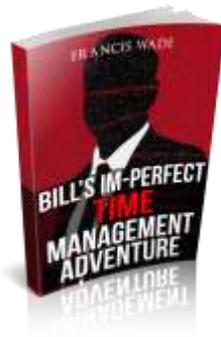


# Chapter One -Sample-

## Bill's Im-Perfect Time Management Adventure

A Business Fable

Francis Wade



Available in the Amazon Store.

# Chapter 1

"More Layoffs Expected in New Jersey."

The headline from the Sunday New York Times screamed at me from the front page, sending a single, distinct chill down my spine.

Shifting in my seat, I struggled to take some deep breaths to push down the tightening of my gut. It had nothing to do with flight AA 345, hurtling through the air on the way back to Newark from Shreveport via Dallas on a warm June afternoon. I removed the paper from the seat pocket in front of me and then flipped it around to hide the headline. My hand shook, and I tried to steady it so the lady sitting next to me wouldn't notice.

I tried to convince my mind to ignore the email I had received earlier that week. *It's anonymous. Might not be real.* That didn't seem to work, so I closed my eyes to try to force myself to sleep, but the image popped right back like a bad tune that just wouldn't go away.

=====

**Unknown**

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From: Unknown<Stevnellie9612@aol.com>  
To: Bill.Crossley@syscon.com  
Subject: FYI - Urgent

See below \*\*\*\*\*-///// -VVVVV

From: Manuel.Bonares@syscon.com  
To: Martha.Adelman@syscon.com, ManagersTeam@syscon.com  
Subject: Keep this private

Here is the list -- please keep this extremely quiet. These are the employees / Project Managers who the executives feel are our weakest. Mostly, they are looking at their productivity / reliability / time management skills, and whether or not they are getting overwhelmed by everything they have to do.

< Bill, I cut out the other names.>

- Bill Crossley, Project Manager, New Education Technologies Group

The VP's will let us know what to do next, so don't panic - this is a preliminary list. As you know, we have been overstaffed at the Project Manager level for some time, so it's only logical that this level will be the one that we tackle next.

Manuel

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I thought of my boss Martha. Knowing her hatred of confrontation, I thought, *she must be wetting her pants*. She was probably suffering as much as I was.

Or maybe I was the only one suffering.

*It isn't fair*. I deserved to keep my job. I had worked hard to put in long hours. But the results were now staring me in the face.

*Are my time management skills that bad?*

I glared at the seat in front of me as the plane made its final descent. The flight attendant gave out muffled instructions –blah, blah, blah - I had heard it a million times before, but all I could think about was how to turn this around. Sandy and the kids, plus Mom and Dad. They all depended on me.

And who the hell was Stevnellie9612@aol.com? Was it Joseph?

Poor guy. He was "restructured" just before Christmas last year, according to Ted, my colleague and ally in our division at Syscon. Now, he clocked in at the Starbucks on Alphonso Street every day, in his work clothes and with his briefcase. The rumor mill had it that his wife didn't have a clue that her family was now living on dwindling savings and his unemployment. He simply hadn't told her that he'd been fired. He was desperately trying to find something before funds ran out (or one of her friends ran into him on a latte run).

Did he send me the heads up? That didn't seem to fit, because the tone of the email wasn't friendly and there was no longer a reason for him to hide anything. I felt another cold chill. Would there be another mysterious email waiting for me in the office?

The napkin in my hands was now damp, even though the cabin was dry and cold enough to make my sinuses rasp.

"It just isn't fair," I grunted softly to myself.

Martha had dropped the first bomb on Tuesday morning, shortly before I left town and before the email had arrived. "Upper management" needed to cut "a few" more people to make its budget, and they had to identify the weakest staff members, especially at the Project Management level. My level. The information confirmed what the email said, but she had left out the part about my name being on the list.

"Their damned numbers" I spat, a little too loudly this time. Good thing the lady beside me was now dozing, oblivious to my low muttering.

Just a few minutes ago, she had been wide awake, flashing me a cute smile brightened by impossibly perfect teeth.

"I'm from South Yorkshire," she explained in an accent that explained why something felt strangely familiar.

"So are my grandparents!" I shot back with a happy smile. It was all enough to get her to glance at my ring finger before continuing with a joke about folks from that part of England. We laughed together for a few minutes as I shared a few sharp memories, warts and all. Granny and Grandpa were real salt of the earth people from a town she knew well.

