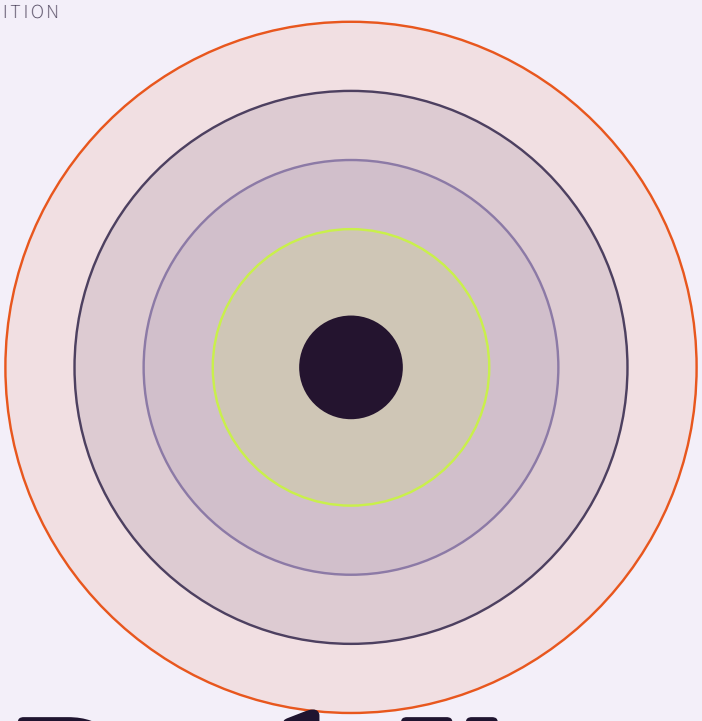


Buy Back Your Time: Get Un-stuck, Reclaim Your Freedom, and Build Your Empire

A reading of the book by Dan Martell (2023)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Buy Back Your Time: Get Unstuck, Reclaim Your Freedom, and Build Your Empire, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Dan Martell is a Canadian software founder who started several companies, including Clarity.fm, and now coaches software founders through SaaS Academy. Buy Back Your Time argues that founders and busy professionals get stuck because they try to do everything themselves, and that the way out is to hire to buy back time rather than to grow the business. Its central sum is the Buyback Rate, which tells you which tasks cost less to hand off than to do yourself. The DRIP Matrix sorts every task by how much money it makes and how much energy it gives you, and the Buyback Loop of audit, transfer and fill turns that sorting into a repeating habit. Martell draws on his own early years of overwork and on the founders he coaches.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Hire to buy back your time, not to grow the business.

This is the Buyback Principle. Most founders hire only when revenue allows, and often for work they already enjoy. Martell reverses the order: hire first for the work that drains you, then spend the hours you win back on the work that grows the company.

2

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Know what an hour of your time is worth, and stop doing work that costs less.

The Buyback Rate is your yearly income divided by 2,000 working hours, then divided by four. Any task you could pay someone less than that to do is a task worth paying for. On 100,000 a year, the line sits at 12.50 an hour.

3

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Sort your work by money and by energy, not by how urgent it feels.

The DRIP Matrix has four boxes. Delegate tasks that pay little and drain you. Replace yourself in tasks that pay well but drain you. Invest in tasks that light you up but do not pay yet. Spend as much of the week as you can in Production, where a task both pays and energises.

4

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Your energy is data about where you belong in the business.

The Time and Energy Audit asks you to log what you actually do for a stretch of days and mark each task by whether it gave or took energy, and by how much money it makes. The pattern that shows up is your hiring list, written in your own handwriting.

5

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Buying back time is a loop, not a single hire.

The Buyback Loop runs audit, transfer, fill. You audit where the hours go, transfer the draining tasks to someone else, and then decide what fills the gap. Skip the last step and busywork quietly takes the hours back.

6

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Hand off the middle of the work, and keep the two ends.

With 10-80-10, you set the direction in the first 10 percent, your team does the 80 percent in the middle, and you return for the final 10 percent to refine it. You stay where your judgement matters and let go of the rest.

7

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Do the task once on camera, and you have the start of a playbook.

The camcorder method replaces long manuals with a recording. Record your screen while you do the task and talk through each step. The person who takes it over can learn from the video and turn it into a checklist.

8

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Most busy founders are not short of hours. A habit is eating them.

Martell names five time assassins: the Staller, the Speed Demon, the Supervisor, the Saver and the Self-Medicator. Each one is a way of working that feels productive or safe while it costs you hours. Naming yours makes it easier to catch in the act.

9

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Design your perfect week before other people design it for you.

The Perfect Week is a calendar template you set up in advance, with your most valuable work, your rest and your people blocked in first. Everything else has to fit around it, instead of the other way round.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Work out your Buyback Rate
- [ ] Run a two-week time and energy audit
- [ ] Sort every task into DRIP
- [ ] Record one playbook
- [ ] Draft your perfect week

KEEP UP DAILY

- [ ] Transfer one task a month
- [ ] Fill freed hours the same day
- [ ] Re-run the audit every quarter

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Work out your Buyback Rate

Divide last year's income by 2,000, then divide the answer by four.

Write the number on a note by your desk. Any task you can hand off for less is a candidate.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Run a two-week time and energy audit

Keep a running log of what you work on for two weeks.

Mark each task as giving or draining energy, and as making little or a lot of money.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Sort every task into DRIP

Put each recurring task from your audit into Delegate, Replace, Invest or Produce.

The Delegate box is your first hiring list.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Record one playbook

Pick the most repetitive task in your Delegate box.

Next time you do it, record your screen and talk through each step. Save the video with a short checklist beside it.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Draft your perfect week

On a blank weekly calendar, block your Production work first, then your fixed personal time, then one or two batched slots for admin.

Copy it forward as your template.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Transfer one task a month

Each month, hand off one task from your Delegate or Replace box, with its recording and checklist.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Fill freed hours the same day

When a task leaves your plate, decide that day which Production work takes its slot, and put it in the calendar before anything else can.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Re-run the audit every quarter

Every three months, log a week and sort it again.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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December 2026

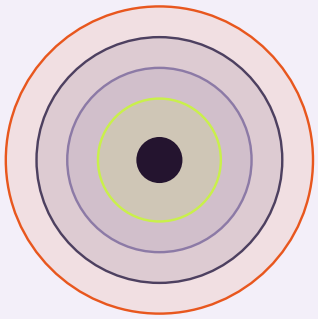
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Every hour you hand off is an hour you can spend on the work only you can do.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER DAN MARTELL