



Where Does the Time Go?

"Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion." - C. Northcote Parkinson. Lovely. But here's the upgrade: work also expands to fill the space we leave when we avoid hard choices. I hear it constantly from leaders: "Stacie, I don't have enough time." Truth: you don't have enough unguarded time. Guarding time isn't a scheduling trick; it's a leadership choice about who you're becoming.

When leaders tell me, "I don't have enough time," what I often hear underneath is:

- **Approval:** If I say no, will they think I'm not a team player?
- **Control:** If I'm not in every meeting, will things go off the rails?
- **Belonging:** If I'm less available, will I be left out of key decisions?
- **Ambition:** If I don't grab it all, will I miss my shot?

Those are not calendar issues; they're identity questions. So let's coach with this 5P framework (person first to become time smart):

1. **Purpose** - What am I creating? If time is sand, purpose is the glass. Name the result you exist to create this quarter. Anything that doesn't serve it is decorative.
2. **Principles** - What do I stand for? Pick 3 non-negotiables. Principles make saying "no" feel like integrity, not rebellion.
3. **Promises** - What will future-me thank me for? Draft 3 Leadership Time Promises and these promises convert values into calendar entries.
4. **Protection** - How will I keep the moat purple? Your calendar is a boundary device. Title your focus blocks like client meetings, because here, the client = the mission. btw, the moat can be any colour in your calendar, purple here for obvious reasons 😊
5. **Practice** - What small behavior proves I mean it? Start with one micro-change for two weeks. Mastery > misery.

Why Guard Time? And it goes deeper than "productivity":

- **Clarity:** Protected thinking time prevents "decision debt." You make fewer heroic rescues because you designed fewer emergencies.
- **Quality:** Complex systems (and humans) need time to learn. Slack time is not laziness; it's capacity.
- **Integrity:** When the calendar matches the mission, your team trusts your yes and respects your no.
- **Culture:** Your availability norms become everyone's survival manual. Guard time, and you give permission for health.
- **Presence:** Your best leadership tool is a regulated nervous system. (Hard to be courageous when your brain is a tab explosion.)

Time doesn't need more tricks. You need more truth about what matters, and the courage to let your schedule reflect it. Guarding time is not selfish; it's how leaders keep their promises to the future.

Be Inspired. Be Inspiring.
Stacie

Client Story

Client Story: Director of Operations at an Energy Company

My client came in saying, "I need time hacks." (Very relatable.) We didn't start with hacks. We started with identity.

Purpose: "Enable decisions on decarbonization initiatives with trustworthy data, weekly."

Principles: "No agenda, no meeting." "Decisions > discussions." "20% slack time for learning."

Promises: Two weekly purple moats; 25/50 meetings; Trade-Off in what swaps out for new work.

What shifted was not just her schedule—it was her stance.

- She stopped proving value by being in every room and started creating value by protecting the rooms where only she could think.
- She let her managers lead meetings she used to "should attend," then reviewed decisions asynchronously.
- She modeled boundaries: after one "no agenda" decline (polite, with a doc request), her org started sending cleaner pre-reads.

Results after 4 weeks:

- Meetings down 36 → 21/week.
- Aligned time up 17% → 43%.
- And the real win: she felt proud of how she led, not just how much she crammed.

My client's words: "I didn't make more time. I made more leadership - and time followed."

"EFFICIENCY IS DOING THINGS RIGHT, EFFECTIVENESS IS DOING THE RIGHT THINGS." - PETER DRUCKER