

Unlocking Time With AI

How to become multipliers as we count down

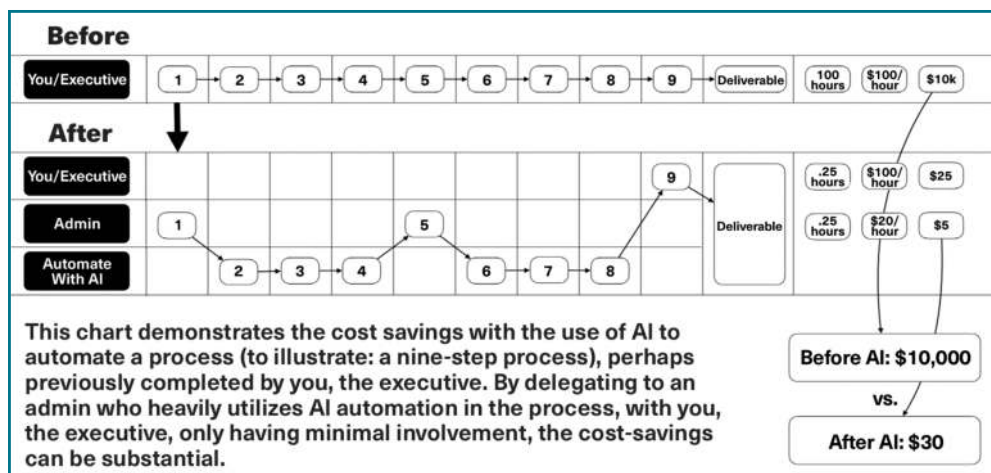
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“**D**ude, time is disappearing,” my brother said, shaking his head. This was after I told him it had been 15 years since our dad passed away. In recent years, more and more vendors and clients are reiterating the same message: Time is speeding by at a frequency we cannot catch.

Dear Reader: It is September. What happened to January? We are already gearing up for the end of the year, strategizing for 2025, and planning next year’s seminars and meetings — and most of us haven’t even started Christmas shopping yet. It is mind boggling to think it was only yesterday (and I may be aging myself here) that we were worried about Y2K’s impacts on our businesses.

This month would have been my dad’s birthday. In fact, the day of the “Leveraging AI for Enhanced Business Efficiency & Growth” panel discussion at BTA’s Sept. 24-25 Gateway to Success event in San Antonio, Texas (of which I’m honored to be a panelist; visit www.bta.org/BTASanAntonio for details), falls on what would have been his 101st birthday. On this day 36 years ago, I rode in the car with him and asked how it felt to be 65. His response was profound: “It’s different. I’m counting down, not up.” Here I was, 22 years old, building my career and planning what I wanted to do. Time was on my side and the future was all I could picture.

He continued, “I may have another 20 years left if God permits.” His answer shook me out of my Generation X mindset and propelled me into his point of view. Today, I sit across from clients, employees and friends and I see the same attitude, but the picture differs slightly from what I thought it would be. It is not a bad difference; it just changed because the world changed. While trying to understand why time is racing, I thought I would use some of



the gifts of today’s world and ask ChatGPT: “Why does time seem to fly by so quickly?”

The bot brains at ChatGPT analyzed my question and responded matter-of-factly with the following three factors. The third is where I will focus this article.

Psychological Factors

(1) Routine and Repetition — As people age, their lives often become more routine. Routine experiences create fewer unique memories, making time seem to pass more quickly. We encounter more novel experiences when we are younger, making time feel like it moves more slowly because the brain encodes more detailed memories.

(2) Proportional Time Theory — This theory suggests that each year becomes a smaller fraction of our total life span as we age. For a 10-year-old, one year is 10% of his (or her) life. But for a 50-year-old, it is only 2%. This makes each year feel shorter relative to his entire life.

(3) Increased Responsibilities — Adults often have more responsibilities and tasks to manage, leading to a feeling of being constantly busy. This busyness can make time feel like it is passing more quickly because of less downtime.

Thanks, ChatGPT. These factors answer a few questions

and help frame how businesses view time and the future. Now, bear with me, I am going to get a bit philosophical here.

The first factor, routine and repetition, is why we need to seek change in our work, not just brace for change. We need to step out, look for new and innovative ways, and forget the “we’ve-always-done-it-this-way” mindset. Break the routine. If nothing else, you can slow the feeling of time slipping away.

Proportional time theory addresses generations in the workplace. Your view of what is happening right now is shaped by the placement of your generation in the workplace; your proportional view of the percentage of the whole life picture. As my father said: “I’m counting down.” If you are on the upside of your career, find a mentor and learn from him. If you are on the other side, become a mentor and share what you have learned in your career and allow your mentee to leverage your knowledge. Your invaluable experience will lift the whole company.

The last, increased responsibilities, is the most responsible (no pun intended) factor for time’s turbo boost. We are all hamsters on the wheel of information and technology. We are crushed by our obligations and searching for key people with the required capabilities to lessen our loads, but that is compounded by low unemployment rates. We are told to be better managers of our time. Would that help? Or is there just too much that needs to be done?

As members of the Business Technology Association (BTA), I believe we can address increased responsibilities and their impact on ourselves, our clients and our employees by providing a balanced work life with the technology and resources we are privileged to have in our industry.

I highly recommend Rory Vaden’s book, “Procrastinate on Purpose.” It is a must-read, and I am applying his Focus Funnel framework along with how my company, Smart Technologies, is using the Smart Path platform with Simple Academy’s AI Transformation Method (AITC).

