



## **This Is Your Life Podcast**

Episode 10: "How to Shave 10 Hours Off Your Workweek"

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Hello and welcome to another episode of *This Is Your Life*. My name is Michael Hyatt, and this is the podcast dedicated to intentional leadership. My goal is to help you live with more passion, work with greater focus, and lead with extraordinary influence.

Last week on this podcast we talked about work-life balance, or as I reframed it in that episode, priority management. Evidently this is a problem for a lot of people because I got more response to that podcast, more downloads, and more engagement around that podcast than anything I've done in the first nine episodes.

This week I'd like to press it a little bit further, kind of pick up where we left off, and make this really practical about how to create more margin in your life. Specifically I want to talk about how to shave 10 hours off your workweek.

Now I wrote a blog post on that same topic and with that same title a couple of years ago, and it proved to be at the time the most popular blog post I'd ever written. In fact, it led to several speaking engagements, and I've spoken around the country as recently as two weeks ago. I've given this same talk to the Department of the Navy, a lot of banking organizations and real estate organizations and others about this topic because everyone faces this challenge of getting more margin to do the things that matter the most. Life just seems to be coming at us faster than we can process it.

In fact, when I speak on this topic, I show this really, really cute clip from *I Love Lucy*. It's called "Let Her Roll." In this episode Lucy and Ethel have this factory job, and evidently they haven't been doing too well because the supervisor is threatening to fire them, giving them kind of the last chance to be able to wrap these chocolates that are coming off the conveyer belt and packaging them as they come off the conveyer belt. Their challenge is to keep up with it.

Well at first the conveyer belt is pretty slow. It's a pretty manageable job, so they even say to one another, "Hey, this isn't too bad." But then the supervisor comes in to check on them, and she says, "Hey, you guys are doing great. Speed her up!" So the conveyer belt doubles in speed. Now the chocolates are flying down that conveyer belt, and Lucy and Ethel can't keep up. So they begin stuffing the chocolates in their shirts, in their hats, in their mouths, and any place else they can. Then the supervisor comes in and thinks they're still doing a terrific job so asks them to speed it up again.

Isn't it just like that in life? You do a great job at work, and how do you get rewarded? You get even more responsibility. You get more work. And so it goes. For most of us it feels like life is a conveyer belt.

I've been feeling this way frankly in my own life. My new book just came out which I'll tell you about at the end of the program. So that's required a lot of extra work. I have my fourth daughter who is about to get married. She's getting married at the end of May. So that's requiring some extra effort and some extra work, mostly on Gail's part, but sort of by proxy it also impacts me.

So I'm having to apply this same stuff. I'm having to take what I learned in the past and apply it to myself again. It's like I said last week. Work-life balance is not a problem to solve, and it's certainly not one you're going to get solved and then never have to address again. Instead, it's a tension you have to manage. It's something that, at least for me, I have to keep revisiting. Fortunately, I know some of the strategies and I know where to go, but it's something I have to keep applying.

So I'm just going to preach to myself here the rest of this podcast, and you can listen in if you want. I think these strategies will be helpful to you. I'm hoping they're going to be helpful to me as I kind of retool and try to carve out again some margin in my own life.

So here are the seven strategies I want to share with you.

1. **Limit your time online.** How often we get caught just engaged in mindless surfing where you're reading a blog post or you're reading a news article on the web. You see an interesting link or some software you want to try. You click on that, and pretty soon you're lost. It's like going down a rabbit hole. You're lost seven levels deep, and you don't even know how you got there. You don't even know where you started or how you ended up there.

All of us, if we're going to get serious work done and get our priorities knocked out day by day, we have to turn off the emails and the other pings when we're trying to focus and get important priorities done. We have to in essence sort of quarantine these kinds of activities so they don't distract us and keep us from doing the most important things.

I think it's helpful to use technology to manage technology. I want to share with you a couple of tools I've found helpful in the past and I'm using again. One of them is called *Anti-Social software*. It's a cute little name. It's Mac only, but it's [anti-social.cc](http://anti-social.cc). You can go to that website and download it.

