



Gamification Code:

SETUP

Work smart, live and lead better

Time strategies for modern professionals



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Before we start...

Questions to the audience

Raise your hand if:

- You checked your emails before getting out of bed today.
- You have more than 50 unread emails.
- You have ever worked on a deadline during a holiday.
- You have postponed an important task because a more urgent one arrived.



Alain M. Leclerc

Fasken Martineau DuMoulin



Time Management for IP Attorneys: Deep Thinking and Enjoyment !

Alain Leclerc

FASKEN LLP, CANADA





Introduction and Context

Why Time Management Is Different in IP Practice

Immovable Statutory Deadlines

Patent and trademark attorneys face fixed deadlines critical to protecting client rights with sometimes no room for delay or extension.

Complex Cognitive Demands

Complex commercial situations or drafting and analyzing patent claims requires deep concentration and understanding of law, technology and business.

Fragmented Workday Challenges

Frequent interruptions force attorneys to push high-value work into non-working hours, disrupting workflow. Some say, the real day starts at 4pm.

Billable Hour Model Impact

The billable hour can reward busywork over true effectiveness and value, complicating time management strategies.



When the Tail Wags the Dog

The Game Plan is tossed aside

Deadlines, examiner calls, client and colleague requests set the agenda, leaving the attorney reacting rather than deciding what matters most. The nice game plan is thrown out the door. Jumping from one thing to another pushes back the necessary deep thinking work. Procrastination sets in.

A Creeping Loss of Control

When every hour is claimed by someone else's urgency, the practice starts to feel like it is running the attorney instead of the reverse.

