

FREE TOOLKIT

Resilient Optimism Toolkit for Team Leads

Five tools to calm a team in uncertain times, ready to use without budget. They build on Michelle Gielan's HBR article [How Leaders Counter Pessimism in Trying Times](#) and on what I used as Interim Marketing Lead at Purpose Green from June to November 2025. Background and examples: my blog article "Resilient Optimism: Leading a Team Through Uncertainty" on [bigbangandwhisper.com](#).

TOOL 01

Priority caps

One priority-1 project at a time, three at most on priority 2. That cap stops the "everything is urgent" spiral.

Priority	Max. projects	This cycle's projects
Priority 1	1	
Priority 2	3	
Priority 3	Set your own	

The rules we used

- Priorities are agreed with the C-level every two weeks.
- The CEO has the final word.
- Leadership can change the order at any time. The caps stay: a new priority-1 project moves the current one down.
- Requests that don't fit go into a backlog. Their relevance and priority get checked again later.

Backlog

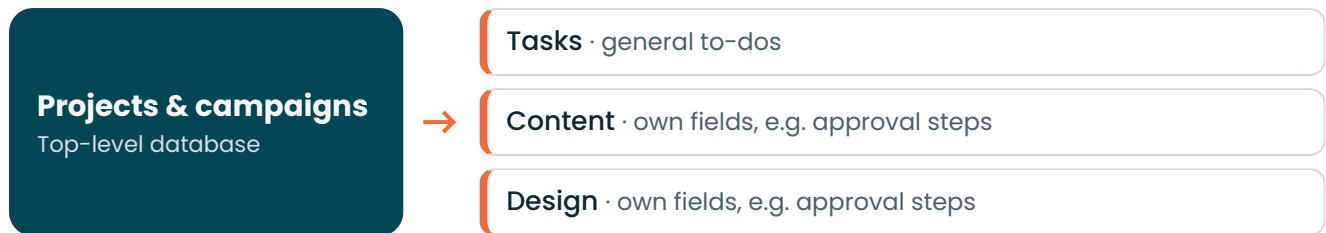
Request	Requested by	Date	Re-checked on	Decision

TOOL 02

Project structure: a build principle

Every task belongs to exactly one project or campaign, so everyone can see where things stand.

This is a principle, not a template: build it in your own tool and adapt it to your team. We used Notion.



Three rules

1. Each project or campaign has all its tasks from every area linked to it.
2. A team area gets its own database only if its tasks need special fields, such as approval workflows.
3. Any tool with linked databases works.

TOOL 03

Monday kick-off

One hour every Monday morning, marketing team only. There is no fixed order; cover these three building blocks each week.

Building block	What to show	Notes for this week
Highlights	What the team achieved last week	
Campaign status	Progress of running campaigns	
Work in progress	Marketing designs still in the making	

Outside the meeting: post results as they come in to a Slack channel the whole company can read. Ours was called #all_news.

TOOL 04

"Yes, and" cheat sheet

State the setback without spin, then name the next step in the same sentence.

"Always remember: making mistakes is good, as long as we learn from them and don't repeat the mistake next time."

What I told my team

A REAL CASE

A Meta campaign brought in plenty of MQLs, but lead quality was too low. Yes, the campaign missed its real goal, and it taught our performance marketing a lesson. Next step: we changed the targeting and reworked the lead form.

Phrasing aids (examples, not quotes)

Instead of	Try
"It's not that bad."	"Yes, the launch missed its target, and here's how we collect feedback to relaunch smarter."
"We just need to push harder."	"Yes, the budget is smaller this quarter, and that tells us which two channels to focus on."
"Let's stay positive."	"Yes, this week was rough, and we still shipped X. What's the one thing that would make next week easier?"

TOOL 05

Your next two weeks

- ☐ Cut your team's priority list to the two items that count this week and say so in the next meeting.
- ☐ Send one specific thank-you per day, naming what the person did and what it changed.
- ☐ Block a visible lunch break in your calendar and take it.
- ☐ Rephrase the next setback with "Yes, and": state the fact, then the next step.
- ☐ Open each team meeting with five minutes on what moved since the last one.
- ☐ Tell one person outside your team about a colleague's quiet work.
- ☐ Ask the team for the one small friction that annoys them most, and fix it within a week.

Sources

Michelle Gielan: How Leaders Counter Pessimism in Trying Times. Harvard Business Review, November–December 2026. hbr.org/2026/11/how-leaders-counter-pessimism-in-trying-times

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