Status updates

For a project

Questions to ask yourself:

1. What is the goal you're working towards? How are you measuring progress toward that goal?

2. What are the consequences of missing your goal? Will this affect other teams? Launch moments?

3. Who will be reading this update? Are you managing up, or are you aligning your peers?

   a. This should reflect your answer to 2. If your project is critical to a large launch moment that affects other teams, someone from those teams probably needs to be reading an update from you. They don't want updates on your minutiae, but they do need to know about the things that affect them.

Components of a post managing upwards/outwards:

1. Is your project on track? Stoplight indicators {🟢, 🟡, 🔴} are highly encouraged

   a. If your project is not on track, explain in two or less sentences why and what the next step is to mitigate the situation. Further detail is reserved for lower down in the update.

2. When will the next milestone be complete?

   a. Milestones are often launches (dogfood, GA, etc.) but can also include things like "Spec approved by leadership," "Finalized designs from UX," and "Prototype complete."

3. High-level breakdown of projects and their statuses

   a. Focus on high-level conceptual chunks of the project; do not fall down the trap of listing what each person is working on.

   b. If the project is not on track, this is the place to add more detail about the problem and mitigation steps.

Components of a post aligning your peers:

1. Is your project on track? Stoplight indicators {🟢, 🟡, 🔴} are highly encouraged.

2. When will the next milestone be complete?

    a. You do have the flexibility here to have more nuanced milestones that may be inappropriate to communicate upwards, but, it is often important to keep the team aligned towards the bigger milestones.

3. Breakdown of project and statuses

    a. This can get into the nitty gritty now that you're communicating with people that have full context. However, try to continue to communicate the status of conceptual chunks rather than "Task *X* completed" updates where possible and appropriate.

Standups

Questions to ask yourself:

1. What is the impact of my current work? What will be enabled once I'm done? Who or what is currently blocked?

2. What do I need in order to successfully complete my work? Who can grant those things? Examples:

    a. Resources: Do you need completed designs from the design team? Are you waiting on an accessibility spec for those designs? Do you need a full task list from your tech lead?

    b. Answers: Which approach are we taking? Should the product behavior for X condition be Y or Z?

    c. Time: Are you at risk of not completing your goals on time? You may be able to free up some hours to focus on this priority by having someone else handle a different task or on-call shift. Engineering managers and tech leads may have the ability to shuffle these things around to spread the load.

3. Am I still on track to complete my work by the time we originally planned?

Components of an update (either verbal or written):

1. Is your project on track? Stoplight indicators {🟢, 🟡, 🔴} are highly encouraged for written updates. Include your target completion date if it is different from the original plan.

2. Highlight any current or upcoming blockers to your work to the people best able to unblock you.

   a. Here again, being proactive with upcoming blockers is helpful. Saying, "Hey <product manager>, I need an answer to 'what happens after X?' by next Thursday in order to stay on track" is much more helpful to the project success than saying, "Hey <product manager>, I'm totally blocked, I need an answer ASAP."

3. Highlight any risks to the project uncovered by your work.