



# SPRINT PLANNING USING

# WORK MANAGEMENT TOOLS

A step-by-step guide on running the sprint planning system mentioned in *Chapter 7: Workloads and Capacities*

# READY, SET, SPRINT!

In chapter 7 of *Come Up For Air*, I covered the importance of sprint planning in theory, how to adapt its core concepts to suit different teams, and the simple formula to calculate team members' bandwidth. In this guide, I'll show you how to apply the concepts outlined in the book using a work management tool.

Here's how it works. At the end of each sprint, everyone takes a few minutes out of their day to prepare for the next one. They calculate their remaining capacity for the upcoming sprint using the system mentioned in the book ( $\text{Bandwidth} = \text{Capacity} - \text{Admin} - \text{Meetings}$ ). Once they know their bandwidth, they add whatever tasks they see as a priority to the upcoming sprint until they've reached their capacity.

At Leverage, we do weekly sprints. On Fridays, we all go through this process to plan the next week's sprint. That way, when people show up to the weekly team meeting on Monday, they already have a good idea of what their focus will be for the week.

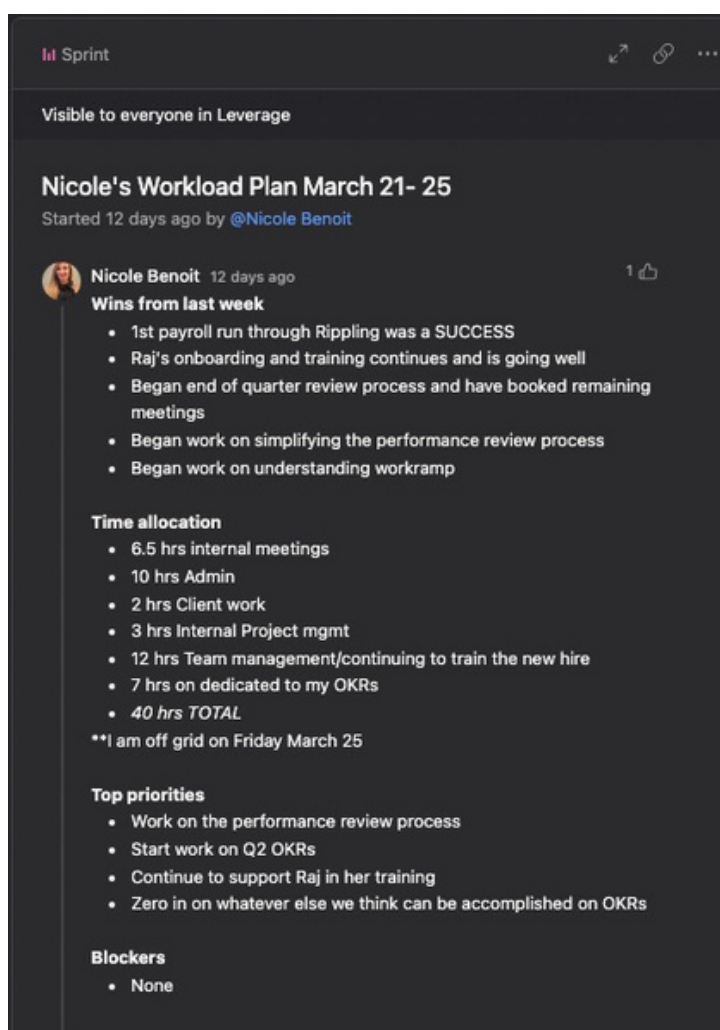
After everyone has added their work to the upcoming sprint, they can send a message to their team that includes:

- any major wins from the previous sprint
- their top three priorities for the next sprint
- a simple breakdown of how much time they're allocating toward precommitments, including the number of hours spent in meetings
- a simple breakdown of where they're investing the rest of their time.

If they'd like, they also have the option of sending this information with a video recording of themselves running through each point. (This is easier than typing for some people, me included.)

**Don't forget to include a few wins from the past week's sprint in your message. Sometimes managers don't have visibility into their team's accomplishments. Celebrating wins ensures that team members get the recognition they deserve, and everyone heads into the next sprint feeling energized and motivated.**

Here's what one of those messages typically looks like:



These messages take only a few minutes to write up (or record), and they give managers the chance to quickly review everyone's upcoming sprint.

Now, although I love how this system empowers my team to plan and own their work, there needs to be a review process in which managers can look through everyone's sprints to make sure they're putting their efforts in the right place. The team has created their first draft at this point, and the weekly meeting is where we turn it into a final draft.

During the weekly meeting, everyone gives a quick overview of their focus for the week, and managers or other team members have the opportunity to make suggestions or requests for changes. Maybe someone is focusing on something that isn't really a priority, or they're forgetting something. I sometimes notice that people are investing time in activities that are below their pay grade or that someone else is better suited for.

This whole process only takes a few minutes, and the more you and your team get used to sprint planning, the less time it takes. In fact, most of the time my team is spot on with their sprints, and I have no feedback.

The benefit of a system like this is that it provides immediate clarity and enables team members to take control of designing their weekly work schedules. Managers can then review their team's sprints before the weekly meeting, and the sprints can be finalized in just a few minutes during that meeting. Team members have ownership over their work, and everyone can feel comfortable heading into the week knowing that they have a reasonable workload and they're focusing on what matters most.

To be clear, the way we do this review process—using messages and video recordings—is unique. Traditionally, sprint planning involves a meeting where everyone decides on the priorities for the upcoming sprint and people allocate their time accordingly, then review with the group.

It's a valid option, and if you feel like one would be better suited to your team, I would welcome you to try it. But what we found is that most people are well aware of what they should be working on and can create an initial draft that is 80 percent accurate. Planning this out beforehand makes the weekly meeting much more efficient. And this system still provides visibility into everyone's sprints. But if someone's sprint is irrelevant to you, you don't have to sit in a meeting listening to them talk about it for fifteen minutes—you can just skip their message and move on.



**Book a call to learn how we can help you plan and run your sprints effectively.**