When she relaxed into a deep sleep, my mind picked up where it left off. It still didn't feel fair.

Once again, I made a mental list of all the projects I was working on and the number of roles I was filling. The biggest one was the DAPE Project, which I'd been working on for over three years. DAPE was initiated by the executives of Syscon to harmonize a number of e-Learning courses that sat on several platforms across the company. It was a massive cleanup effort, undertaken to resolve a number of conflicting techniques.

Now, I had that job plus two others. *How did that happen?* First, there was the vacancy created two years ago when Anna was seconded to a company in California. Apparently, once it was all over, she'd received a letter asking her not to return to Syscon. Joseph was forced out to take up his new seat at the local Starbucks a year later. That left me to do their jobs as well as my own, and I worked longer days and weekends just to keep up. Now, my job was on the line for the very first time. My fists tightened, and I wondered, "What would I tell Sandy? What would I tell my kids?"

My jacket felt tight around my chest, and I shifted positions. In my lap lay a book I had picked up in the airport bookstore. The title leapt off the page: *2,002 Tips and Tricks in Time Management - Every Shortcut on the Planet!* It was bright yellow with hot red lettering and had the look of a cheap tabloid newspaper. I hadn't been looking for a book to purchase - I mostly bought eBooks - but this one was sitting beside the Times, and it seemed to offer some immediate help.

I was partway through it and opened back up to "Tip #450 - Get up Early." *Pure crud.* With a weary shake of my head, I closed the book for the last time and hid it behind the Times. It was a never-ending list of trivial bits and pieces that offered little more than titillation. *What nonsense.* And, supposedly, a New York Times Bestseller.

Whom was this written for? –The answer was obvious: *tired-out project managers who were scared of being laid off because of their sorry-ass time management skills.* My own stupid joke made me smile a bit. It faded when I remembered that I needed a real solution to this problem. Okay, so chasing down a bunch of tips and hoping for a short-term fix wouldn't work. *What the hell would?*

I glanced at the in-flight monitor overhead. It was 5:00 p.m. Right about now, Lizzy and Rebecca were probably playing in the living room, lost as usual in a game involving long legged Barbies and bright yellow monster trucks. Lizzy liked to pretend that Barbie modeled by day and pulled a night shift driving heavy trucks, which kept Rebecca laughing, even though she was less than a year old. I didn't think that I needed a son with the tough little girls I was raising. What they didn't know was that Sandy and I desperately needed to refinance our mortgage in order to keep that living room.

Like many of other people, we were stuck with one of those ARM mortgage payments that increased dramatically early in the prior year. We applied for a new loan at the local bank, but they told us we needed to put up more cash. We were saving as much as we could, thinking that it might take about a year to hit the targeted amount. In the meantime, the payments kept increasing every quarter, putting a further strain on our finances.

Losing the job would mean... The thought of losing our home made my eyes well up. I blinked hard, fighting back the anger bubbling inside. Every time I imagined something bad happening to the kids I got pissed. Realizing I was the one who had caused it... well, that only made it worse.

Amazingly, I hadn't even thought about Martha, Syscon or anything about my situation since I fell asleep on the flight to Shreveport last Tuesday. I had been going, going, going since then and had done nothing but meet, sleep, talk, listen and travel until today, Sunday. Those few days of being too busy to think about that email had felt like a vacation from my situation.

When my plane landed with a bump at 6 p.m. I felt that little release of tension that comes from being on the ground, so I brightened a bit. It was Sunday, after all. I was heading home to Sandy and the kids, straight to my easy chair in the living room. I'd be able to turn on the TV while trying again to forget.

There was no way I could tell Sandy. This was too damned big for her to handle; one stressed-out Crossley was one too many. *No depressing news.*

At the carousels, I called Carruther's - the limo company – only to find that my driver was delayed for an hour. Only slightly pissed off, I decided that there were worse things than being stuck in Newark airport, the so-called “armpit of America,” on a Sunday night.

To kill time, I headed to the bar in Terminal C. A beer would help, I decided. Then, maybe, I could see if the I.T. guys had the patch ready. A virus had wreaked havoc on Outlook, leaving me unable to access my messages for the entire trip. I.T. sent me a text message on Saturday letting me know that there was a patch I could download via the company website, but now I had a new problem. My battery, which should have been replaced months ago, had lost its charge. The charger was in the drawer of my cubicle in the office. I'd have to borrow one.

