A TIME AUDIT FOR BUSY OWNERS

Where does your week *actually go?*

The usual advice is to set an alarm every fifteen minutes for two weeks and write down what you just did. This is the shortcut: walk through your days, your weeks, your months and the people around you, and write down what you do.

You'll need a pen, a coffee and two sittings of about an hour: Parts 1 to 8 in the first, Parts 10 to 12 in the second.

HOW IT WORKS

01	**Your days** PART 1	What you do at the start, during and at the end of each day.
02	**Weeks, months, quarters, years** PARTS 2 TO 5	The rhythms that are easy to forget because they come round less often.
03	**When something happens** PART 6	Work that starts with an event, not the calendar.
04	**People** PART 7	What your staff, customers and suppliers ask of you, and why they come to you.
05	**Tools and paperwork** PART 8	Every system you log into and every form that crosses your desk.
06	**Reality check** PART 9 · OPTIONAL	Your calendar, inbox and phone remember what you forget.
07	**One list** PARTS 10 TO 12	Merge, score and sort into keep, automate, delegate or kill. Then pick three quick wins and decide what the time is for.

FOUR GROUND RULES

1. Capture first, judge later. Don't sort anything until Part 10.
2. One task per line, in your own words.
3. Write how often and how long. The ready reckoner on the next page turns that into hours a month.
4. Rough is fine. You're looking for the big ones, not invoicing anyone.

NAME _____ STARTED _____ FINISHED _____

Made by Edu at Connected Strategies, Eight Mile Plains, Brisbane. Free to print, copy and share. Print extra copies of any page you fill up.

BEFORE YOU START

How to fill in a line

Every page from Part 1 to Part 8 uses the same four columns. Write the task, how often it happens, how long it takes each time, and then the hours a month from the ready reckoner below.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH
Check emails and overnight orders	*D*	*30*	*10.8*
Approve supplier invoices	*W*	*40*	*2.9*
BAS with the bookkeeper	*Q*	*120*	*0.7*

How often: short codes

D every weekday **W** weekly **F** fortnightly **M** monthly

Q quarterly **Y** yearly or a number, like **3/wk** or **2/mth**

Ready reckoner: hours a month

Find how long it takes down the side and how often across the top. Where they meet is your hours a month. If it's three times a week, take the weekly figure and times it by three.

HOW LONG EACH TIME	D EVERY WEEKDAY	W WEEKLY	F FORTNIGHTLY	M MONTHLY	Q QUARTERLY	Y YEARLY
5 minutes	1.8	0.4	0.2	0.1	<0.1	<0.1
10 minutes	3.6	0.7	0.4	0.2	0.1	<0.1
15 minutes	5.4	1.1	0.5	0.3	0.1	<0.1
20 minutes	7.2	1.4	0.7	0.3	0.1	<0.1
30 minutes	10.8	2.2	1.1	0.5	0.2	<0.1
45 minutes	16.3	3.3	1.6	0.8	0.3	0.1
1 hour	21.7	4.3	2.2	1.0	0.3	0.1
1½ hours	32.5	6.5	3.3	1.5	0.5	0.1
2 hours	43.3	8.7	4.3	2.0	0.7	0.2
4 hours	86.7	17.3	8.7	4.0	1.3	0.3
A full day (8 hours)	173.3	34.7	17.3	8.0	2.7	0.7

Rounded, and based on a five-day week. In between two rows? Pick the closer one. This is for ranking your tasks against each other, not for payroll.

Don't leave out

The work you do at home: emails on the couch, quotes on a Sunday night, the phone calls in the car. If it's for the business, it counts.

PART 1 · YOUR DAYS

Monday

Walk through a normal Monday, from the first time you pick up your phone to the last. Anything you do every weekday goes on this page once, marked D. On the other days, only add what's different.

Start of the day

Think about: emails and messages, overnight orders, the bank, walking the floor, the day's schedule.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

During the day

Think about: quotes, calls, problems on the floor, staff questions, suppliers, admin, chasing people.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

End of the day

Think about: checking the day's work, tomorrow's plan, invoices out, locking up, emails after dinner.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

PART 1 · YOUR DAYS

Tuesday

Only add what's different about Tuesday. Anything you do every weekday is already on Monday's page.