The Problem

Consider some common ideas we have heard: We need to manage our time, plan it or prioritize it. If you buy into this mindset, you might think you are in control of time. Focusing on time management may seem helpful, but the truth is, we cannot actually manage time. Time is God’s creation, and He gives each of us 168 hours per week, without bias. He ultimately determines how many hours and days we have left. What we can control is how we choose to spend that time.

The challenge is that our responsibilities have grown. We try to prioritize and organize everything, but there is simply too much to fit into the 168 hours we have. It is like trying to

Ask yourself if a task is necessary. If it does not align with your long-term goals or priorities, eliminate it. Removing unnecessary tasks frees up time ...

fit eight ounces of water into a jar that only holds six.

I want to show you how we can become multipliers of time. Let’s begin by shifting our perspective and thinking of time as something we spend. Now, let’s approach time the same way we approach money. How do we multiply money? How do we spend it? Imagine we have \$168 each week and need to create a budget. This exercise can help us see how important it is

to make wise choices with our time, just like with our money. Consider these key questions we would ask ourselves when putting together a budget.

Budgeting: What Must I Spend Money On?

Just as we all have essential expenses like rent or mortgage payments, everyone has basic financial needs. But we can ask ourselves what we really need to spend money on.

■ **Eliminate:** Ask yourself, “What can I stop spending money on?” Identify the things you can live without and cut unnecessary spending.

■ **Cut Costs:** Ask, “How can I reduce or lower my expenses?” Consider using coupons, shopping around for better prices or finding ways to save on recurring costs.

■ **Multiplying Money:** Ask, “How do I make my money work for me?” Think about investing instead of just spending. “The Rule of 72” tells us how long it takes to double our money based on a fixed annual rate of return. When we invest wisely, we aim for a solid return on investment (ROI).

Let us shift back to time. We all get 168 hours a week, just like we imagined with dollars. Replace money with hours and think about how we spend it. Instead of ROI when it comes to time, we will focus on return on time (ROT). Below is the Focus Funnel framework (paraphrased) that will help us become multipliers of time.

The Focus Funnel Framework

■ **Eliminate:** Ask yourself if a task is necessary. If it does not align with your long-term goals or priorities, eliminate it. Removing unnecessary tasks frees up time for more important activities.

■ **Automate:** Determine whether a task or a step within a task can be automated using artificial intelligence (AI). By investing time in setting up systems, software or processes that handle repetitive tasks, you save time in the long run. This is an example of ROT, where the time you invest now pays off by multiplying your available time later.

Consider this: If a task takes 20 minutes a day and you automate it using AI, it might take an hour and 33 minutes to set up. Within four days, you will start gaining 20 minutes

every day. Over one year, this will add up to nearly 11 workdays saved. Now, calculate the impact: nearly 11 workdays (or 86.66 hours) multiplied by an hourly rate of \$20 is approximately \$1,733 saved. And that is for just one employee. Multiply that by the number of employees performing the same task and the savings grow exponentially.

■ **Delegate:** Identify tasks or a step in the task that can be delegated to others (see the chart on page 16). This involves finding the right people who can take on tasks that do not require your specific expertise, allowing you to focus on high-priority activities. You may automate and delegate steps in the task because you simplify parts of it.

■ **Procrastinate on Purpose:** This is about consciously deciding to delay tasks that do not need immediate attention. By procrastinating on purpose, you focus on more critical tasks first and return to less urgent ones later. Read Vaden's book.

■ **Concentrate:** For tasks that only you can do and that need to be done now, focus and concentrate fully until they are completed. This involves prioritizing these tasks and dedicating uninterrupted time to them, which may be the last step in the process.

The Power of Ideas

In recent years, we have discovered that AI transformation has the power to take automation to an entirely new level. Initially, we focused on helping businesses streamline processes across departments, locations and teams. Today, AI allows us to go deeper by automating specific roles, responsibilities and tasks. Employees can quickly identify what to automate because they understand their jobs best. AI empowers everyone to be a programmer, unlocking new capabilities. We focus on training how AI works and how to apply it so employees can use it to become multipliers of time.

We are all locked into the same 168 hours each week ... What do you want to invest in? Where can you multiply it? And then ... how do you want to spend it?

At Smart Technologies, one of our pillars is "People and Organization Development." The Smart Path AI training platform equips employees to harness AI, showing them how it can enhance their roles. The results are significant — AI transformations save our clients both time and thousands of dollars. What is particularly remarkable is how fast these changes take effect — often from day one.

Many companies approach AI with a focus on cross-departmental automation, which can be challenging due to the complexity of the scope and individual roles. Business process automation (BPA) requires extensive planning and not every company has the bandwidth to dedicate to such efforts. That is where AI transformation is a game changer. Smart Technologies' mission is to simplify business. By taking a straightforward approach, we have seen a profound positive impact on our clients and ourselves.

Smart Technologies' vision is to glorify God by fulfilling every good purpose. Our clients are witnessing results that are 100 times more effective, with a noticeable improvement in employee satisfaction and engagement.

Most of us are counting down. Fifteen years have passed since my dad has been on this side of eternity and 36 years have passed since I asked him the question that forever changed my perspective on time. We are all locked into the same 168 hours each week. Only God knows the hour He calls us home. What do you want to invest in? Where can you multiply it? And then, most importantly, how do you want to spend it? ■

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