With my laptop and carry-on in hand, I glanced around slowly, looking for an open stool in the dimly lit, sticky-floored room. I chose a worn out stool in the corner that had borne the weight of too many travelers for too many years. I struggled to balance myself on a cushion that felt as if it were built for a teenager, and I wheeled my stuff into the space between the stool and the wall.

Forgetting about the beer, I ordered a Screwdriver and asked around for a charger. I got lucky on the fifth beg, and I reminded myself that a great business trip was built on small victories just like this.

Within a few minutes, Syscon's servers someplace in Kansas flooded 456 new messages into my email Inbox, courtesy of the Wi-Fi network. 456. On Sunday. We were only a little 1000-person technology firm that offered e-Learning platforms, not the army, but the workload felt like we were about to launch Desert Storm.

My Tzinbox score was -5, on a scale of -10 to +10. The program's warning lights flashed an angry red to tell me I was probably in big trouble. The software was an optional add-on that we used to determine how close we were to the ideal - the Zero Inbox. Not everyone used it, but I liked being on top of things by working through all my incoming email in one go so that it left the Inbox clear and empty. Usually, I had all green lights.

Now, my indicators were all going crazy - the age of the oldest message and the average age of each message were higher than I had ever seen them. But I didn't need the program to tell me how things were going. I knew I was in trouble. Even though I liked "being on top of things," it told me a sad fact. I hadn't achieved a Zero inbox for an entire week in over a year.

I muttered quietly to myself as I desperately glanced through the list of subject lines and senders, hoping that I was looking at a ton of Spam rather than legitimate stuff. Wishful thinking. Three meager pieces of junk mail had escaped the filters, but I was looking at many hours of work just to get back on track. And, to make matters worse, there was an all-day staff retreat planned for Monday.

Completely forgotten. *How did I miss that?*

The tension returned to my shoulders before it spread to my neck and into the small, weak spots in my back. I wished that I had taken a seat at one of the booths so that I could lean back and close my eyes. To get rid of the tight feeling, I stretched upwards on the stool and pulled my arms behind me in a weak imitation of the warm-up I used to do before high-school swimming workouts.

I knew these messages meant several days of long evenings and early mornings, trying to catch up. A week of living in hope that I didn't miss anything important. A half a month of stress.

Sandy hated when I brought work home instead of paying attention to the family, but tonight had to be an exception. Closing down my laptop, I decided that I was too tired to focus on all that email. Instead, I picked up some bits and pieces of the New Jersey Herald, the Washington Post, and US News and World Report as I finished my drink.

Outside on the sidewalk, several hundred tired travelers all had the same look on their faces and probably the same thought in mind: "What am I doing at the airport on a warm, Sunday evening? There was still plenty of light out, and jackets and ties loosened and came off.

Standing next to me, a younger guy clicked furiously away at his BrainPhone. He didn't look up once as he hailed his limo, gave the driver his bags, and sat in the back seat. He had a few words with the driver before the vehicle drove off. He didn't look up once. I smiled. It was a piece of well-rehearsed business-traveler ballet. But, not for the first time, I began to think that he was doing a better job with his smartphone than I was doing with my laptop and cell phone combined.

When my driver from Carruthers finally showed up, I slid into the backseat and settled down for a boring ride home, wishing that I could also spend the travel time dealing with email. As I stared out at the landscape of bright, metallic chemical factories, I sniffed the air and then wrinkled my nose. It all helped to make Newark such a charming airport, I thought, when the subject line of an email popped into my mind.

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**Martha Adelman**

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From: Martha Adelman  
To: DapeTeam@syscon.com, Directors@syscon.com  
Subject: SRD Project Delayed.  
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I gasped as we turned onto the ramp for the Turnpike. I tried hard to remember. *Did I tell Martha that the project received new funding? She should never have sent that email. Did she copy anyone in senior management on the message?* My pulse raced as my mind feverishly went over all the nasty things that could happen if she had.

My weakly charged laptop was stuffed in the trunk with the rest of my stuff, so all I could do on the ride home to Piscataway was hope that I hadn't screwed up.

*I need to do better.*

The email and the conversation with Martha - these were real. If I kept losing track...

Ever since Joseph left, I had been forgetting to do all sorts of things at work and at home. Shouldn't that be expected when an employee, even a good one, is forced to do so many jobs at once?