Start of the day

Think about: emails and messages, overnight orders, the bank, walking the floor, the day's schedule.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

During the day

Think about: quotes, calls, problems on the floor, staff questions, suppliers, admin, chasing people.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

End of the day

Think about: checking the day's work, tomorrow's plan, invoices out, locking up, emails after dinner.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

PART 1 · YOUR DAYS

Wednesday

Only add what's different about Wednesday. Anything you do every weekday is already on Monday's page.

Start of the day

Think about: emails and messages, overnight orders, the bank, walking the floor, the day's schedule.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

During the day

Think about: quotes, calls, problems on the floor, staff questions, suppliers, admin, chasing people.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

End of the day

Think about: checking the day's work, tomorrow's plan, invoices out, locking up, emails after dinner.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

PART 1 · YOUR DAYS

Thursday

Only add what's different about Thursday. Anything you do every weekday is already on Monday's page.

Start of the day

Think about: emails and messages, overnight orders, the bank, walking the floor, the day's schedule.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

During the day

Think about: quotes, calls, problems on the floor, staff questions, suppliers, admin, chasing people.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

End of the day

Think about: checking the day's work, tomorrow's plan, invoices out, locking up, emails after dinner.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

PART 1 · YOUR DAYS

Friday

Only add what's different about Friday. Anything you do every weekday is already on Monday's page.

Start of the day

Think about: emails and messages, overnight orders, the bank, walking the floor, the day's schedule.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

During the day

Think about: quotes, calls, problems on the floor, staff questions, suppliers, admin, chasing people.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

End of the day

Think about: checking the day's work, tomorrow's plan, invoices out, locking up, emails after dinner.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

PART 1 · YOUR DAYS

The weekend

Plenty of owners work weekends without counting it. Include the work done at home as well as at work.

Saturday

Think about: Saturday trading, catching up on paperwork, site visits, checking the week's numbers.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

Sunday

Think about: emails, quotes, invoicing, planning, the things you didn't get to.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

Sunday night

Think about: next week's schedule, rosters, the first jobs on Monday morning.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

PART 2 · YOUR WEEK

Your week

Now zoom out. What happens once a week, or once a fortnight, that wasn't already on a day page?

Start of the week

Think about: planning, rosters, the production or job schedule, the weekly meeting.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

During the week

Think about: site visits, supplier orders, banking, catch-ups with key staff.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

End of the week

Think about: timesheets, payroll, invoicing, the week's numbers, next week's plan.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

PART 3 · YOUR MONTH

Your month

What happens once a month? Skip anything that's already on an earlier page.

Start of the month

Think about: closing off last month, statements, management reports, a stock check.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

During the month

Think about: chasing overdue accounts, paying bills, supplier meetings, reviewing the numbers.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

End of the month

Think about: the invoicing run, reconciling accounts, payroll tax, figures to the bookkeeper.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

PART 4 · YOUR QUARTER

Your quarter

Every three months. Easy to forget because it comes round so rarely, and often heavier than it looks.

Start of the quarter

Think about: planning the quarter, setting targets, reviewing prices.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

During the quarter

Think about: reviews with key customers, catching up with your accountant, a stocktake.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

End of the quarter

Think about: the BAS, quarterly reports, looking back at the quarter's numbers.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

PART 5 · YOUR YEAR

Your year

Once a year. Most of this is small in hours a month, but some of it lands on you and nobody else.

Start of the financial year

Think about: the budget, pay reviews, price increases, insurance renewals.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

During the year

Think about: licences and rego, safety or quality audits, staff reviews, trade shows, the Christmas shutdown.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

End of the financial year

Think about: EOFY with your accountant, payroll finalisation, stocktake, the workers comp declaration.

TASK	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH

PART 6 · WHEN SOMETHING HAPPENS

When something happens, *I…*

Plenty of work isn't on any calendar. It starts when something happens. For each one that applies, write what you do, and roughly how often it comes up. Cross out the ones that don't apply.

WHEN THIS HAPPENS	I…	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH
A quote request comes in				
A quote is accepted				
A new customer comes on board				
An order or job starts				
A customer asks where their order is				
A job finishes or ships				
A customer complains				
A customer pays late				
Stock or materials run low				
A supplier changes prices				
Something breaks down				
Someone calls in sick				
Someone new starts				
Someone leaves				
A safety incident or near miss				
Other:				
Other:				
Other:				

PART 7 · PEOPLE

Your staff

Go through your team one person at a time. What do they bring to you? Then the part that matters most: why you? Tick one box for each line.