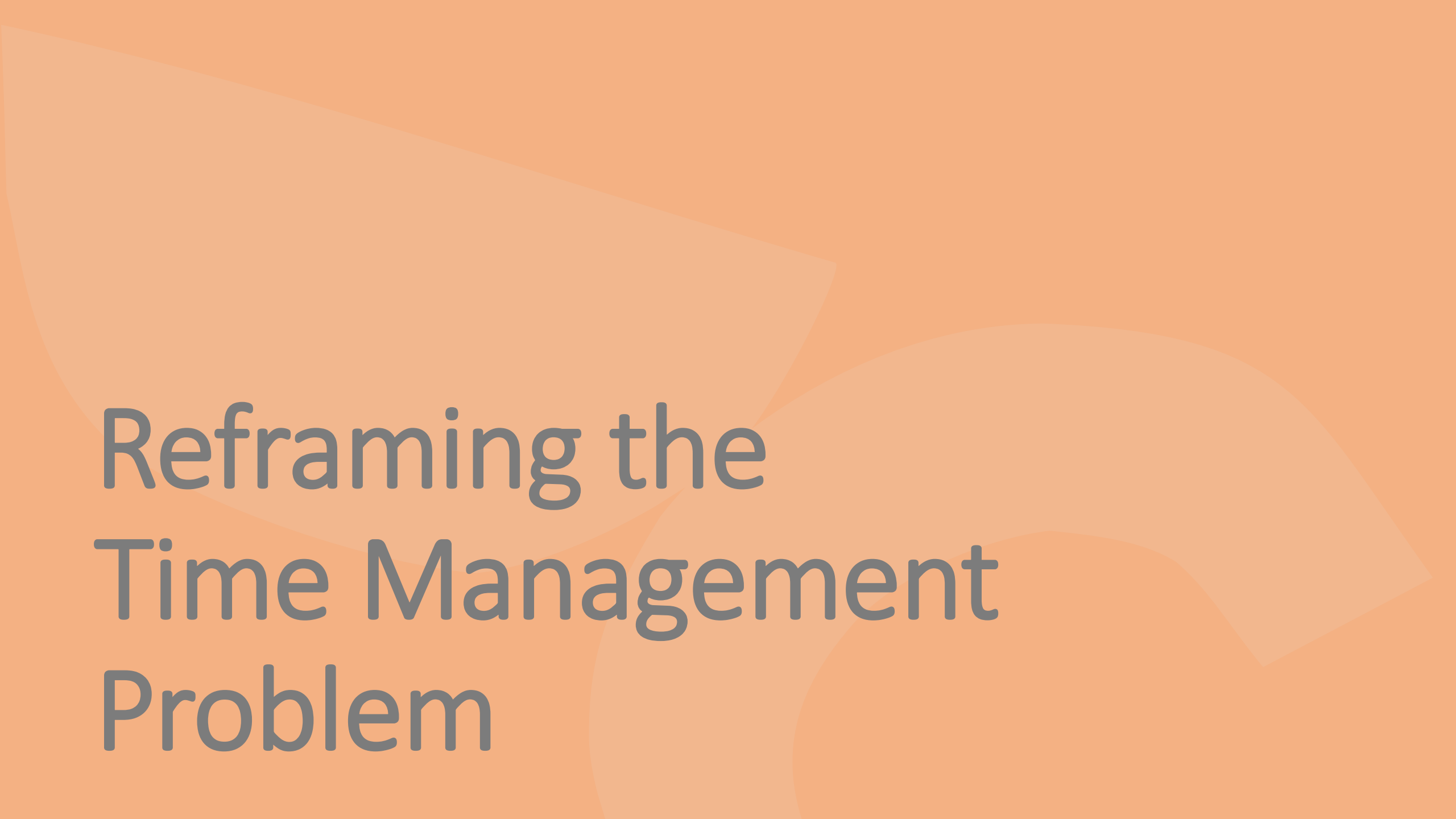
Deadline Anxiety

The fear of missing a due date or task lingers in the background, draining attention even during evenings, weekends, and time off.

Taking Back the Lead

Naming the pattern is the first step; realistic forward-looking docket review and protected time turn anxiety back into deliberate control. Getting help from a team is key. Have regular "to-do list" sessions with your team.





Reframing the Time Management Problem

From Hours Worked to Attention, Risk, and Energy

Attention Management Importance

Sustained focus on complex tasks yields higher value than fragmented hours spent on minor requests.

Legal Risk Prioritization

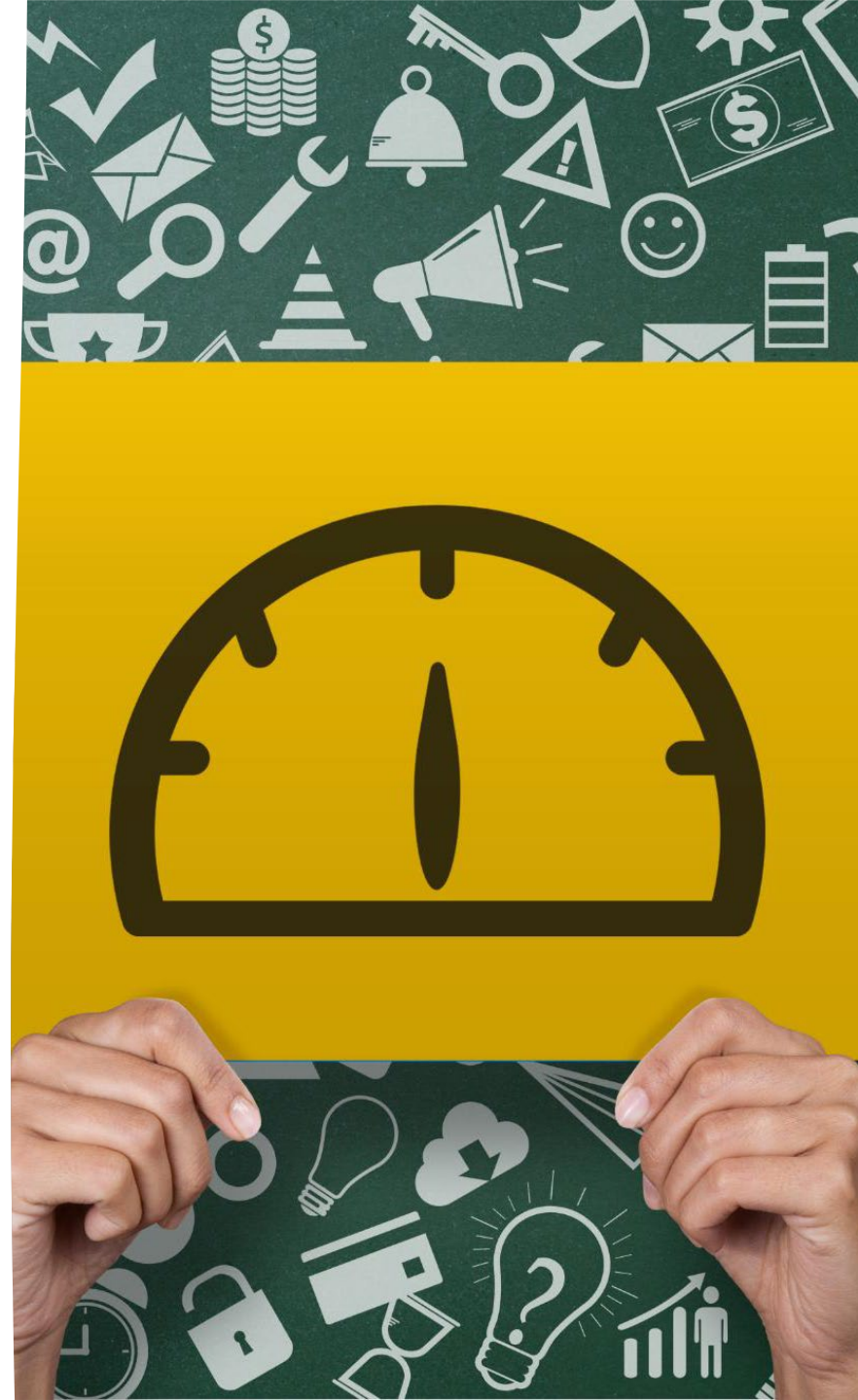
Deadlines vary in severity; statutory deadlines carry high risk while client deadlines may be flexible with communication.

