

Check Six

Define your compass-point question and go/no-go criteria

As we learned in this chapter, momentum toward an extraordinary goal rarely progresses in a straight line. At this point it is time for a “Check six.” It’s a term fighter pilots use to refer to the 6:00 spot on the clock, which is directly behind you. This is your final quality check before you begin to manage the cadence of the work.

The two simple tools in this exercise will help you ensure that you have a tight plan and give you helpful language for discussing and altering the plan.

STEP 1: WRITE A COMPASS-POINT QUESTION

What is your guiding force? What is the one simple question that will always lead you back to your overall goal? (e.g., “Will it make the boat go faster?”) Come back to this question at each decision point.

TIP: Flip back to Exercise 3, Activity 1, Part 2. Take your response to the prompt “The single most important thing this team can do is...” and rephrase it in the form of a question.

STEP 2: DETERMINE GO/NO-GO CRITERIA

Remember, this is the “Mission Abort” criteria for each milestone. For example, “If X happens...” or “If Y isn’t approved/funded/developed/hired...” then you will try a different tactic. There are two simple tricks for discovering useful go/no-go criteria that will signify when it’s time to re-group and steer in another direction.

- Look back at your BNAs, whether you wrote them on the Chapter 4 worksheet or somewhere else, and circle those that are absolutely non-negotiable.
- Identify a nightmare scenario for each milestone. Ask yourself, “What could happen that would make it impossible to complete this milestone?”

Using the insights from these two activities, write 1-3 go/no-go criteria for each milestone in the table on the next page.

KEY INITIATIVE:

MILESTONE 1:	GO/NO-GO CRITERIA:
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MILESTONE 2:	GO/NO-GO CRITERIA:
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MILESTONE 3:	GO/NO-GO CRITERIA:
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MILESTONE 4:	GO/NO-GO CRITERIA:
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MILESTONE 5:	GO/NO-GO CRITERIA:
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TIP: Reflect on the compass-point question whenever you reach a no-go point. And remember the Turkish proverb on Scott Shippy's wall: "No matter how far you have gone on the wrong road, turn back."