Sandy had noticed and gotten upset with me more than a few times. The worst was when I arrived over an hour late to pick up Lizzy from school. Now, at work, I was rumored to be a weak member of the team.

Locking my jaws, I told myself that I needed to make sure that this SRD bullstuff didn't get me fired, no matter what. This recession was no time to be messing around at work, especially when layoffs were on the horizon. If I wasn't serious before, I needed to get focused now, before I ended up with a promotion to the Starbucks branch of Syscon.

*But where the heck should I start?*

\* \* \*

It was still light outside when my limo pulled up in front of our home on Wentworth Road just after 8 p.m. As we turned the corner into the development and I got my first glimpse of our house, I felt a tiny glow of pride. Sandy and I owned a 4-bedroom colonial in Piscataway - about 30-40 minutes drive from the airport, depending on the traffic. It was painted white with black shutters, which really stood out from the neighbors' houses. I had painted them myself and they looked pretty, overlooking hedges with purple flowers right beside a solid white picket fence.

Our home wasn't the biggest in the development; my salary was barely enough to pay our expenses each month. I used to care about not getting ahead fast enough. Some of my engineering peers from Rutgers were now partners in big consulting firms and vice presidents at banks on Wall Street. Here I was, playing the role of Project Manager in a no-name company in New Jersey, but who cared? Being a good provider for my family was more important than career success.

Then, my heart skipped a beat as I remembered the mess that had been created on the SRD Project. Could it land me on the list of people to lose their jobs? What if we lost the house because I couldn't turn things around? I once again imagined a conversation with my parents about moving in with them until we could get back on our feet. *Simply awful*. My strength was being a good provider. Without that...

Shaking my head quietly, I thought, *Gotta put an end to mistakes like this before I produce a real doozy*.

I had to handle the messages in my inbox immediately. I needed to make sure that things weren't as bad as they seemed.

That guy at the airport had probably gotten through all of his email already, between the curb and the ride home. His family was probably happy to get his full attention at this very moment.

As I paid for my limo, I made my decision. It was time to get a smartphone. It would help stop the errors and I'd have access to email whenever I wanted. Maybe I'd get a BrainPhone like everyone else at work, but I needed the absolute newest and best one.

Lugging my stuff to the front door, I quietly let myself in. This was our usual ritual. I'd try to sneak in to surprise everyone and they'd try to catch me before I got too far. As I clicked the door shut and stepped into the dark foyer, my daughter Lizzy came running, full of squeals, hugs and kisses. Her freckles were just starting to disappear; she looked less like a ten-year-old and more like a teenager every day. Every time I was away from her, she seemed to get just a little bit bigger and older.

Sandy stretched out her arms to surround me in a big, long hug; she squeezed me hard, but I barely noticed. My attention was already in cyberspace, answering SRD emails and finding a BrainPhone store online. Google search terms were already lining themselves up...

My cyber-dreaming stopped when she took my head in her hands and looked me in the eyes. "Bill, Honey..." She was wearing her favorite New York Yankees cap over her dark hair, a T-shirt, jeans and sneakers. Lizzy didn't actually play soccer, but Sandy relished the role of "soccer Mom" and didn't miss her career as a student counselor for even a minute. On most of my first nights back from a business trip, I'd hold her for just a few extra minutes until one of us initiated a game of "How is every little thing?" We'd repeat the question back and forth for a few minutes until one of us ran out of answers. It was our way of checking in after not seeing each other for a long time.

This time, she remembered, but I simply forgot. Sandy quickly asked "Is everything okay? Even every little thing?" She still had the kindest eyes I had ever seen, as they looked quietly into mine, filled with a question I didn't want to answer.

"Yeah, just tired from the trip," I sighed as I kissed six-month-old Rebecca. The truth was that I couldn't wait to put Lizzy to bed and get everything off my mind. Half an hour later, after both kids fell asleep and Sandy started washing up my plates, I slunk upstairs to my home office to start sorting through my email.

First, I searched for a profile for Stevnellie9612@aol.com, but the account had been completely deactivated. There was nothing else I could do to find out who the mysterious sender was.

Fortunately for me, Martha's SRD email was a non-issue. Someone else on the team had corrected her errant message, and we had moved on. I took note of the fact that if I'd had a smartphone, her original email wouldn't have fazed me. All that worrying about making her look feckless wouldn't have happened.

