The Administrative Black Hole

A Handbook for Finding the Coordination Loops a Calendar Can't See

TIME AFFLUENCE
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Why This Exists

A calendar only records what got scheduled. The coordination work that happens between scheduled blocks, chasing a reply, resolving a thread, rewriting a status update, never appears on it, which is exactly why it can consume roughly sixty percent of a working day without anyone noticing the total. This handbook is a fuller diagnostic for finding those loops and closing them, 1 category at a time.

The 3 Categories

Coordination overhead tends to fall into 3 recognizable scenarios. Naming them is the first step in closing it.

Unnecessary meetings. A meeting that exists to share information which could have been written down once, or a recurring meeting that outlived its original purpose.

Duplicative work. The same status compiled twice for 2 different audiences, the same question answered in 3 different threads because nobody could find the first answer.

Talking about work instead of doing it. Planning the plan, discussing how to discuss something, coordinating who will coordinate. This category is the hardest to see because it feels productive while it's happening.

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Step One: A Single-Day Coordination Log

For 1 representative workday, log every coordination task as it happens, in real time, not from memory at the end of the day. Memory reliably under-counts small interruptions.

Time	What Happened	Category	Minutes

Step Two: Sort by Category and Total

Add up the minutes in each of the 3 categories from Step One. Most people find 1 category dominates the total, and it's rarely the one they expected going in.

Category	Total Minutes	Percent of the Day
Unnecessary meetings		
Duplicative work		
Talking about work		

Step Three: Close One Loop Per Category

For the single largest item logged in each category, write down the specific change that would prevent it from recurring. Not a general resolution to "communicate better," a specific, nameable change: a document that gets written once instead of restated 3 times, a status that gets posted in 1 place instead of 2, a decision that gets made by 1 person instead of discussed by 5.

Category	Largest Item	Specific Fix
Unnecessary meetings		
Duplicative work		
Talking about work		

Implement one fix this week. The other two can wait until the first one has actually held.

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