Energy and Cognitive Fatigue

Mental and physical exhaustion impacts judgment and precision, highlighting the need for managing personal energy wisely.

Reframing Time Management

Viewing time through attention, risk, and energy lenses supports high-quality work and long-term sustainability.



A Practical Time Management Framework

The Four-Layer System



1. Deadline and Docket Control

The first layer ensures all critical deadlines are tracked in a reliable system to prevent last-minute crises.

2. Protected Deep-Work Blocks

The second layer schedules uninterrupted time for focused, high-value tasks like drafting and analysis. Block it in Outlook™. Be bold and stick to it.

3. Reactive Work Containment

The third layer manages reactive tasks by batching emails, calls, and client communications on a schedule.

4. Reward Yourself

Challenge yourself and reward yourself. Plan a fun activity or sport, involve others. Have a life !



Billing,
Productivity, and
Sustainability

Billable Hours Without Burnout



Cognitive Effort Importance

High-quality patent work depends on thinking time, which is vital for sound legal and technical judgment despite not always seeming productive.

Thoughtful Billing

Align billing with value by including milestones like claim strategy resolution and inventive concept clarification. Be descriptive in your time entries. Talk to your client, talk to yourself with identification of the true value work.

Reducing Burnout

Minimize fragmentation and start time tracking at analytical work onset to respect mental fatigue and cognitive limits. Stop taking on too much.

Sustainable Productivity

Integrate thoughtful billing and structured time management to maintain excellence and personal well-being long term.





Closing and Action Steps

The One-Week Challenge



Implementing Deep Work Sessions

Schedule two protected deep-work sessions weekly to focus on substantive legal tasks without interruptions.

Forward Review of Deadlines

Conduct a six-week forward review of docketed deadlines to reduce anxiety and increase preparedness.

Controlled Email Checking

Limit email checks to specific times to minimize distractions and reclaim attention throughout the day.

Gaining Control and Satisfaction

Don't forget to reward yourself (activities, sports, leisure, vacation). You need to recharge and make it sustainable.



Why Time Off Matters



Rest Restores Judgment

Fatigue quietly erodes the precision clients are paying for. Rest and restore.

Distance Creates Insight

Stepping away lets the mind work in the background, which is often where the better argument or strategy finally appears.

A Safeguard Against Error

Rested attorneys catch what tired ones miss, and that margin protects both client and firm.

