DAN MARTELL

BUY BACK YOUR TIME

GET UNSTUCK, RECLAIM YOUR FREEDOM, AND BUILD YOUR EMPIRE
Portfolio / Penguin, 2023

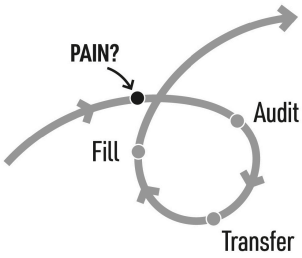
THE BUYBACK PRINCIPLE

"Don't hire to grow your business. Hire to buy back your time."

Founders stall because they keep trading their own hours for money. Martell's claim: *"someone else should be handling about 95 percent of your current work"*. Hand off what drains you, then refill the hours with work that lights you up and makes money. Repeat.



THE BUYBACK LOOP · audit, transfer, fill



AUDIT *"What tasks do I hate doing that are easy and inexpensive to offer someone else?"*

TRANSFER *"Who do I have on my team—or who can I hire, even part-time—to take these over?"*

FILL *"What tasks should I focus on that I love doing that can immediately bring more money to my company?"*

His client Stuart had a panic attack at Disneyland. Within two months of running the loop he freed more than thirty hours a week; in under a year revenue tripled.

THE PAIN LINE

"The Pain Line is the point at which growth becomes impossible."

For most founders it hits at about twelve direct reports and just over $1 million in revenue. There they unconsciously do one of three things:

SELL · SABOTAGE · STALL

"a decision to not grow is a decision to slowly die."

YOUR BUYBACK RATE

INCOME ÷ 2,000 HOURS ÷ 4
Example: $200,000 ÷ 2,000 ÷ 4 = $25/h

Income is what the business pays you; 2,000 hours is a rough work year. Never do a task you could pay someone a quarter of your hourly rate to do. Short form: **your pay ÷ 8,000**.

"$100 million companies were not built on $10 tasks."

THE DRIP MATRIX

MAKES YOU MONEY ↑ / LIGHTS YOU UP →	
Replacement Makes you money, drains your energy. "The pitfall quadrant."	**Production** Makes you lots of money, lights you up. Spend most of your time here.
Delegation Makes you little money, drains your energy. Remove these first.	**Investment** Makes you little money, lights you up. An investment in you.

"80% done by someone else is 100% freaking awesome."

THE ONLY 3 TRADES THAT MATTER

1 TIME for MONEY = INCOME	2 MONEY for TIME = LEVERAGE	3 MONEY for MONEY = FREEDOM
the employee	the entrepreneur	the empire-builder

Owning a company isn't enough: if you still sell your own hours, you are still a Level 1 trader. Buying back your time is the Level 2 trade.

"You can't personally outwork yourself to a better business."

THE 5 TIME ASSASSINS

- **The Staller** hesitates on big decisions.
- **The Speed Demon** hires the quickest, easiest, cheapest option, then is stuck again.
- **The Supervisor** micromanages instead of training people to grow.
- **The Saver** hoards cash instead of investing it in growth.
- **The Self-Medicator** rewards success and escapes failure with food, alcohol or other vices.

Their root is a chaos addiction: *"Chaos can feel so normal that calm can actually feel strange."*

THE REPLACEMENT LADDER · climb it in order, from the bottom

	Hire	Feeling	Ownership
5	Leadership	Flow	Strategy & Outcomes
4	Sales	Freedom	Calls & Follow-up
3	Marketing	Friction	Campaigns & Traffic
2	Delivery	Stalled	Onboarding & Support
1	Admin	Stuck	Inbox & Calendar

YOU	YOUR TEAM	YOU
10% ideation	80% execution	10% integration

The 10-80-10 rule: you start it, the team does the middle, you add the final touch.

CLONE YOURSELF

Camcorder Method. Record the real task three times, talking as you go; whoever takes it over writes the Playbook, not you. Every Playbook has 4 Cs:

Camcorder	Course	Cadence	Checklist
the recordings	the steps involved in the process	how often these tasks should be completed	the high-level items that must be completed, every time

- **1:3:1 rule**: one problem, three solutions, one recommendation.
- **Perfect Week**: design your ideal calendar in advance, with tasks batched. *"Your calendar can't lie."*
- **Preloaded Year**: each December, put the big rocks in first (family dates, holidays), then work.

FROM JAIL CELL TO EMPIRE

Group homes, expulsion, then a six-month sentence in adult jail. At Portage, a therapeutic facility for teens, he found a Java book and typed "Hello World!". Coding became his new addiction.

Working nonstop, he lost his fiancée four months before the wedding; that was his wake-up call. He sold Spheric in 2008 for his first million. Then Flowtown (sold 2012) and Clarity (sold 2014). Today he says he spends six hours a week on an eight-figure business.

USE IT MONDAY

- Work out your Buyback Rate.
- For two weeks, log every 15 minutes of work.
- Rate each task $ to $$$$, then highlight it green if it gives you energy, red if it drains you.
- Hand off the red, low-dollar tasks first, starting with an assistant for your inbox and calendar.
- Hire with a paid test project: *"I can't work with you until I work with you."* (Seth Godin)

FAIR WARNINGS

- *"I'll never disparage hard work or tell any entrepreneur that work ethic isn't a key component of success."*
- Buying back time isn't for idling: one founder *"forgot the last word: fill"*.
- The Perfect Week takes 2–3 weeks of iterating. Personality tests are just *"a data point"*.
- He expects you to fire your first salesperson: your expectations will be unrealistic.

"You build the people, and they build the business." — DAN MARTELL