Return on Minute

As Director of Operations in the Office of the CEO at Microsoft, I ran quarterly time audits with 15-minute precision. One pattern was impossible to miss: male executives received significantly more unplanned access to Senior Leadership than their female counterparts. Not because of performance. Because of proximity. And proximity is a function of time dedicated to promotable tasks and non-promotable tasks (NPTs).

That experience led me to build the **Return on Minute R.I.S.E. Matrix** — a decision framework that guides you on what to do, negotiate, approve, or eliminate. Ideal for quick decisions on unexpected requests. The goal isn't to stop contributing. It's to stop contributing for free.

The R.I.S.E. Matrix classifies each NPT across two axes: **career return** and **assignment origin:**

- **Career Return** — Does this build visibility, management recognition, relationships, or skills that advance *my* goals?
- **Assignment Origin** — Did I choose this, or did it arrive because of who I am?

How To RISE: Categorize tasks or projects into four quadrants:

- **Return** — High career return, you chose it. These are the NPTs worth protecting: the ERG leadership role that puts you in the room with the CHRO, the mentoring relationship that's genuinely two-way, the cross-functional project that expands your scope. Do these.
- **Investment** — High career return, assigned to you. These deserve scrutiny, not automatic acceptance. The ask may be legitimate and the opportunity real — but don't absorb these silently. Negotiate the terms, timeline, and recognition explicitly.
- **Selflessness** — Low career return, you picked. Sometimes you take on tasks that won't advance your career but build organizational goodwill or reflect your values. That's a legitimate choice — as long as it's a *choice*, not a default. Approve and audit annually.
- **Expense** — Low career return, assigned to you. This is the invisible tax in its purest form: the meeting notes no one reads, the committee that meets quarterly to produce nothing. These are the hours that built someone else's career while stalling yours. Eliminate these.

	LOW CAREER RETURN	HIGH CAREER RETURN
CHOSEN	**Selflessness** Meets personal values. Approve and audit annually.	**Return** High strategic value. Protect the time. Do these.
ASSIGNED	**Expense** Invisible tax in its purest form. Eliminate these.	**Investment** Real opportunity. Negotiate terms explicitly.

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Your NPT Audit

The RISE Matrix tells you what to do with each commitment. The audit tells you what you're actually carrying.

Step 1: Pull your last 90 days. Log every recurring commitment, one-off meeting, and project. Flag anything NPT: behind-the-scenes, not tied directly to your core priorities, something anyone could have done.

Step 2: Run each item through the RISE matrix. What was the career return? Did you choose this, or was it assigned — and if assigned, why you? "I felt I couldn't say no" is a data point, not a justification.

Step 3: Quantify the tax. Total the hours. Multiply by four. If the research average holds anywhere near your experience, you'll find something close to 200 hours — five weeks — committed to work that isn't building your career. Write that number down.

Step 4: Identify one exit and one negotiation. Don't overhaul everything at once. Exit one Expense commitment — gracefully, with a transition plan. Renegotiate one Investment commitment explicitly: ask for credit, scope reduction, or recognition.

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DATE:________________

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	Item	**Item**
ASSIGNED	**Expense** Invisible tax in its purest form. Eliminate these.	**Investment** Real opportunity. Negotiate terms explicitly.
	Item	**Item**

Return On Minute Free Resource
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