Sustaining a Long Career

Vacations, sports, and genuine downtime are not lost billable hours; they are what makes decades of demanding practice possible.



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Own tomorrow





Sini-Maaria Mikkilä

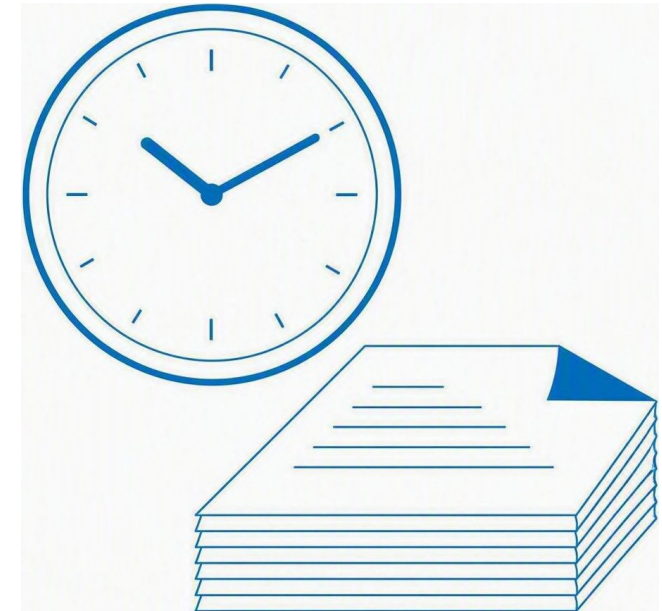
Boco IP





Time Management in Real Patent Practice

- Sini-Maaria Mikkilä – Boco IP
- What I thought the problem was, and what it turned out to be
- “I thought my biggest challenge was delegation. That mostly stopped working when every word became my responsibility.”





Different Roles, Different Ways of Managing Time

Working in very different roles

- Quality engineer in manufacturing and telecommunications
- Program manager in software tool projects
- Patent attorney in private practice

Delegation works differently here

- In project work and operational excellence, delegation is essential – work is distributed and tracked
- In patent work, delegation is much more limited – responsibility stays with you
- You cannot really delegate quality and legal judgement

What this means

- What works well in one role does not necessarily work in another



Many Hats at the Same Time

More than one job at once

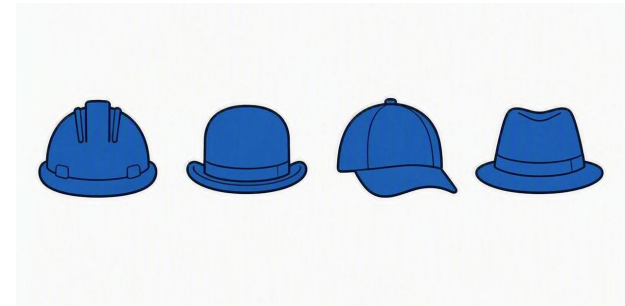
- Patent attorney work is unique in many ways – and many of us are not doing just one job
- In parallel, I have had: patent attorney work, business unit responsibility, people management, internal development

Different modes of thinking

- These require very different thinking: deep focus, quick reactions, strategic decisions, creative and system work

The real cost is switching

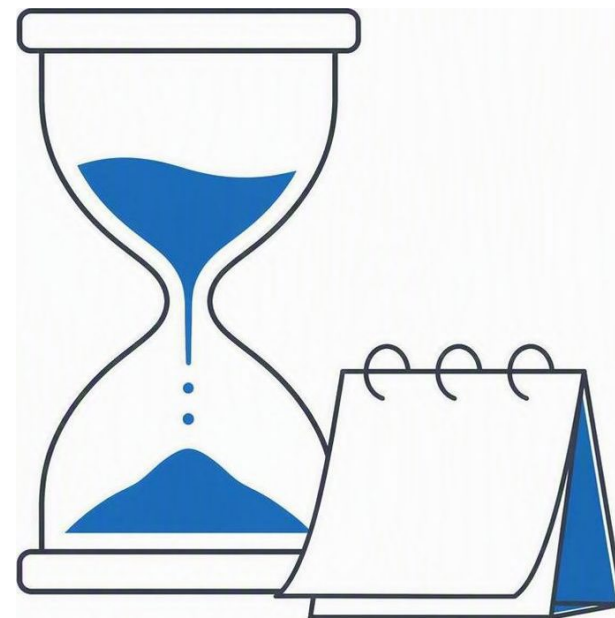
- The issue is not only lack of time, but the constant switching between modes
- Managing time is often about managing transitions