It shuts off the social parts of the web for a designated period of time. So you enter in the number of minutes you want to be cut off from Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and all the rest. It doesn't cut you off from the parts of the Web you may need to access, like for me I still have to do research on the Web, but I don't need to do Twitter. I don't need to do Facebook. I don't need to do my email. So it gives you the option of turning off email or not turning off email when you do that.

For me I set it, for example, to 70 minutes. Then I turn it on and I'm stuck. I can't access the social stuff. I can't get distracted. I have to focus on the next priority, which is awesome. The only way I can get access to those social parts of the web is to completely reboot my computer, which is a hassle, and I won't do it so I stay focused and get done what I need to do.

Another piece of software you might want to try is called [freedomsoftware@macfreedom.com](mailto:freedomsoftware@macfreedom.com). This is Mac or PC. Another one that is only PC is called [coldturkeysoftware@getcoldturkey.com](mailto:coldturkeysoftware@getcoldturkey.com). I have links in the show notes so you can flip to those later. Use technology to manage technology.

Strategy number one: limit your time online.

**2. Plan your day in advance.** This is so helpful. This has been one of the most helpful things to me. I'm not saying it's easy, but it goes so much easier when I have a plan for the day rather than just waking up and sort of getting in that reactive mode where you're responding to the tennis balls that are coming over the net. Sometimes you just feel like you're being pummeled with tennis balls.

I find it helps when I do it the night before, right before I close up shop for the day, to actually get my list and to begin to identify the things I want to tackle the next day. So here is what I do. I scan my list in my task manager, and then I identify five to seven actions items I want to accomplish the next day.

You have to be careful here because if you're like me, your eyes are too big for your stomach. That's how my parents used to say it when I would load up my plate with too much food, more food than I could eat. The same thing is true here. It's easy to be too ambitious, and for me it's easy to think I can accomplish more than I can actually accomplish. So identify five to seven. Don't get more than that. You have to allow space to react to the things that come in that you didn't plan for. But identify five to seven actions items.

Then prioritize your list. Now here is how I do that. It's really important I think to understand not every task is created equal. There are a lot of different kinds of tasks. They don't all have the same weight, and they shouldn't all have the same priority.

So imagine a 2 x 2 grid so you end up with four different boxes. The horizontal or x-axis represents urgency. Some tasks are really urgent; some of them are not urgent. Then the vertical or the y-axis represents importance. Some tasks are important, and some tasks are not so important. So every task you consider fits into one of the four quadrants. So I just want to take these one at a time. As you consider your task list, categorize these.

*A. Quadrant one: those tasks that are urgent and important.* Let me give you some examples. The nurse calls from school and says your child is sick, or your boss tells you to stop what you're doing and work on a certain project. If you value your boss and if you value your job, you're going to stop and do that because not only is it urgent, but it's important. At least it's important to your boss and therefore should be important to you. Or suddenly you feel like an elephant is sitting on your chest because

maybe you're having a heart attack. That's an urgent and important task that takes precedence over everything else.

The strategy in dealing with urgent and important tasks is to do them now if you possibly can. What else are you going to do? These are not tasks that get better with time. You have to address them. So do them now if you possibly can. That's quadrant one.

*B. Quadrant two: the important but not urgent tasks.* These are so important. These are like working on the annual budget, getting your annual physical, going out for a walk or a run in the morning, or taking your spouse or one of your children to dinner and spending quality time with them. These items aren't urgent, but they are *so* important.

The secret here, the strategy, is to schedule time on your calendar to do these tasks. I'm firmly convinced that what gets scheduled gets done. If it doesn't make it on to my calendar, there is a good chance it's going to be hijacked by something else in the moment. So quadrant two, important but not urgent.

*C. Quadrant three: urgent but not important.* These are the tasks that so often fill up our days. It's a coworker's last minute request, an unsolicited phone call from a salesperson, or a request from someone you barely know. The strategy here is to politely decline or to delegate these tasks to someone whose job it is to address these tasks. If they're not your tasks, if they're merely urgent but not important, you have to get them off your list if you're going to have any chance of building margin into your life.

