

# Reliable Promises · Field Guide

Pin it to your trailer wall. Use it on your next promise.

## THE 4-PART STRUCTURE OF A PROMISE



Example: "I (architect) will deliver the permit set to you (super) by 3 PM Friday."

## 5 HONEST REPLIES

- YES** I can complete that.
- NO** I can't.
- YES, IF...** I can — if [condition].
- NEED MORE INFO** I'll commit once I have [X] by [when].
- COUNTEROFFER** I can't do that — but I can do this.

## WHEN TO SAY NO

- X **Capacity exceeded**  
*Already committed elsewhere.*
- X **Missing information**  
*Can't define 'done' yet.*
- X **Dependency risk**  
*Someone else's promise has to land first.*
- X **Insincere yes**  
*You don't actually intend to do it.*

# CHECK BEFORE YOU SAY YES

- Conditions of satisfaction are clear
- I'm competent — skill + resources
- I've blocked the time on my calendar
- I'm sincere — I actually intend to do it
- I'll own the recovery if I miss

## WHEN YOU MISS — THE RECOVERY SCRIPT

1. "I missed my commitment because *[reason — no excuses]."*
2. "My new commitment is *[what] by [when]."*
3. "What I need from you to keep this one is *[ask]."*

## LANGUAGE LADDER · LISTEN FOR THE VERB

- 0% I'll try / I won't
- 60% I might
- 70% I think I can
- 90% I will
- 100% I did

## WORDS WE DON'T SAY

- |               |             |                 |
|---------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Should        | Maybe       | I don't know    |
| Hopefully     | We will see | Sure            |
| Would like to | I'll try    | Do my best      |
| Possibly      | It depends  | Someone told me |