The Nature of Deadlines in Patent Work

- In other fields: software delays are common, delivery delays lead to penalties
- In patent work: missing a deadline may lead to an irreversible loss of rights
- This creates high pressure and constant awareness of risk
- Time management here is closely linked to risk management





Saying No Is Difficult

It is difficult to say no

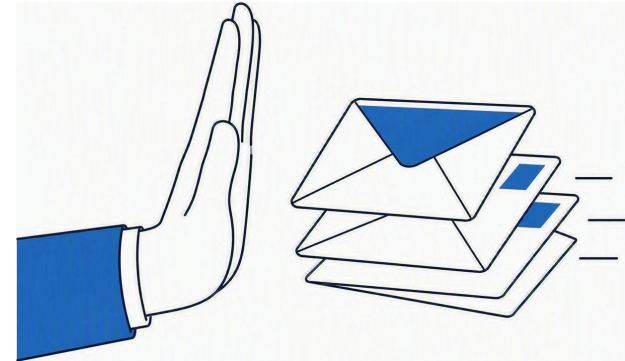
- Work can go to competitors, and future work may follow
- Typical pattern: accept everything, become overloaded, deliver under pressure

Work arrives in waves

- At the same time: sales cycles are long, work arrives unpredictably and in waves
- You are expected to sell even when capacity is limited

Our own share of it

- Part of the time pressure is created by our own decisions





Human Behaviour

Optimism about time

- Many of us may leave things quite late – by choice, because it is practical for the task, or because of workload
- This leads to underestimation and compressed schedules

But pressure can work

- At the same time, short and intensive work periods can be very effective

Work with your pattern

- It helps to recognise your own pattern and work with it, not against it





The Other Calendar

A second, invisible schedule

- Professional time is only part of the picture – there is a second, largely invisible schedule
- Many women I know carry not only the planning at home – the mental load of remembering and anticipating – but also a large share of the practical work of running a household and a family

Two sets of deadlines

- Care responsibilities rarely follow office hours – children, illness, ageing parents
- Deadlines are non-negotiable in both directions, and the two calendars collide

What would actually help

- Constant availability reads as commitment, which makes saying no harder
- Flexibility helps only if it is genuinely shared



What I Have Tried

Tools and ways of dividing work

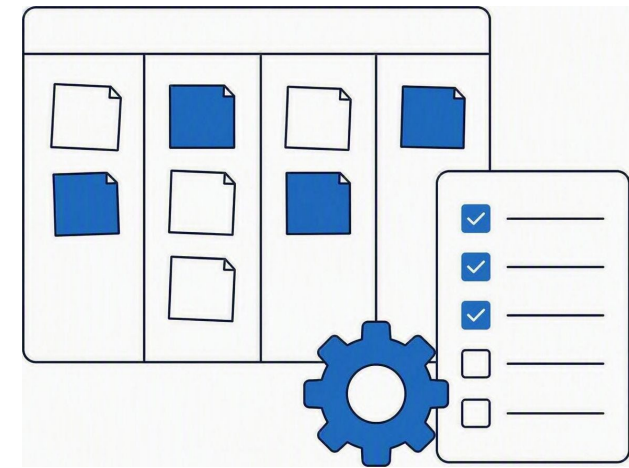
- Tools and approaches: to-do lists, kanban boards, Excel tracking, ERP systems
- Different ways of dividing work: attorney vs. paralegals and specialists
- Automation and AI

What did not work

- Ideas that did not work well – for example, zero email
 - The most important work does not come via email anyway