Within the hour, an order for the newest-model BrainPhone was whizzing through cyberspace from a warehouse somewhere in the world, courtesy of eBay, FedEx, and the other gods of online shopping. Once I ordered it, I was amazed at the way the all-knowing Google immediately started flashing banner ads featuring the BrainPhone on every page. One promised "A 50% boost in Productivity. Right Now," and I felt comforted, even though I couldn't shake a nagging thought: *what if this tactic was no better than any of the "Two Thousand and Two Tips in Time Management? What if it failed to get the job done? What then?*

Later that night, as I lay in bed with Sandy, she asked "How did the trip go? Whom did you meet? What did you say? Then what did they say?" These were all the details that she liked to hear, and I normally hated discussing them. Tonight, however, it felt comforting and took my mind off my big dilemma. I didn't want her to worry at all about my situation at work, so I answered the fresh urgency of her questions with quiet accuracy.

I felt better until she told me about the Hernandezes and what was happening to them in Florida.

They were our neighbors and friends -- Rafael and Tonia. Both our families had moved into the Pembroke Lions development in Miramar, near Fort Lauderdale, ten years ago. Luckily, our family returned to New Jersey before the recession started. Dad's first transient ischemic attack made that a no-brainer. From a few thousand miles away, we watched as South Florida suffered some of the worst depreciation in real estate values in the country. Unfortunately, the Hernandezes' home quickly lost about 40% of its value, and their mortgage payments ballooned by over \$500 per month. The real disaster struck when Tonia got pregnant and was ordered to leave her job and take full bed rest, just before Rafael's construction company started losing a lot of money. This last fact was new to me, but it made sense.

"He's looking for painting jobs now and the bank is about to foreclose their property. The job market has fallen apart. They sounded awful; Tonia was crying, and poor Rafael couldn't even talk to me. I hope this thing ends soon. Thank God we moved from Florida before all this happened and we aren't in any trouble."

I couldn't talk. My pulse was hammering in my head and I pretended to be half-asleep, afraid that she'd hear my voice shake in the dark. In a bid to end the conversation, I muttered something incomprehensible and tired sounding.

"Even though we moved here to take care of your parents, it was a smart decision. By the way, your Dad wants to talk to you. He wants to get some test done that's not covered by insurance, so he needs to borrow some more money. Thank goodness we are stable and you have a reliable job -- the poor Hernandezes. Thanks for taking care of us, Honey."

She often said this, especially when she talked about how much it meant to our kids to have a stay-at-home Mom. A few minutes later, Sandy was asleep. My body wouldn't cooperate and I stayed wide awake. A cold fear surged through my muscles, which were as tense as piano wires. It was my first sleepless night courtesy of Syscon's layoff list.

\* \* \*

I looked at the clock after what seemed like an eternity – only 2:30 a.m. Lying in bed, I tried to think of what I would do if my smartphone gambit didn't work.

At around 5:00 a.m. I rose to get a cup of coffee then flicked on my laptop. I wanted to get ahead of the day by working off some of the email backlog.

Great. Now I had only 490 email messages.

I started going through them, but by 6:45, I was still groggy. It was time to get to the office, and the email count was now at 455. While I worked, 12 new ones had arrived.

*What was I supposed to do?* I thought angrily, *I'm not some slave to everyone's email!*

Sandy called out, "Time to get to work, Honey," so I reluctantly got up to take a shower, still feeling upset. *I may never catch up.... and what the hell does it mean if I don't?* The thought kept running through my mind as my body went through the motions of getting ready.

Before I knew it, I was pulling up into Syscon's parking lot in Holmdel, a town in south-central New Jersey. Nothing had registered that morning. Sandy, Lizzy, Rebecca, breakfast, the drive to the office. Just as I pulled up the emergency brake in my Saturn, my cell phone rang.

Sandy asked, "Is everything okay? You seemed a bit preoccupied this morning." The concern in her voice was hard for me to hear. I hated the thought of her worrying, and I hated my job for making me feel this way. Biting my lip, I remembered a promise made during much more difficult times: *to never allow my precious wife to slip back into depression.*

"No, darling, it's just that I was looking ahead at what I'd have to do catch up." I stopped and listened, hoping that her concerns would go away.

"Okay," she said, "but remember that you can always talk to me about anything." As an afterthought, she added "You should read this book I'm reading -- it's about how to be inspired by making a difference in the world and how we don't need to be a King or a Lincoln to do great things." She was so utterly sincere and innocent that in the couple of seconds before I could catch myself, my eyes began to flood with tears.