*D. Quadrant four: neither urgent nor important.* I would like to think these don't fill up my day, but often they do. Examples of this would be checking your Facebook account or your Twitter account, reading the newspaper, or just surfing the Internet.

The strategy here is stop doing the tasks. Become more intentional. I'm all for social media. I've just written a book that in large part deals with social media. So I'm not opposed to it at all, but it has to be intentional. There has to be a reason. It has to fit into your goals because just wasting time or distracting yourself is not helpful, especially if you're trying to get 10 hours of your week back so you can create more margin in your life.

So that second strategy in shaving 10 hours off your workweek is to plan your day in advance. Create a list, prioritize it, and do it the day before you're going to tackle it.

**3. Touch emails once and only once.** Your goal should be "Inbox: 0" every day. Now honestly I don't do it every day. I do it almost every day, and I always keep my emails under 100. But I have met people who have thousands of emails in their inbox, hundreds of them sometimes, sometimes more than 1,000 that are unread. This is not helpful. It's not going to be helpful to your career. It's not going to be helpful to you building your own brand and your reputation. You have to find a way to deal with your inbox.

The key is not to get bogged down, to keep moving, to deal with each email message once and only once. The way you do this is to start by asking, *Is this email actionable? Does somebody expect me to do something with this email, or is it asking me to do something?* If no, there are two possibilities; if yes, there are three possibilities. So let me cover these.

If the answer is *no* to the question, "Is this email actionable?" then you have two options. Number one, *delete it*. Yes, there is a delete key, and my own philosophy is if it's really important, somebody else somewhere in the world has a copy.

The second thing you can do with it if the answer is *no* to the question, "Is this email actionable?" is you can *file it*. When in doubt file it because you can always get back to it, and it really doesn't take up a lot of space, particularly with all the space that's made available to us in systems like Gmail today, which is where I have all my email accounts. I just go ahead and file it.

Here is what's important: I use one and only one folder. It's called *Processed Email*. The reason I do this is because it really keeps me from procrastinating. If you have to make the decision about, "Where am I going to file this? Like this is about Project X from Client Y, do I file it in Project X? Or do I file it under Client Y? What if it's about two projects? Do I make a copy and put a copy in each folder?" It can become very complex very quickly.

So instead of that, I just put it all in one folder, and then I let the software system do the searching when I need to find that message. I promise you I can get back to almost any message in a matter of seconds. It takes less time than me having to remember what folder I filed it in. So if the answer is *no* to the question, "Is this email actionable?" then there are two responses: delete it or file it.

If the answer to the question is *yes*, you have three options. *You can do it*. Here is where I use David Allen's two-minute rule. David Allen is the author of *Getting Things Done*, a great book you must read if you haven't read it. But just go ahead and do it if you can do it in less than two minutes. Why take the time to put it in your task list? You run the risk of it getting lost, you're not getting back to it, or you're not being as responsive as you'd like to be. So just go ahead and do it.

The second option is to *defer it*. It may need to get done, but it doesn't need to get done now. So go ahead and put it on your calendar, create a reminder, something, but defer the action till a later time. But get it out of your email inbox, by the way, and put it in processed email once you have it on a calendar or a task list.

The third option is to *delegate it*. Just delegate it. By the way, here I am preaching to myself. You're not always the best person to handle every task. You probably have other people if they don't work for you, and they're competent. They may be colleagues. This is their designated responsibility or maybe just their joy. You may not enjoy it and so you think, *Well nobody would like doing it*. But there are people in every possible kind of work who enjoy doing that work and are better equipped to deal with it. So just delegate it.

So that's the third strategy: Touch emails once and only once.