The conclusion

- No single tool solves the problem





What I Do Now

Making capacity visible

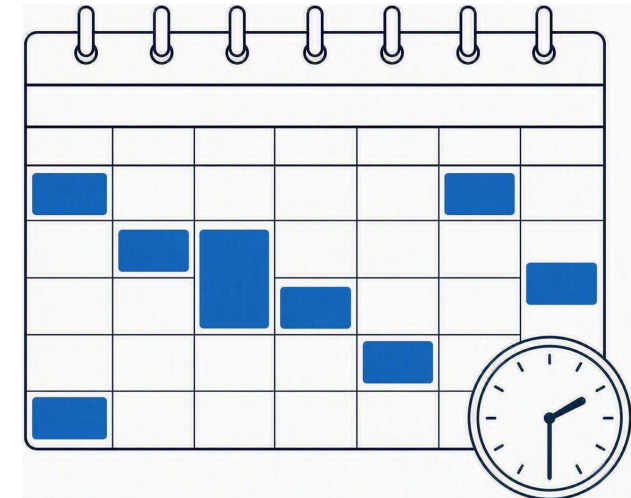
- Calendar as the main tool: blocking time and making capacity visible
- ERP as the overview of the client workload

Support and shared work

- Using AI to support drafting and analysis where allowed by clients, and to reduce repetitive work
- Involving junior attorneys more – working together and building their experience
 - This is also a long-term investment in delegation

Being realistic

- Trying to say no earlier, and to be more realistic about capacity





A More Honest Observation

- Sometimes it feels easier to stretch, take on more, and just get things done, rather than constantly prioritising and negotiating
- There is also a personal preference for being busy
- “There is no perfect solution – but understanding the nature of the work makes better decisions possible.”





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www.ficpi.org



Alice Maudret

Avocation





1 . BUILD A FRAME OR YOU'LL WORK BY DEMAND

Without a clear frame, your workday is organized by whoever needs you most.

- Define working hours
- Define response times
- Define what constitutes an emergency
- Define when clients can access you
- Protect time where nobody can ask anything from you

The psychological difficulty: tolerating that someone may want something from you and not immediately responding.

Your availability should be a decision, not a reflex.



2. STOP SELLING YOUR TIME

Billable hours create a structural problem: more revenue requires more of you.

As your expertise increases, your business should progressively capture the value of what you know, not only the hours you personally deliver.

- Packages
- Retainers
- Intellectual property
- Group delivery
- Products / programs
- Systems other people can execute



2. STOP SELLING YOUR TIME

The psychological difficulty: trusting that your value exists even when you are not personally performing the work.

For an expert, “they pay for me” can become both flattering and imprisoning.



3. A CLEAR POSITIONING PROTECTS YOUR TIME

If you can help everyone, every request deserves consideration.

Every prospect becomes a decision.

Every opportunity requires evaluation.

Every custom request becomes potentially reasonable.

A clear positioning decides in advance:

- who you serve
- what problems you solve
- what you want to be known for
- what belongs in your business
- what doesn't



3. A CLEAR POSITIONING PROTECTS YOUR TIME

The psychological difficulty: accepting the loss of possibilities.

Experts often resist positioning because their competence is broader than their positioning should be.

Capability is not direction.



4. STOP SAYING YES TO EVERY GOOD CLIENT

Not every person you can help should become your client.

The wrong client costs more than the hours on the invoice:

- extra communication
- emotional bandwidth
- exceptions
- customization
- context switching
- work you don't want more of



4. STOP SAYING YES TO EVERY GOOD CLIENT

The psychological difficulty: saying no to money, being wanted, and the satisfaction of being useful.

A good client isn't simply someone willing to pay you.

A good client makes your business better.



5. BUILD A SYSTEM THAT NEEDS YOU LESS

Experts often solve delegation problems by becoming more efficient themselves.

That works, until it doesn't.

Ask:

- What actually requires my expertise?
- What am I still doing because I'm good at it?
- What could become a process?
- What could someone else own completely?
- What am I repeating that should become an asset?



5. BUILD A SYSTEM THAT NEEDS YOU LESS

The psychological difficulty: giving up control, accepting that someone may do it differently, and separating quality from personal involvement.

The goal isn't to become faster at carrying your business.

It's to build a business you don't have to carry.



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