A forced chuckle came from somewhere, sounding hollow and empty. "Nothing to worry about, Honey... but I have to go, as I'm still in the parking lot; plus, I bet Lizzy is asking for her crunchy Cheerios right about now." She laughed back, and her concern seemed to go away. That was good enough for me, for now, so I quickly ended the call and stepped into the parking lot.

\* \* \*

Most people had never heard of Syscon and had no idea what happened behind its whitewashed walls.

To the average outsider, our techie work sounded pretty boring, but I loved it. In fact, I enjoyed it so much that Syscon was the only place I'd wanted to work when I returned from Florida. This was my second stint with the company. The first lasted from 1994 to 2000 and ended when Sandy and I left to live in Florida.

After we moved back to New Jersey in 2005, I was happy to get an offer to return. While working for an insurance company in Florida, I missed the sense of being on a grand quest to educate the world, which was close to Syscon's mission statement.

In spite of all those warm feelings, the last few months had been difficult. Doing the job of three people was hard: I didn't have the time to think freely and come up with new ideas, which I used to treasure. Also, instead of being an industry leader, the company was stuck in competitors' tracks, which made me feel wary. It was a far cry from where we used to be, defining and dominating the computer-based learning industry without much effort.

As I looked up at the building, I felt a pang of disappointment. Syscon's exterior needed a fresh coat of paint, but the building's design still looked quite modern. It was built just before I joined the company the first time, a few years before the Dotcom boom. Upon close inspection, it was obvious that the building wasn't properly maintained. Our senior management just hadn't kept the place up. Broken panes, cracked walkways and missing fixtures would make a keen observer take a second look. A line item budgeted on a spreadsheet had obviously been cut, and it was showing.

The place looked like a dump; it reflected the company owners' state of mind. They were now squeezing 1,000 people into a space designed for 500. A big part of the building was leased to other tenants.

Simply, it was difficult to get excited about doing three jobs each day with no end in sight. According to Ted, my closest colleague at work, "Nowadays, it's all brute force and ignorance." Instead of executing a fine painting like a Renaissance artist, I felt like an ordinary painter from New Jersey who just got the job done using sheer force of will.

As I climbed the stairs to enter the building, I thought about the two goals I needed to accomplish: first, I had to get Martha to approve the purchase of the new BrainPhone that was already being shipped to me via UPS. Given the number of smartphones being carried around Syscon, that wouldn't be too hard.

The second was to show her that I was making a solid attempt to distance myself from the list of those "Most Likely to be Voted Out of the Company." Way too much time watching "Survivor", I thought wryly.

After rehearsing my arguments, I was ready. After all, I'd be using the BP for work and \$350 was almost too much for me to handle on my own, considering Lizzy's overdue need for braces. Martha should be willing, I told myself, especially if it would benefit her and Syscon.

As I practiced making my case, I crossed the expensive, Italian marble floors that would never have been installed in these recessionary times. They were still shiny, and the glass atrium let in an abundance of light, lifting the spirits even on cold wintry days. My office was on the third floor, not quite overlooking the sunniest part of the atrium, but near enough to benefit from the generosity of light. I sometimes wondered how office layout affected employee productivity, because the tone shifted markedly once I turned the corner from the corridor into my cubicle farm. I shared a space with 30 people, all squeezed between short walls that rose just above waist height.

My hutch was on the other side of the room, so I had to pass through the crowd to get to its safety. It wasn't so bad this early in the morning, but by 10:00 a.m. the place would look like an ants' nest and sound like a disco. I remembered the scenes from the old movie, "Saturday Night Fever," when John Travolta entered the dance club and had to say hello to everyone, just because they were there and because there were so many of them. By the time I got to my chair, I was exhausted. Being away from the daily routine for a few days always had this effect.

Dropping my briefcase on the floor, I tried not to notice the six-inch stack of papers sitting on my chair or the flashing light on my telephone, telling me that I had voicemail waiting. Instead, I made my way right over to Martha's office. "This should be easy," I imagined. In fact, in the good old days, I would have just picked up the device from the stockroom.

As I caught sight of her silhouette through the frosted glass panel that framed her door, I immediately felt that familiar pull of affection. Right after I had entered the company as a young pup, she had taken me in hand and transformed me from a green college graduate who thought he knew everything into a working professional with a more open mind. She never stopped looking out for my best interests, standing in my corner even when I failed and made her look bad. I trusted her.