4. **Triage your calendar.** What do I mean by that? I mean you have to go into your calendar, and I have to do this myself right now, where I go in and I clear out all that stuff that when I scheduled it seemed important, but now that I'm right on it, I realize, *This is not that important.*

This really comes from a battlefield metaphor where medics would go into a situation, and they would see there are people who were dying who no matter what they do they can't save. Then there are people who are going to get better and survive no matter what they do, so those are people to be left alone. The people where they can really make a difference are the people who if they get medical attention will survive. In a battlefield situation, that's where the medics focus their attention.

The same thing on your calendar. There are some issues, some calendared events that whether you go or don't go, it's not going to make a difference. So where can you add value? A couple of things you can do here.

A. *Cancel standing meetings that no longer add value.* You know what I'm talking about. It's those meetings that sounded good when you put them on your calendar. You thought this would be great to have this regular meeting, but it's kind of outlived its usefulness. So go ahead and kill it. I think killing things on a regular basis when it comes to your calendar is a great practice. In fact, my friend Bob Goff has a practice he calls *Quit Thursdays* where he quits something every Thursday.

B. *Challenge meetings others have scheduled if you no longer believe they add value.* This takes some grace. It may take some courage, particularly to your boss, but sometimes you have to speak the unspeakable, to ask the question nobody else is willing to ask but everybody is kind of in agreement on, that the meeting doesn't add value. This is I think a prerequisite to and a mark of leadership if you can be courageous to just say, again graciously, "I wonder if this meeting has outlived its usefulness. Can we go ahead and cancel it?"

C. *Consider or suggest alternatives to meetings.* A meeting is not always the best option for dealing with a situation. I'll tell you something. This happens in corporate America. I've seen it up close and personal where people just don't have the courage to make the decision on their own. So rather than make the tough call, make the decision they need to make, they call a meeting and they try to diffuse the responsibility so they don't have to make the tough call. If you sense that's happening either with the people who report to you or even with your colleagues, you need to challenge it.

D. *Be fully present in the meetings you do attend so you add value.* This is a really important practice. Don't be looking at your smartphone. Don't be looking at your computer. This is one of the things that makes meetings drag on and on and on is because the people who are in attendance aren't really there. You've been in those meetings. I've been in them, too.

So that's the fourth strategy: triage your calendar.

5. **Schedule time in the "alone zone."** Now the "alone zone" is a phrase that was coined by Jason Fried and David Hansson in their excellent book *Rework*. I have a link to it in the show notes. If you haven't read this book, you will really enjoy it. It really challenges the sacred cows in corporate America and in the way we do work. I found it immensely refreshing.

One of the things they talk about is actually putting on your calendar appointments with yourself, and if possible this should be daily. It can't always happen daily, but this has a couple of advantages. For one thing, it shows this time as busy when others in your organization check your availability. The other advantage is it gives you a ready-made excuse when someone makes a meeting request. Then you can practice the 10 magic words: "I'm sorry, but I have another commitment at that time."

I love using that phrase, and it's true. You do have a commitment. You either have a commitment to a project, you have a commitment to yourself, or you have a commitment to a higher priority. You can legitimately say, "I'm sorry, but I have another commitment at that time." What does the other person do? They try to find another time to meet with you because that time is already committed.

So the fifth strategy is to schedule time in the alone zone.

6. **Use batch processing.** This has been particularly helpful to me this year as I've launched out on my own and kind of rebuilt this second career for myself. Now what do I mean by that? Well batch processing is the grouping of similar tasks that require similar resources and doing them sequentially one after another.

The whole notion of multitasking is a myth. Study after study has shown that multitasking decreases productivity and dramatically drains you of creativity. There was an article I read recently by Peter Bregman in the *Harvard Business Review*. It was called "How (and Why) to Stop Multitasking." I have a link in the show notes so you can go read it later.

Basically he notes that our productivity goes down by 40 percent when we attempt to focus on several things at once. Let me say that again. Our productivity goes down by 40 percent when we attempt to focus on several things at once. He notes we're not really multitasking; instead we're rapidly switching from one task to another and interrupting our workflow or our productivity.

