TIME

123. It Might Be Later Than You Think.

A "couple of minutes" late is ... LATE.
Five minutes late is ... LATE.
One-point-three minutes late is ... LATE.
LATE is ... LATE.
PERIOD.

(It matters.)
(NB: A boss being late for a meeting with an employee is worse than an employee being late for a meeting with his/her boss.)

124. Time Off for Smart Behavior.   Hustle rules. But the very same times that call for speed-speed-speed also call for exceptional creativity, and that doesn't always match up with 90-hour workweeks—especially back-to-back-to-back 90-hour weeks. So, in the course of the day, week, year, figure out how to take a pause—even a 2-minute "right breathing" break, like I do—that refreshes.

And take it.
(This is of the utmost importance. Believe it.)

125. Time Out for ... Daydreaming!   Dov Frohman is a pioneer in the semiconductor industry. Among (many) other things, he started Intel Israel and was significantly responsible for the growth of Israel's potent high-tech sector. With Robert Howard, he presented us with a truly original book on leadership, *Leadership the Hard Way: Why Leadership Can't Be Taught—and How You Can Learn It Anyway*. In a chapter titled "The Soft Skills of Hard Leadership," Frohman astonishes as he insists that the leader-manager must free up no less than 50 percent of his-her time from routine tasks:

"Most managers spend a great deal of time thinking about what they plan to do, but relatively little time thinking about what they plan not to do. ... As a result, they become so caught up in fighting the fires of the moment that they cannot really attend to the long-term threats and risks facing the organization. So the premier soft skill of leadership the hard way is to cultivate the perspective of Marcus Aurelius: avoid busyness, free up your time, stay focused on what really matters. Let me put it bluntly: every leader should routinely keep a substantial portion of his or her time—I would say as much as 50 percent—unscheduled. Only when you have substantial 'slop' in your schedule—unscheduled time—will you have the space to reflect on what you are doing, learn from experience, and recover from your inevitable mistakes. Leaders without such free time end up tackling issues only when there is an immediate or visible problem. Managers' typical response to my argument about free time is, 'That's all well and good, but there are things I have to do.' Yet we waste so much time in unproductive activity—it takes an enormous effort on the part of the leader to keep free time for the truly important things."

The chapter's second mind-ripping idea is labeled "The Discipline of Daydreaming": *"Nearly every major decision of my business career was, to some degree, the result of daydreaming. ... To be sure, in every case I had to collect a lot of data, do detailed analysis, and make a data-based argument to convince superiors, colleagues and business partners. But that all came later. In the beginning, there was the daydream. By daydreaming, I mean loose, unstructured thinking with no*

particular goal in mind. ... In fact, I think daydreaming is a distinctive mode of cognition especially well suited to the complex, 'fuzzy' problems that characterize a more turbulent business environment. ... Daydreaming is an effective way of coping with complexity. When a problem has a high degree of complexity, the level of detail can be overwhelming. The more one focuses on the details, the more one risks being lost in them. ... Every child knows how to daydream. But many, perhaps most, lose the capacity as they grow up. ..."

126. Master the Art of Milestoning.   My latest trip from VT to MA (173.6 mi) got me thinking of something else besides pit stops. I was running late, and noting my progress via odometer and various landmarks and highway markers. As my mood went up and down I realized (re-realized?) the power of manageable goals in every form of activity:

(1) Milestones are all-important, no matter how trivial or repetitive the task.
(2) "Milestoning" is a real art for reasons psychological, as much as or more than for reasons of "substance."
(3) Truly trivial milestones *are* often meaningless, even if they are "accomplishments" of a sort and "milestones" of a sort—scoring the eyedrop's distance from the Dorset turn to the Stratton turn is no big deal and not really a motivator.
(4) "Milestone power" is variable. E.g., at the beginning or near the end of a task, the apparently trivial can indeed seem utterly grand. "Well, I've done *something*"—that's what I feel seconds after 4 a.m. when I make it to the immediate end of the farm road that starts at our house, thus putting behind me the first click, or 0.7 miles, in numbing reality a scant 0.4 percent of the whole.
(5) There is a definite sweetspot ... "the perfect milestone." The 13 miles from home to Dorset, or the 12 miles from Gill to Erving, is a winner—substantial enough to matter, to merit a pumped fist at 4:23 a.m., and to constitute "progress of note."
(6) There is a fine line between "trivial" on the one end and "daunting" on the other. (A 27-mile stretch, if thought of that way, is downright discouraging: "Dear God, these 27 miles of Route 2 are frigging endless.")

Action: Become a "milestone activist." Use milestoning, for instance, on every project, large or small, as a matter of routine, but do so with the greatest care, as only partially explained above—that is, become a Milestone Professional as well as a Milestone Activist. These project landmarks, the establishment and celebration thereof, can have an enormous impact on the energy and motivation of a team.