Martha took a moment to look up after she heard me rap on her door. Lately, she had taken to wearing reading glasses all the time, which made her look much older than her 55 years. Some gray wisps peeked through her brown, highlighted hair.

She looked alert, but a little frazzled for a Monday morning. "Tough weekend?" I asked as she smiled and welcomed me in. "Not quite, but I'm glad you're back. How was the trip?"

I sat down and told her all about my travel through three airports, the email outage, and the death of my battery. She listened closely with a nod and a laugh as I hyped up the difficult moments. I also gave her a short update on my end of the DAPE project.

"Well, you didn't miss anything too exciting while you were gone," she admitted before updating me on my other projects and the meetings that I had missed.

"Thanks for doing that," I offered, even though it was standard practice.

"Will you be at the department meeting today?"

With a groan of sudden realization, I asked, "Do I really have to go to that? I desperately need to catch up, and I bet I'm getting messages asking why I hadn't responded to earlier messages."

"Just show your face for an hour, maybe before lunch, so you can see and be seen." We both laughed; this running gag had started the day I joined Syscon. Martha had been forced to repeat a ridiculous company policy about "networking" that we boiled down to nothing more than, "See and Be Seen." Any time we wanted to make fun of a showboating colleague, we'd laugh and say "See and Be Seen", sometimes in the middle of meetings, just for amusement.

"Great, now I can really get some work done. I almost stayed home to work through all my email in peace and quiet. But I do want to ask you something. I was wondering... I wouldn't have fallen behind on my email this week if I had had a BrainPhone. Would Syscon pay for me to get one?" I didn't mention that it was already on its way.

She paused for a moment and stood up to close her door. "Actually, that's a good idea, but I want to give you some feedback that you need to hear. It's not all pretty, unfortunately."

This is the end of the first Chapter of Bill's Im-Perfect Time management Adventure - thanks for reading. The next page provides links to some key resources.

## Where to Go Next

Thanks for reading *Bill's Im-Perfect Time Management Adventure*. Please share your impressions of the book using an Amazon Review, a share on Facebook, or a Tweet. We are also on Goodreads.

If I have done my job well as an author, then you probably have a number of questions that you didn't have before you clicked or flipped open this book. If you belong to one of the following groups, follow the appropriate links to specific pages on <http://perfect.mytimedesign.com> to learn more about what I call "The Bill Book."

If none of these categories apply to you, simply visit the pages that you find the most interesting, and come visit the reader's discussion forum at <http://perfect.mytimedesign.com/forums>.

### Coach, Consultant, Trainer or Professional Organizer

Like G, you advise working adults on how to improve their time management or time clutter skills. Visit <http://perfect.mytimedesign.com/g-coaching> to find out how to improve your own performance as an adviser, use content from the book with your clients, and get qualified as a Certified Time Management Adviser (CTMA.)

### Project or Team Manager

Like Bill, your job is to supervise other people who (you hope) are improving their time management skills so that they keep up with a tough job or challenging project. Getting them into the kaizen frame of mind can be a challenge, but you can find some answers here: <http://perfect.mytimedesign.com/bill-as-pm>.

### Self-Improving Lifehacker

Bill, Ted and Mike might be more like you: people who want to get better because they either love the experience of learning or simply want practical results that improve on the past. If you like to do that kind of work on yourself, then visit <http://perfect.mytimedesign.com/mike-nutz>.

### Executive, Entrepreneur or Hard-Driving Careerist

Martha, Andre and Vernon all wanted practical business results, and like you they sometimes get impatient as they wait to get them. Your attention is on the bottom line so you want to get dramatic improvements in your performance as quickly as possible. Waste no time in checking out <http://perfect.mytimedesign.com/executive>.

### Training and Development Professional

Unfortunately, Syscon didn't have someone in this role due to its lack of progressive thinking. Nevertheless, RingCORE's HR Lab showed strong signs that some pretty smart people were behind the scenes, and they turned Andre's ideas into on-the-ground programs and interventions. You are someone with a similar role, and you can get some help at: <http://perfect.mytimedesign.com/train-and-dev-admin>.

### Academic Researcher

You are one of the few researchers in the world with an interest in a field that's critical to every single business person, every single day, but has no home in academia. The sources of the ideas that underlie Time Management 2.0 may interest you. If you can't wait for my next book, then visit: <http://perfect.mytimedesign.com/g-as-academic>.

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