



Help! The most common leadership struggles and what to do about them.

Help... I have no time!

We all have the same number of hours in a day, if we want to be able to have boundaries and stay balanced, we need to be better at using it!

First, we need to start with getting perspective. This is always what does that for me. According to Cassie Holmes in her book 'Happier Hour' if we live to be 90 years old, then we will experience:

- 22 Winter Olympics
- 8212 Summer sunsets
- 4,680 Sunday nights
- 23,400 weekday mornings

That doesn't seem a lot of time, does it? And, of course, many of us won't live to be 90 years old.

Time is precious, how we spend it is important. If your diary is managing you, and you are not managing it, then perhaps it's time to stand back and look back in to see what can change.

'Deep Work' is a phrase coined by researcher Cal Newport in his book of the same name. Newport has a 'deep work hypothesis' where he states that the ability to be able to concentrate and engage in deeper work is becoming very rare at the same time as it is becoming increasingly valuable to the workplace and to the economy. He goes so far as to say that those who can engage in deep work regularly, will thrive. The ability to concentrate and remove ourselves from all the distractions really is important because we are constantly suffering from split concentration and cognitive overload with very few chances to get into what psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls 'flow'.

What is the issue with our time especially when it comes to work?

There are plenty of them!

- There is often a constant hum of distraction when we sit down to work
- We are unable to concentrate for very long before an email, call or Team's message interrupts us and needs our attention.
- We feel we can't get away from the team/job enough to settle and focus and so do this in our own time.
- We engage in 'shallow work', not taking the time to go deep.
- Our relationship with the important over the urgent needs to be re-visited.



What can we do to MAKE time?

1) Try 'Monk Mode Mornings'

Cal Newport recommends an approach called 'Monk Mode Mornings', these types of concepts are also covered in a TED talk by Jason Fried called 'Why Work Doesn't Happen At Work'. The concept of Monk Mode Mornings is that you take the morning to go into deep work, distraction free, and tell people you will be in communication after 12. This chunk of time is great for strategic thinking, creative problem solving, planning for the long term or grappling with a big issue. It may not work for all the people in all roles BUT usually all of us have some big piece of work that we just need to sit down and get into for a longer period of time, interruption free.

2) Remove distractions and interruptions

When we have this time set aside, we put it in the diary, turn off all notifications and lock your phone in a drawer! Sometimes it is helpful to set a timer, 'I am going to spend 30 minutes on answering email' and stick to it. Some of us find it more helpful to tell someone else what we are going to get done and then get them to ask us how it has gone at the end of the day. Positive peer pressure works for adults as well as children!

3) Identify the right amount of time to get into 'deep work'

Giving yourself the best chance of being able to do deep work needs discipline so you can reap the rewards. What you produce will likely be better quality and you leave that time feeling great. There are rewards of having the time to get into 'flow'. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi talks about 'flow states', this is when we are:

- engaged in challenging activities
- not distracted
- engrossed in what we are doing
- thinking deeply and our mind is reaching full capacity
- doing work where the challenge and the skill match (if we are working on something we can't do, we often find it harder to get into a flow state)

If we are in 'flow' we feel motivated, fulfilled, efficient, productive and, as a result, generally happier. The challenge of course is finding and making the time for this to happen. We need to work out for ourselves how much time is helpful for us. How much time do you need to be able to settle yourself and get stuck in?

We need to be better at time management if we want to manage. Start with identifying which 3 of these techniques you might try and see the difference it makes.