So instead we need to focus by batching. Here is one way to do it. Think back over your typical workweek. Identify those categories of similar activities like phone calls, meetings, sales calls, or in my case writing or prep time. Then do these all at one time so you kind of get into the groove, whether it's making phone calls or writing blog posts (for me), and then do them all at one time.

So right now on Mondays I have that whole day blocked out to do nothing but write blog posts. I got this idea from my friend Dan Miller who is doing this at 48days.net for his blog posts. He does them all in one day, and I thought, *Wow, why haven't I thought of that before?*

I also only take meetings on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday afternoons because I don't want meetings interrupting the rest of my workflow during the rest of the week. So I kind of quarantine them all into these blocks on these three afternoons, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Then I return phone calls at 1:00 and at 5:00.

Again, I'm not legalistic about any of these things. If something comes up... Like I'll be at a conference on Monday of this next week, and I won't be able to do my blog posts on Monday. So I have to figure out another time to get them done. But it at least provides a rough guideline that helps me batch these similar activities.

So that's strategy number six: use batch processing to reclaim your time.

**7. Use email templates to say no.** Honestly, this is probably the biggest timesaver of all. This will shave hours off your month and probably hours off your week if you practice it. Andy Stanley said this, and I think it really resonated with me: "The more successful you become, the more inaccessible you must be." Let me say it again. "The more successful you become, the more inaccessible you must be."

Now what do I mean by that? I mean that as you become successful, there are going to be more and more demands. You cannot give the same attention, and you cannot have the same availability you used to have. There are just not enough hours in the day. If you're like me, you have difficulty saying no. I'm basically a people pleaser. I hate to say no to people. I like to comply with their requests. I like to be helpful if I possibly can.

So I realized this was a problem a couple of years ago, and I had to figure out a way to say no in a way that honored the person making the request and yet kept me free to work on what matters most. So I at the time identified 11 common requests. These requests were coming in week after week, and I would spend endless hours just agonizing over how I could say no and how I could respond to them.

These were people wanting to meet with me about a job. I wasn't the hiring manager for all these jobs. I really couldn't help them. I could give them a sympathetic ear and give them the illusion of forward motion, but I really couldn't help them. This was a waste of my time.

Or unpublished authors wanting me to read their book proposal. As a publisher, that can eat up hours of your time, as well. It's somebody's job, but it wasn't my job as the publisher and certainly not as the CEO of Thomas Nelson. Then business people wanting to pick my brain. That was always challenging too because again, I wanted to be helpful. I didn't want to say no. Or vendors requesting an appointment to pitch their product.

So here is what I did. I came up with a very thoughtful, canned response in each case where I was gracious. I didn't make them feel badly for asking the question, but I definitively said no to their request, which freed me up again to stay focused on the things that matter most. So I wrote out this canned response to each of these 11 common requests, and then I saved each response as an email signature, which I could invoke at will.



Now you may think the email signature in your email program is just for putting a bona fide signature at the end of your email. Did you know you could put almost any boilerplate text in one of those signatures and name it accordingly? So I have one, for example, that says, "Response to Someone Requesting a Job." I just pull out that template. Usually I modify it or warm it up at the front end to make it a little bit more personal, but it makes it very easy.

Now Tricia, my assistant, has all these templates. In fact, we've grown these templates to now where we have over 20 of them I think. But every request starts with this canned response that again is gracious and honoring to them but definitively says no. It has been a huge help to me to use this seventh strategy.

So seven strategies. My premise is you can get 10 hours of your week back if you use these consistently. What if I'm only half right? What if it's only five hours a week? What could you do with your life if you had more margin? What kind of progress could you make on those Quadrant 2 categories that are important but not urgent? I think you could make all kinds of progress. I know I can, so I'm going to take my own medicine, go back through, and shave 10 hours out of my workweek.

So here is the question I have for this week. I hope you'll respond on the show notes. I have a place for comments there back at my blog at [MichaelHyatt.com](http://MichaelHyatt.com). The question for this week is, ***What other tips do you have for finding more margin in your life?***

Let's crowdsource this. I'd like to learn from you. My readers would like to learn from you. My listeners would like to learn from you. So if you have some tips for finding more margin in your life, please share them in the comments section of the post where you found this podcast.

