

## Protecting time<sup>1</sup>

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I am not calling it 'creating time' because time is already there, we just need to 'see it' and protect it from all the usual physical and psychological invasions. Physically protecting time may look like a 'close the door' or 'don't come in' behaviour, if you can do it! Psychologically, it means to carve out your own 'space' to be able to – and here the terminology is very personal - reflect, think, ponder etc. Those who 'can't' because the simple constraint of pre-scheduled-time-to-think-and-reflect would block them from thinking and reflecting on anything, are the very same people who need protected time (and, incidentally, have back-to-back meetings in Outlook until 2023), and who have to learn to create those spaces. Period. Part of leadership development is to be able to become architects of those spaces, for oneself and the organisation they work for.

For many, the initial confrontation with 'free time' may look scary above all! But there is no other trick. Practice! In a recent seminar that I ran, I met somebody who disclosed to us that he organises 'fake projects' in his Outlook calendar and project-manages them accordingly. This is the only way to ensure that his time is not cannibalised by the thousand and one ways of time being used and commoditised in the organisation!

### ► *Managed by my calendar*

Life in many organisations today looks like devolution of responsibility to Mr Microsoft Outlook. Outlook is in charge. (Apologies to the three or four other sole users of alternative systems!) It is the real boss. We may kid ourselves by thinking that it is a tool but, in reality, we report to it, which automatically makes Bill Gates our boss. Scary thought. 'Managing my calendar' has become a management term, de facto making the *calendar* and *you* one single entity. I am me and my Outlook.

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<sup>1</sup> Initially posted on [www.theleaderwith7faces.com](http://www.theleaderwith7faces.com), January 2008

As I mentioned above, it is no longer a joke that people 'can't find gaps in their calendar' for many months in advance. Whatever you think of busy business life, it tells us a lot about the kind of organisations that we are developing, perhaps the one you are working for. I believe that time is man's last asset. If this is true, and you have been booked until five p.m. on Wednesday 23 May 2016, you, my friend, have no assets left whatsoever and are mentally bankrupt.

You can read more about this dimension (Time and Space) by choosing from this list:

- [It's time, stupid!](#)
- [The 'Always on' Leader](#)
- [Leadership and the end of time](#)
- [Leadership is creating spaces](#)
- [Social space](#)
- [Sitting quietly alone](#)
- [But I never heard the builders](#)
- [100K investment lost](#)
- [Intrapreneurs at the gates](#)

You can also read more about the other two dimensions by choosing from this list:

2. [Homes](#)
3. [Legacy](#)

If you want to read more about leadership or want to continue reading from the above, you can read it all in my book [\*The Leader with Seven Faces: finding your own ways to practice leadership in today's organization.\*](#)