Decision
They need you to decide. Often fixed with a rule or a limit, like "approve anything under $2,000".

Info
They need something only you know. Fixed by writing it down or putting it in the system.

Owner
It's genuinely your job, for now. Some of these will still move later.

WHO	WHAT THEY ASK ME FOR	DECISION	INFO	OWNER	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			

PART 7 · PEOPLE

Your customers

Which customers come to you directly, and what for? Think about quotes, pricing, problems, progress updates, and the ones who only want to deal with the owner.

Decision
They need you to decide. Often fixed with a rule or a limit, like "approve anything under $2,000".

Info
They need something only you know. Fixed by writing it down or putting it in the system.

Owner
It's genuinely your job, for now. Some of these will still move later.

WHO	WHAT THEY ASK ME FOR	DECISION	INFO	OWNER	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			

PART 7 · PEOPLE

Suppliers and everyone else

Suppliers, your accountant or bookkeeper, the bank, the landlord, insurers, inspectors, and family in the business.

Decision
They need you to decide. Often fixed with a rule or a limit, like "approve anything under $2,000".

Info
They need something only you know. Fixed by writing it down or putting it in the system.

Owner
It's genuinely your job, for now. Some of these will still move later.

WHO	WHAT THEY ASK ME FOR	DECISION	INFO	OWNER	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			
		☐	☐	☐			

PART 8 · TOOLS AND PAPERWORK

Tools and paperwork

Every system you log into, and every bit of paper that crosses your desk, comes with jobs attached. Go through them one by one.

Systems you log into

SYSTEM OR PAPERWORK	WHAT I DO WITH IT	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH
Email				
Accounting (Xero, MYOB...)				
Online banking				
ATO and government portals				
Customer portals				
Supplier portals				
Job, ERP or inventory system				
Spreadsheets				
Phone, texts and messaging				
Other:				
Other:				

Paperwork that crosses your desk

SYSTEM OR PAPERWORK	WHAT I DO WITH IT	HOW OFTEN	MINS EACH	HRS A MONTH
Quotes				
Purchase orders				
Invoices and bills				
Timesheets				
Job cards and dockets				
Freight and delivery paperwork				
Forms, checklists and reports				
Other:				
Other:				

PART 9 · REALITY CHECK · OPTIONAL

What did you *miss?*

Memory is good at routines and bad at the scattered stuff: interruptions, quick questions, phone calls. Two ways to catch what slipped through. Add anything you find to your earlier pages, or straight onto the list in Part 10.

Check the records you already have

Tick each one as you go through it.

- ☐ Your calendar, last two weeks
- ☐ Your phone's call log
- ☐ Texts and messaging apps
- ☐ Who entered what in your accounting or job system
- ☐ Your sent emails, last two weeks
- ☐ Your phone's screen-time report
- ☐ Your diary or notebook
- ☐ Your credit card and bank statements

Three-day spot check

No alarms. Three quick notes a day, for three days: at smoko, at lunch and at knock-off.

WHEN	WHAT DID I ACTUALLY DO SINCE THE LAST CHECK?	ON MY LIST? Y / N
Day 1 · smoko		
Day 1 · lunch		
Day 1 · knock-off		
Day 2 · smoko		
Day 2 · lunch		
Day 2 · knock-off		
Day 3 · smoko		
Day 3 · lunch		
Day 3 · knock-off		

PART 10 · ONE LIST

Make it one list, *then sort it*

Copy every task from Parts 1 to 9 onto the next three pages. If the same task turns up twice, write it once and add the hours together. Then fill in the rest of each line.

Hours a month	From your earlier pages, added together.
Energy	**+** it gives you energy. **0** neutral. **–** it drains you.
Only me?	**Y** if only you can do it, or it's genuinely worth your time. **N** if someone else could, with a bit of help.
Bucket	Ask the four questions below, in order. The first yes is the bucket.
Ease	**3** you could change it this month with what you've got. **2** needs some setup or training. **1** a bigger job.
Score	Hours a month × ease. The highest scores are your quick wins.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS, IN THIS ORDER

X	**Kill**	Can I stop it, or do it less often? Ask: what would happen if nobody did this for a month?
A	**Automate**	Could a system do it, or most of it? Good signs: it's repetitive, it follows rules, and it means typing or copying from one place to another.
D	**Delegate**	Could someone else do it 80% as well as you? That includes a bookkeeper, a virtual assistant or a contractor, not just staff.
K	**Keep**	Only you can do it, and it's worth your time. Energy settles the close calls: keep what gives you energy, plan to hand off what drains you.