With that, let's transition to some listener questions. I have four that have come in this week. The first one is from Jane Graham who is calling from West Michigan. Jane?

**Jane Graham:** Hi Michael, my name is Jane Graham. I'm calling from West Michigan. I have a question about my husband's job. He is a public high school principal. Aside from helping to guide a staff of 85 teachers and 1,500 students, he also has after-school responsibilities such as attending athletic events, school dances, open houses, parent-teacher conferences, and all of those things. It just seems like he cannot get away from his job. As you mentioned in last week's podcast, there are certain things that worry me about that. I'm just wondering how he can shave 10 hours off his workweek given the nature of his job. I'd love to hear your suggestions. Thanks!

**Michael Hyatt:** Jane, this is a great question. It's one I struggle with and one a lot of people who have worked for me in the past have struggled with. I think one of the things you have to do and your husband has to do is to acknowledge he is a finite resource. His time is not unlimited. There is a strict and finite resource he has available which is his time and certainly his energy. So I think that's number one.

The second thing is I think to go through all the things he is doing and prioritize them. Not all of them have equal weight. There may be expectations on the part of other people that they expect him to be at certain functions or certain activities he has to engage in, but he has to assess honestly and soberly where he adds the most value and then be ruthless about cutting out the other things.

You say, "Well yeah, but there are these expectations." I've had that too. I've had to cope with that too, and there have been times when I've had to sit down with a boss, sit down with a customer, sit down in my case as a publisher with authors, and just say, "Look, I want you to know I've come to the place where something has to give. Here is how we're going to handle this activity going forward, or here's what I'm going to focus on."

Particularly if he has a board or a supervisor, it's important to come to an understanding that he's going to give his time to certain activities but not to others. I think you just have to get some alignment on that. Otherwise, something is going to happen. Something has to give. That's not sustainable to keep going without it, so I think you have to almost force a crisis in essence to be able to address this and get the people who are around you to be able to recognize the problem for what it is. So thanks for your question.

The next one comes from Jen McDonough who is calling from Lindstrom, Minnesota.

**Jen McDonough:** Oh hi Michael, this is Jen McDonough from Lindstrom, Minnesota, author, motivational speaker, and blogger at [fieldofdebt.com](http://fieldofdebt.com). My question about work and time management is I'm phasing out of my corporate position in life and looking to go into the entrepreneurial world. I would love to use virtual assistants to the best way possible. I'm wondering how you do that at first while my time is very intentional and very focused where I spend it. I know setting up that relationship with the virtual assistants takes a little bit.

I'm wondering is it best to try to keep doing what I'm doing, or is it best to kind of focus in on that time and really work with someone to help with email management? I know you have your assistant help with that a little bit and just the different things. Is it worth investing your time in that at first? And again, what do you use your virtual assistant for? Thank you so much. Keep up the great work. We're all out here just learning from you and loving it. So thanks so much and have an awesome day.

**Michael Hyatt:** Thanks, Jen. Thanks for calling, and by the way Jen left another message where she gave me some great critique on my last podcast and some ideas about putting the announcements at the end of the show, which I've done. So Jen, thank you for that input. Very helpful to me.

With regard to virtual assistants, I am a huge believer in using a virtual assistant. I have one. Tricia is my virtual assistant. She is from [eaHELP.com](http://eaHELP.com). Again a link in the show notes to that. Man, she has transformed my life. She does everything. She books my travel. She handles my calendar. She screens all my email. She screens all my phone calls. It feels like she is working 24/7 for me, and I know she's not. She's that extraordinary. I just use her 15 hours a week, but that's sufficient for me right now.

I think if you're going to go to that next level, you have to figure out... *What are the things you and only you can do?* You have to get some help. A virtual assistant is a great way to do that because you don't have to take on a full-time team member. You can usually get a virtual assistant in blocks of time and use them more as your demands increase.

