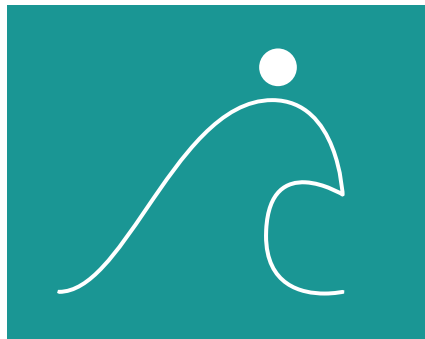


# Beyond Urgency: Bandwidth Management and Priority Setting

Amid the speed, intensity, and demands of life, it is easy to lose perspective on where we are, how we are operating, and what is happening. When this happens, we're often so consumed, we also fail to optimize how we are engaging, deploying our resources, and managing our energy.

“Riding the wave” is a simple and powerful metaphor to help assess how you are operating in life, at work, or on any project. It also weaves together many of AIM Leadership’s tools, including our vital tools for managing change (donut), altitude, bandwidth, and energy management.



## The Three Zones

Zones	It Feels Like...	Challenges and Opportunities
<b>Struggling to Keep Up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exerting excessive effort without results;</li> <li>• Being caught in the churn and unable to choose your next move or dictate your direction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often operating at terror’s edge or at a 5 on the donut; Exerting maximum effort with no guaranteed wins and at risk of burnout;</li> <li>• Leaves little bandwidth;</li> <li>• Risking burnout, quiet quitting, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Living in Chaos</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling energized and yet also in chaos;</li> <li>• Experiencing new highs and lows;</li> <li>• Not using energy efficiently and, as a result, putting yourself, team, and organization at risk;</li> <li>• Expending more energy on tasks than you should be.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toggling between terror’s edge and the learning zone (at 4 to 5);</li> <li>• Draining bandwidth;</li> <li>• Exerting significant effort to stay on top of the wave and at risk of depleting all energy reserves (mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual).</li> </ul>
<b>Riding the Wave</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being in flow, in the zone, and enjoying an energetic zen rush;</li> <li>• Being at your best self and living your best life;</li> <li>• Being alive, engaged, growing, and inspired;</li> <li>• Energy is coming from the source.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling challenged, yet inspired (in the learning zone a a 3.5);</li> <li>• Operating as your best self feels effortless;</li> <li>• Recharging and renewing on a regular basis and building sustainable capacity while avoiding burnout;</li> <li>• Taking on new challenges and responding to unexpected ones is possible as your energy reserves are full.</li> </ul>

## The Illusion of urgency

It's often assumed that

BUSY

=

PRODUCTIVE/  
IMPACTFUL

**In many organizations, this is far from true.**

Similar to being “overwired,” workplace cultures fixated on urgency often report lower rather than higher levels of productivity. Constant urgency can also result in lower-quality work and increased errors because people are focused on productivity rather than outcomes and impact.

Despite this, people can become addicted to the chaos that a culture of urgency creates and simply fail to see the implications or costs of it.

To move beyond urgency, it is essential to invest in people, relationships, and your workplace culture.

## Essential Questions

### STEP 1: Understand where you are and what is happening

Are you chasing the wave?

- If so, why? Could it be a lack of order or capacity, or is it due to unclear expectations?
- Are you at risk of burnout?

Are you constantly on top of the wave?

- If so, why? Do you have a passion for chaos?
- Are you in control of your direction?

Are you out in front of the wave?

- If so, what is helping you stay in this position? Is it about having clear boundaries and expectations?
- Is it about how you're managing your time, energy, and attention?
- Is it about having a passion for your work?

### STEP 2: Look Backward to Look Forward

When you were last in front of the wave, what helped you get there and stay there?

- Can you re-create those conditions?
- What resources or support might help you accomplish this goal?

### STEP 3: Incorporate Regular Checkpoints

How might you gain altitude to get perspective on your situation?

- When you look at your situation from a distance, what do you notice?
- Are there any small changes you might make to sustain your position out in front of the wave?

## Ideas into Action



### **AWARENESS:** Identify your position

- Notice whether you are chasing the wave, on top of it, or on front of it.
- Audit the energy you expend in each of these locations
- What themes do you see (e.g., are some types of projects more likely to find you chasing the wave rather than riding it?)

### **ACTIVATION:** Plan

- Develop a clear plan to spend more time riding than chasing or being on top of the wave;
- What are two to three ways you can get in front of the wave?

### **AGILITY BUILDING:** Practice

- Practice getting out in front of the wave, even when you find yourself chasing the wave or caught up in the churn
- Look for patterns: Do certain projects, times of year, or teams consistently drag you under?
- Do after actions: What worked well, what could have worked better, and what did I learn?
- Don't try to fix everything when you're in chaos; wait for calmer waters.

### **ACCOUNTABILITY:** Progress

- Attend to differences in energy, effort, outcome, and experience when you're in front vs. behind the wave;
- When you start slipping into the churn or find yourself chasing the wave, notice what pulled you back.

### **INTEGRATE/ACCELERATE:** Keep surfing

- Commit to becoming a pro-surfer who spends most of your time in front of the wave where even challenging obstacles feel effortless.

### **BONUS**

- Notice patterns around you. Are there certain projects, teams, or times of year that intensify chaos?
- Takes notes and return to these observations after the storm/intensity passes.
- Explore ways to get out ahead of future projects and more effectively manage your energy.
- Commend wave riders and tap their success by exploring what makes them successful!

Discover how influencing without authority can transform your ability to lead. Set up a time to talk to the AIM Leadership team. To learn more, visit [aimleadership.com](http://aimleadership.com)

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