

Hey! What's New? 2026-13

The Most Effective Executives Don't Manage Time, They Command It

In an article in Chief Executive, Bill Korman writes that, "as a time-ownership expert who works with senior executives, and as a military veteran who learned time discipline in environments where misused minutes carried real consequences, I've seen a consistent pattern: Most leaders believe they are managing time. In reality, they are being managed by it."

He then goes on to explain how leaders can shift from time management to time ownership.

Time management asks a tactical question: How do I fit everything in? On the other hand, time ownership asks a leadership question: Who must I be to decide what belongs?

That shift, says Korman, "bypasses tactics and goes straight to identity, which is the most powerful driver of behavior. When leaders begin to see themselves as owners of time rather than stewards of demands, something subtle but profound happens:

- Meetings no longer feel automatically legitimate.
- Availability stops being confused with leadership.
- "No" becomes strategic, not personal."

This is not mindset fluff, he says. "It is neurological recalibration. Once identity changes, systems start working effortlessly instead of requiring constant discipline."

One CEO he worked with led a fast-growing services firm and routinely logged 80+ hour weeks. His calendar was packed wall-to-wall with internal meetings, client escalations and "quick check-ins." Strategy was something he handled "when things slowed down." Of course, they never did. Instead of adding productivity tools, he made one identity-level decision: Mondays were no longer operational.

Every Monday morning, writes Korman, "was blocked for things like strategic thinking, leadership development and reviewing only decisions that required his judgment. The discomfort was real at first, but within six weeks, his team escalated fewer issues, decisions improved because they were made proactively and his week felt much lighter because output increased. He didn't manage time better. He changed the rules his organization operated under."

Korman suggests three strategies that executives can apply immediately:

1. Reframe time as an asset, not a resource: "Your subconscious understands assets versus expenses intuitively. When time is treated as something to 'spend,' it disappears. When time is treated as an asset, decisions change automatically. Before committing, high-performing leaders ask: Will this appreciate who I'm becoming as a leader or depreciate it? This single filter replaces guilt with clarity. You do not need more willpower. You do need a better valuation model."

2. Build the calendar around leadership, not logistics: "Most executives allow their calendar to be shaped last, after everyone else's needs are accounted for. Time owners reverse the sequence. They anchor the week with things like strategic thinking, decision-making windows, leadership presence, energy renewal and relationship investment. Only after those anchors exist

does the rest of the calendar get filled. This mirrors military planning, where it's mission first, movement second. When leaders calendar this way, urgency loses its grip. Presence improves. Paradoxically, responsiveness increases because clarity replaces chaos."

3. Use MVPs to eliminate decision fatigue: "Executives drown not in workload, but in decisions. The brain seeks rules. When rules are vague, stress dominates. But when the rules are clear, speed emerges. Time owners operate with explicit MVPs: Morals, Values and Principles that act as neurological shortcuts."

For example, says Korman:

- If it doesn't require my judgment, it doesn't require my presence.
- No agenda means no meeting.
- Energy is a leadership responsibility, not a personal indulgence.

When MVPs are clear, he notes, "boundaries feel natural, focus deepens, burnout is reduced and decisions resolve themselves. This is not rigidity. It is leadership clarity."

He adds that "most executives already know they should delegate more, protect thinking time and reduce unnecessary meetings. Information is not the missing ingredient. Environment is. Executives reclaim time fastest when they step outside reactive environments and surround themselves with leaders who operate by the same rules. At this level, leadership isn't about learning more, but instead is about installing systems that hold under pressure."

Owning time isn't about working less, Korman concludes. "It's about leading better. When your calendar reflects who you are instead of who is pulling at you, you lead with clarity, authority and intention. Best of all, the organization feels it immediately."

For more read [The Most Effective Executives Don't Manage Time, They Command It.](#)