So yeah, I would absolutely get started. The great thing about it is on the eaHELP website, and I'm sure this is true for other companies, they help you make the best use of their virtual assistants. So it's a training program in essence on delegation and something I never received in the corporate world. So I feel like I'm a better manager just since I started with Tricia because she has trained me, and the company I use that she uses has trained me, as well. So that's been very helpful.

The next voicemail message came from Kurt Feldner in Columbus, Ohio. Take it away, Kurt.

**Kurt Feldner:** Hello Michael, this is Kurt Feldner from Columbus, Ohio. I have a question for you, and it is in regard to your subject of how to shave 10 hours off your workweek. What I'm wondering is if you would be able to address any possibility of crowdsourcing with regard to any responsibilities or duties during a typical week and perhaps how that might be able to save some time off of the normal workweek. Thank you very much. Have a great day.

**Michael Hyatt:** Thanks, Kurt. I do believe in crowdsourcing. I think it can be really helpful. I've only used it in a couple of limited situations, and hopefully some other people will have some ideas they can share in the comments in the show notes.

I've used it, for example, when I'm doing research on a writing project. I'll tweet out a question and then wait for the responses to come in. The thing I like about that is it's a more personalized form of search than just going to Google and hoping you come up with the right articles or the right research as you're writing. So I think I have some really smart people following me, and they can be very helpful in situations like that.

I've also used crowdsourcing when I'm trying to make a decision like on a book jacket cover or on a logo design or something where I just would like to have some of the people who follow me, some of the people I consider my customers, part of my tribe, have a look at it and give me their input. That's been hugely helpful, as well. There are probably a lot of things I haven't explored, but those are a couple I've used. Again, they've been helpful. I hope to do more of this in the future. So Kurt, thank you for your question.

The last question came in from Leesa Barnes. Leesa?

**Leesa Barnes:** Hi Michael, my name is Leesa Barnes, and you can find me over at [successrefresh.com](http://successrefresh.com). I love this topic about how to shave 10 hours off your workweek. I own my own business and have been self-employed since 2006. One of the things I've tried to do is bring in different consultants to help me in my efforts of shaving 10 hours off my workweek. However, I find I'm still eating up that time telling them what to do.

So I've tried many things. I've put together job descriptions so people who come on to my team are clear on what their responsibilities are. I've put together an operations guide online, again to help my team be more self-sufficient. I find the 10 hours or more I'm trying to shave off my time is eaten up trying to teach them what to do.

So my question is what tips do you have for me, someone who is self-employed who is trying to free up some time on how to make my team feel more (I don't like this word, but it's the only one that comes to mind) empowered to make decisions and to be able to move forward with the task at hand without always having to get my input? Again my name is Leesa, and you can find out more about me at [successrefresh.com](http://successrefresh.com). Thanks for this opportunity, Michael.

**Michael Hyatt:** Thanks, Leesa. Great question. It sounds like you're doing a lot of the things right. You're trying to prepare them, trying to train them. I would say you have to acknowledge and remember that any investment on the front end exceeds the return. It's just the nature of investing in anything. I don't care if it's a financial investment or an investment of your time. If you're going to get to the next level, you're going to have to spend more time on the front end developing your people and getting them to the place where they can act as your proxy.

By the way, this has always been hard for me, too, because I'm kind of a control freak, and I have this sort of unspoken assumption that nobody can do it as well as I can do it. I know it's not right intellectually, but maybe you suffer from that, as well. All of us have to get over that if we're going to take it to the next level. We can't do everything.

The other thing I would say to you as you're dealing with people is to give them an authority limit so in some sense you have some control, but they have the freedom to act on your behalf. Tim Ferriss says in his book *The 4-Hour Work Week* that one of the things he did with his virtual assistants is he gave them a \$100 limit where he said, "If you can solve the problem for \$100 or less, solve it and then tell me what you did. Don't wait on me. Don't come back to me for permission. Just go ahead and do it."

