can question themselves and their way of working.

A greater challenge, since it is an emotional and not a rational topic, is the completion of small tasks – even those that are unpleasant or where the responsibilities are unclear. Here, fairness and pride are affected as personal values. This also explains why people argue for hours about the smallest tasks (the legendary updating of an Excel list). A management meeting does not harm the employee's self-perception – updating an Excel with copy and paste does.

As an organization, it only makes sense to tackle this as part of a comprehensive leadership development program or to integrate it into an existing leadership development program.

Result

The SPEED framework provides employees, regardless of their hierarchical level, with a set of tools to prioritize their tasks in a meaningful way and increase their personal efficiency and effectiveness. The framework can be combined and used in a variety of ways: In particular, it is compatible with classic to-do lists as well as with KANBAN boards, both of which are frequently used.

In addition, it is intuitive to use, as there is no need for an elaborate quantitative evaluation of tasks according to numerous criteria on an evaluation scale, but the individual criteria are intuitively weighed against each other. This can be challenging for career starters. This intuitive approach retains a certain arbitrariness, but it seems justifiable if it can be used quickly in everyday life. The big advantage, however, lies in the model, which allows tasks to be prioritized within seconds after a little practice. However, it must be taken into account that even with the SPEED model, conflicts (interests of the employee vs. interests of the organization) cannot be avoided when prioritizing tasks.

The introduction or cultivation of the framework requires a rethink among

employees. However, once the way to sort tasks based on the five factors is established, employees will be better able to prioritize and complete tasks, which will benefit the efficiency of the individual as well as the organization as a whole.

Finally, SPEED can be used to divide tasks in a much more differentiated way compared to the Eisenhower Matrix, which is why the framework can be seen as a worthy successor and will hopefully soon be used in your company.

About the authors



Chris West

Manager

Purple Bird Technology International, Dubai

Chris West is Managing Director of Purple Bird Technology International in Dubai, a company of the Purple Bird Technology Group. During his academic career, he completed a degree in technology management at the Ludwig Maximilian University and the Technical University of Munich. He was a visiting scholar at UC Berkeley in California, where he conducted research in the field of digitalization. As a proven expert in agile management, he has been advising companies on agile transformation and the

optimization of their processes for over 15 years.



Thomas Maier

Manager

Purple Bird Technology, Munich

Thomas Maier is the founder and managing partner of Purple Bird Technology. After studying business administration at the Ludwig Maximilian University and the honors elite course at the University of Regensburg, he worked as an employed management consultant, freelance consultant and in the group. In 2020, he founded the digitization and organizational consultancy Purple Bird Technology, headquartered in Munich. Prestigious companies, such as DAX 40 corporations, are among its

customers. In addition, he completed various courses lasting several months, such as training as a business coach, the Certificate of Human Capital Management (Ludwig Maximilian University) and training as a business trainer.