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Live free under time's constraints 3 ways to travel well through time

by [mark I vincent](#)

Enterprise requires the tracking of money. Most business leaders know their balance sheet, their P&L statement, share price, and the status of their annual/quarterly and monthly budgets.

A business leader is not required to keep track of

time in the same way. Time is not regulated by the federal government. Analysts track dollars not time usage. Questions about time management are not usually asked at shareholder meetings. A corporate board rarely asks for a time study of the CEO's calendar. And yet, time is a fixed currency that we spend and impacts everything about everything. Even more, choices of how to spend it can build or

destroy the sustainability and production one's life and enterprises one leads.

Many business leaders organize their day into segments that keep them rested, healthy and as productive as possible. Doing so helps them say no to many good possibilities in order to say yes to the most important aspects of life and business.

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And yet, this form of time management can feel like a prison; no flexibility and a growing sense that some of the items being said no to may be of great importance--items an imprisoning schedule causes the executive to miss.

Three freeing approaches to time as an essential and non-renewable commodity in our lives can make business leaders more effective time-travelers.

1. Assign time value to money.

Listen and you will hear yourself saying *"It's not worth my time."* Try switching to *"My time is not worth it."* Instead of saying something costs (or pays) \$35 an hour, try tracking it as one hour that costs (or pays) \$35.

This fights against our instincts. We instinctively assign money value to time. If we place chronological value to money, however, we start asking about the ROI for time invested--the resource that can never be recovered once spent.

Because time is actually more than money, we can apply this approach to relationship investment, the benefits of leisure time, the impact of our volunteering as well as choosing our tasks at work.



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2. Understand the 1/3 principle

It makes little difference whether you track hours in the office or days delivering services. Only about a third of your time produces money. The rest is spent setting up earning it and then administering what you earn.

Sure, there are specific jobs within your enterprise that produce more than others, just as there are jobs that don't produce at all. Sure, there are periods of hyper-production just as there are slow periods. Over the long run it evens out: time setting up business, time performing what the business produces, and time cleaning up, filing, reporting, evaluating and administering are going to balance at about 1/3 each.

Rather than trying to prove this principle wrong, organizational leaders are better off ensuring the quality of the 3 hours a day or 120 days a year where the money is earned.

3. Grow beyond your style of time orientation

You can read more about [time-orientation styles](#) on the Design Group International blog.

Essentially, people have a past, present or future orientation. A past orientation tends to value what was and seeks to preserve it. A present orientation emphasizes response to what is happening in the moment. A future orientation values what can be. Each orientation offers a strength and each orientation carries significant blind spots. Growth beyond one's time orientation means learning to value and draw upon the strengths other time orientations bring to the conversation. Getting stuck in one's own time-orientation limits insight and one's capacity to work within a team. In this way one does spend some but not too much time reflecting, some but not too much time looking at what is current and real, and more but not overwhelming time casting vision and working toward it.