I did this when I was at Thomas Nelson, but I raised the limit to \$200. I figured I could stand a \$200 mistake. I could deal with that. I could actually probably stand a couple of thousand dollars mistake, but I want to keep it corralled. I want to give my people the chance to grow and to develop. So maybe that will be helpful to you, as well.

So I really do appreciate everybody who called in and left questions. I think those are very helpful and give me a sense of the kinds of issues you who are listening to the podcast deal with.

Let me just give you a couple of announcements here in conclusion. First of all, my *Platform* book started shipping to stores last week! I'm so excited about this. It's called *Platform: Get Noticed in a Noisy World*. It's basically everything I've learned over the last eight years of building what has become a pretty enormous platform with 300,000 unique visitors a month on my blog and 120,000 followers on Twitter. I'll tell you more about it.

Here is the thing I want to say today in the podcast: Please, please don't order it yet. That may sound like a strange request coming from the author, but there is a method in my madness. The official publication date is May 22, so we want to focus all the sales we can into that first week of publication hoping we can drive the bestseller list.

If you're willing to wait, I'm willing to reward you big time for this wait. I've put together a special offer that includes seven free bonuses worth \$375.98. All the bonuses are ready. They're loaded on to my website, and we're going to make these available during that week of May 21-May 25. All you have to do is buy a copy of the book and forward the receipt to me. I'm not prepared to tell you more. We're going to unveil this on May 21.

Here is what you can do just so you don't miss this offer because when it goes away on May 25, it's going to go away forever. You can sign up to be notified at [MichaelHyatt.com/platform](https://MichaelHyatt.com/platform). We're not going to spam you. All we're going to do is let you know that now is the time to buy. Go buy the book, and you can get these seven free bonuses again worth \$375.98.

Next week I'm going to be speaking at Catalyst Dallas, which is going to be on May 9-11. The theme for this year is *Be Present*. I already spoke at Catalyst West, the one in Irvine, California. It was terrific. I'm going to be speaking on Wednesday, May 9 at a lab on the topic of my new book *Platform*. The other speakers include Andy Stanley, John Maxwell, Matt Chandler, Mark Batterson, Bob Goff, Jon Acuff, and a whole bunch more. There are still tickets available, and you can find out more information at [catalystdallas.com](https://catalystdallas.com).

Then I'm going to be speaking at BlogWorld & New Media Expo in New York City on June 5-7. Man, I have wanted to go to this particular conference for years, and it's just never worked out in terms of timing. I got asked to speak. I'm going to be leading one of the Super Sessions on Thursday morning, June 7, at 9:00 am again speaking on the topic of *Platform* but with a little bit of a twist.

I'm going to be talking about how I'm having to apply that in my own case with this podcast and what I'm learning going through the process as though I didn't have a platform. If you register before May 15, you can get \$100 discount on the three-day blogger and podcaster pass. You can go to [MichaelHyatt.com/blogworld](https://MichaelHyatt.com/blogworld) to learn more.

So that's about it for this episode of *This Is Your Life*. Thanks so much for tuning in. Next episode I'm going to be talking about the secret power of naps. So again one of the most popular blog posts I've ever written, one of the things I think is crucial for learning to manage your energy.

If you have a question about naps, you can leave a voicemail for me at [MichaelHyatt.com/podcastquestion](https://MichaelHyatt.com/podcastquestion). There is a link in the show notes. I'd love to hear from you, and there is a good chance you can actually be on this show if you leave me a message.

If you have enjoyed this podcast, please subscribe to it at [MichaelHyatt.com/ThisIsYourLife](https://MichaelHyatt.com/ThisIsYourLife). That way you won't miss a single episode. You can also find more resources on my blog at [MichaelHyatt.com](https://MichaelHyatt.com). If

you'd like to comment on this episode, again go to [MichaelHyatt.com](http://MichaelHyatt.com) and look in the show notes. Below that is a comments section where listeners like you engage with other listeners and with me. I visit those comments, as well.

So until next time, remember: Your life is a gift. Now go make it count!