Why this order: there's no point automating a job you could stop, or handing someone a job a system could do.

Simplify before you automate. Automating a messy job just makes the mess faster.

Mixes are fine. Write A+D when a system could do the grunt work and a person checks it.

From Part 7. Decision requests usually need a rule or a limit. Information requests need writing down or putting in the system.

Handing a job over? Record yourself doing it once, on your phone or with a screen recording. That's most of the instructions written.

A finished line looks like this

#	TASK	HRS A MONTH	ENERGY + 0 -	ONLY ME? Y / N	BUCKET K A D X	EASE 1 TO 3	SCORE	NOTES
e.g.	*Typing orders from emails into the system*	*10.8*	*–*	*N*	*A+D*	*2*	*21.6*	*System reads, office checks*

PART 10 · ONE LIST

One list *1 of 3*

Energy: + gives, 0 neutral, − drains · Only me: Y or N · Bucket: K keep, A automate, D delegate, X kill · Ease: 3 easy, 2 some setup, 1 big job · Score = hours a month × ease

#	TASK	HRS A MONTH	ENERGY + 0 −	ONLY ME? Y / N	BUCKET K A D X	EASE 1 TO 3	SCORE	NOTES
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								

PART 10 · ONE LIST

One list *2 of 3*

Energy: + gives, 0 neutral, − drains · Only me: Y or N · Bucket: K keep, A automate, D delegate, X kill · Ease: 3 easy, 2 some setup, 1 big job · Score = hours a month × ease

#	TASK	HRS A MONTH	ENERGY + 0 −	ONLY ME? Y / N	BUCKET K A D X	EASE 1 TO 3	SCORE	NOTES
28								
29								
30								
31								
32								
33								
34								
35								
36								
37								
38								
39								
40								
41								
42								
43								
44								
45								
46								
47								
48								
49								
50								
51								
52								
53								
54								

PART 10 · ONE LIST

One list *3 of 3*

Energy: + gives, 0 neutral, − drains · Only me: Y or N · Bucket: K keep, A automate, D delegate, X kill · Ease: 3 easy, 2 some setup, 1 big job · Score = hours a month × ease

#	TASK	HRS A MONTH	ENERGY + 0 −	ONLY ME? Y / N	BUCKET K A D X	EASE 1 TO 3	SCORE	NOTES
55								
56								
57								
58								
59								
60								
61								
62								
63								
64								
65								
66								
67								
68								
69								
70								
71								
72								
73								
74								
75								
76								
77								
78								
79								
80								
81								

PART 11 · QUICK WINS

Your first *three quick wins*

Circle the ten highest scores on your list. From those, choose three you'll actually start in the next month. Write today's hours down, so you can see the difference when you check back.

QUICK WIN 1

TASK

BUCKET | HOURS A MONTH NOW | SCORE

FIRST STEP

WHO | START BY | CHECK BACK ON

HOURS A MONTH AFTER | WHAT CHANGED

QUICK WIN 2

TASK

BUCKET | HOURS A MONTH NOW | SCORE

FIRST STEP

WHO | START BY | CHECK BACK ON

HOURS A MONTH AFTER | WHAT CHANGED

QUICK WIN 3

TASK

BUCKET | HOURS A MONTH NOW | SCORE

FIRST STEP

WHO | START BY | CHECK BACK ON

HOURS A MONTH AFTER | WHAT CHANGED

NEXT IN LINE	BUCKET	HRS A MONTH	SCORE

PART 12 · WHAT IT'S FOR

What's the freed-up time *for?*

Freed-up time fills itself back up unless it has a job. Decide now.

If I had five more hours a week, I would...

I'LL PROTECT THAT TIME ON (DAY AND TIME)

Your only-me list

Copy every task you marked Y. If you were out for six weeks, these are what would stop. And if you plan to sell one day, they're what a buyer will ask about. For each one, note who could learn it, or where it could be written down.

ONLY-ME TASK	WHO COULD LEARN IT, OR WHERE IT COULD BE WRITTEN DOWN	BY WHEN

DO THIS AGAIN IN THREE MONTHS. DATE

HOURS FREED UP SO FAR