Four rules for targets

Where milestone targets come from, and why they stand still.

External

The target comes from outside the team: competitive timing and the market window, customer commitments, annual buying cycles, or the strategic growth plan. The schedule is your way of achieving the target. It is not where the target comes from.

Meaningful

There is a defendable reason for the date. Targets trigger revenue estimates, and those estimates rest on the growth the owners and investors expect. A date picked out of the air defends nothing, and everyone on the team can smell it.

Grounded when nothing external exists

A program nobody outside is driving still needs a target. Set it from historical cycle times: if it took two years to get the last one out, it will likely take two years to get the next one out. It is not that complicated.

Set once

The target stays fixed and the forecast moves; the gap is the exposure and the trend is the direction of travel. A target that moves hides the trend it exists to reveal. Re-baselining is a rare, gated, public act. That is by design.

The target is the promise; the schedule is how you keep it.