

How to respond realistically to common complaints at work

Lots of us deal with similar delays and distractions at work and they leave us feeling unproductive and unfulfilled. Complaining isn't the answer, but neither is seeking the perfect solution.

Instead, we need a more realistic response that shifts our focus to imperfect solutions that are much easier to act on. We might not be able to fix everything, but we can take action to get control and move forward.

Ideas for action



1. Issue: Too many meetings

Perfect solution: Cut 50% of your meetings. Introduce company-wide "no meeting" days.

Imperfect solutions:

- 📌 Redesign the meetings you run - shorten them by 15 minutes and use the saved time for quick actions.
- 📌 Try co-working meetings - add tasks into the meeting time so people leave with progress, not just plans.

2. Issue: Too much to do

Perfect solution: Design your day like a productivity expert - deep work, inbox zero.

Imperfect solutions:

- 📌 Zoom in and out: Ask yourself: "What matters most today / this week / this month?"
- 📌 Use a Win Watch to track your focus for the quarter. What are you working towards and why does it matter? It gives you something to reflect on at the end of your year too.

3. Issue: No time to think or be strategic

Perfect solution: Create a thinking day / week

Imperfect solutions:

- 📌 Create a 'to think list' and spend 5 minutes on first thoughts - sketch, talk aloud, or use AI as a thinking partner.
- 📌 Try self-explaining for 3 minutes. When you get stuck what comes next can be more insightful.
- 📌 Record a minute of your thoughts and ask AI to summarise your ideas into 5 key points. Or share with someone for feedback.

4. Issue: Senior people stall my progress

Perfect solution: Schedule another meeting with them. Ask for dedicated time and ongoing updates.

Imperfect solutions:

- 📌 Mirror how they like to work e.g. length of meetings, types of messages.
- 📌 Adapt your approach: can you share updates in a new way? e.g. video tools like Loom.
- 📌 Try experimenting with format and tone. Make it as easy as possible for them to respond.

Coach yourself questions

What are your most common complaints at work?



What's the most realistic action you could take to start to resolve it?



Recommended resources



Try using the [Reclaim AI tool](#) to add short moments of thinking time into your diary



Sarah and Helen explore how to practice a 'good enough' approach to reduce pressure and accelerate your progress in [episode #322](#) of the Squiggly Careers podcast.