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# WHEN TIME LEAKS AWAY: The Hidden Cost of Clarity Debt™



By Lana Potgieter,  
Lighthouse  
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Battery Park City in New York. Treasure Island in San Francisco. The Netherlands.

and people are left to fill in too many gaps for themselves. It shows up in rework, repeated conversations, stalled execution, unnecessary firefighting, and the exhausting feeling of being busy with too little to show for it.

Many leaders assume they need more time. But we all get the same 24 hours in a day.

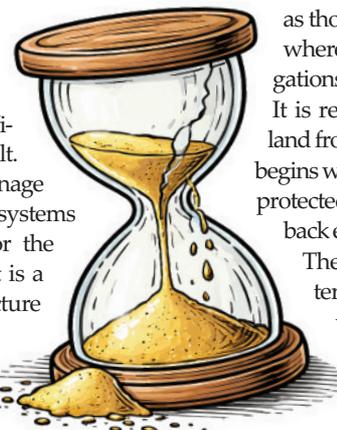
What most leaders actually need are fewer leaks.

At first glance, they have little in common. But each proves the same idea: valuable ground can be reclaimed from the ocean that would otherwise keep swallowing it.

This dry land did not appear by accident. It was reclaimed — deliberately, systematically, and at significant cost. Barriers were built. Water was redirected. Drainage was managed. And the systems had to be maintained, or the water would return. That is a surprisingly accurate picture of how time must be reclaimed in everyday leadership.

Most leaders do not lose time in one dramatic wave. They lose it in slow leaks: a delayed decision, a priority that shifts mid-stream, a meeting that should have created alignment but instead creates more follow-up, an interruption that breaks momentum, a team member waiting for clarity that never quite comes.

This is how Clarity Debt™ accumulates. Clarity Debt™ is the hidden cost leaders pay when priorities are vague, communication is inconsistent, ownership is blurred,



We talk about “finding time” as though it is misplaced somewhere between emails and obligations. But time is rarely found. It is reclaimed. Like reclaiming land from the sea, reclaiming time begins with deciding what must be protected. Cities did not try to hold back every inch of ocean at once.

They identified what mattered, where the investment was justified, and what systems would be required to make that ground useful. Leaders must do the same.

What in your day is truly worth reclaiming? Time to think before reacting? Time to lead instead of chase? Time to work on the business instead of only in it? Time to solve the right problems before confusion turns into friction?

Until you answer that, your day belongs to whatever waves pound against it hardest.

That is why boundaries matter more than most leaders realize. Reclaimed land



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needs barriers before it can be built on. The same is true of time. If your calendar has no boundaries, your priorities are only good intentions. If every request, ping, and interruption has equal access to you, the urgent will win every time.

This is where leadership gets uncomfortable. Reclaiming time requires more than working faster. It requires deciding what no longer deserves immediate access to your attention. It means reducing unnecessary meetings, tightening decision-making, clarifying ownership, and resisting the urge to become the answer to everything.

Many leaders say they want more strategic time yet leave their shoreline undefended.

And even when boundaries exist, there is still drainage to manage.

Water seeps in. In business, that seepage looks like indecision, poor delegation, vague communication, weak handoffs, repeated follow-up, and conversations that keep circling because no one has created enough clarity to move forward. This is how Clarity Debt™ compounds — not in one dramatic collapse, but in the slow drag of preventable friction.

In many organizations, the real issue is not lack of effort. It is the cost of confusion. That is why good intentions are not enough. No country reclaims land by moti-

vation alone, and no leader reclaims time by determination alone. It requires systems: clear priorities, disciplined meetings, defined decision rights, protected focus time, strong delegation, and regular review.

And one more thing: maintenance. Reclaimed land does not stay reclaimed by accident. It must be defended. The same is true of time, clarity, and leadership capacity. Pressure returns. Demands expand. Teams drift. Old habits creep back in.

Leadership is not only about setting direction. It is about protecting what matters so it stays usable. So rather than asking, "How do I get more time?" ask: What has been flooding my day, my team, or my business — and what am I willing to reclaim? Because when clarity leaks, time goes with it. And when leaders reclaim clarity, they reclaim the ground where better business results are built.

**Author Bio:** Lana Potgieter is the founder of **Lighthouse Leadership Coaching & Development**, where she partners with business owners and leaders to reduce Clarity Debt™, strengthen leadership effectiveness, and build healthier, more aligned organizations. Drawing on more than two decades of coaching and leadership development experience across the U.S., South Africa, and the U.K., she helps leaders turn fog into focus and strategy into execution.

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