

TEMPLATE

The Difficult Stakeholder Conversation Script

Prepare for a hard trade-off conversation so it lands as a decision, not a conflict.

FORMAT

1 script

TIME

20-30 min

WHO IT'S FOR

Product managers and delivery leads preparing for a hard trade-off conversation

USE IT WHEN

Use before a conversation where you need to say no, or deliver news a stakeholder won't like.

01 Context

- What does this stakeholder actually care about here?
 - What have they already been told, and by whom?
 - What's the real relationship risk if this goes badly?
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02 The ask

- What are they asking for, in their own words?
 - What's the version of this you can genuinely say yes to?
 - What's non-negotiable, and why?
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03 The trade-off

- What has to give if this is prioritised?
 - Can you name that trade-off in one sentence?
 - What evidence backs up why this is the right call?
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04 The path forward

- What's the alternative you're offering instead?
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- What would change your answer later?
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- What's the one next step you're both agreeing to right now?
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This resource is deliberately lightweight. Adapt the language to your context and capture the decisions that follow.