



Adam Lacey: Welcome to this Leading Future Humans audio series from Assemble You and Liggy Webb. My name is Adam, co-founder of Assemble You, the audio learning experts, and in this series, I'm joined by author of *Resilience: How To Cope When Everything Around You Keeps Changing*, international speaker and behavioural skills specialist, Liggy Webb.

The original Future Human series focused on a set of human behavioural skills identified by various research, including the World Economic Forum, as skills for the future that will be essential to us in the coming years. In the first series we explored each of these in depth and examined why they are important and how we can individually improve at them.

In this second series we're looking at how as leaders we can support developing that same set of skills in the people that we lead. We're excited to dive into each of these topics. As before, this Leading Future Human series is all delivered via audio and designed to be consumed on the go. So Liggy, what are we talking about today?

Liggy Webb: Today, Adam, we're talking about leading time management.

Adam Lacey: Brilliant. A favourite topic of mine. But first let's look at why is this topic so important and why should we, as leaders, care about this one?

Liggy Webb: Well, time is of the essence, isn't it? We're living in a world where I think so many people are feeling time-starved. I know we have numerous conversations where we say, we're just so busy.

We've got loads on our plate and we wish we had more hours in the day. The reality is we only have so much time that we're delivered each morning into our time account. And we do need to be very mindful about how we spend that. And of course, as leaders, we've got our own time management, but we also have to support other people within our teams managing their time as well, so how we approach time, our behaviours around time. And also having some of the skills that are useful in terms of managing our time as well, because let's face it, time is the most precious commodity that we have.

Adam Lacey: It is. It's perpetually slipping away as they say. Yeah, agree completely there.

I think you can't do everything, neither can your team so you've got to get that balance right. And if you don't and if your team doesn't, then the consequences can be quite dire, can lead to burnout, can lead to feelings of fatigue. It can lead to poor productivity. It can lead to bad decision making.

It can lead to stressed staff, demotivated staff, confused expectations, people leaving the business. So I think this is maybe a bit more of a tactical one from the Future Human point of view and the set of behavioural skills that we're looking at in this series, but it's actually incredibly important.

Should we move on to the first question here, which is how do we role model this as a leader? And for all of these, we're looking at both how we enable this, but also some of the barriers and how we take some of those barriers down. Liggy, kick us off with a few of the ways that maybe we can help role model this as leaders.

Liggy Webb: Okay. First of all is respect. It's about respecting our time, our own time, but it's very important in respecting the time of people within your team. There are so many examples I see where people aren't respectful of other people's time. I think a classic one is when people show up late for meetings so people are just hanging around. It's dead time for a lot of people. And then people rock up late and they haven't got themselves particularly organised. I think as a leader, it's so important to be respectful of other people's time and not keep other people waiting. I think that when we do keep people waiting, it demonstrates that we don't value them.

I think that's the bottom line really so I can't begin to emphasise how important that is. It's being respectful of other people's time, showing up for meetings, not keeping people waiting. Also, when it comes to time management is thinking about prioritisation because we may have things that are really important to us and obviously people have things that are very important to them and as a leader, we shouldn't override other people's priorities. We should have that conversation, have that debate, have that negotiation so we make sure that again, we're respectful about people's priorities as well. And the other point that I'd really like to get across around role modelling and leading time management is being realistic about how much time people have got to do things there's a lot of pressure and there's a lot of demand these days, people's expectations, they want things and they want it now so just being aware of what can be achieved in a limited amount of time.

Adam Lacey: Yeah I love all of those. I think one of the ones I liked in particular on this as well around role modelling, is being clear on your own boundaries. And this whole idea of saying no, what you'll say no to, because I think if you do that really effectively and you're clear with your team in terms of what you can do and what you can't do, then they will role model that.

If you're the kind of person who says yes to everything and takes on too much and gets overwhelmed and then nothing gets done or a little bit of everything gets done, but nothing gets completed. That's quite a classic one that you see with bad time management. You're basically giving people the green light to do that themselves and to take on too much because they feel that they can't say no to stuff because you as the manager never say no to anything. So I think that's a real important one for role modelling. So say no and explain why, but then also I think educate others on this. So explain the techniques and the tricks and the tips that you have learned over time to be better in these ways. I think this is overlooked actually by loads of leaders, especially if people may be new to the workforce, school leavers, graduates, people transitioning from frontline work into desk-based work or something like that, where you're in control of your day all of a sudden, and you need to learn how to prioritise.

And so that needs to be properly explained and actually modelled by you as a leader. So what are you doing to show people how to actually do that? And I would go as far as like explaining your processes and explaining your thought patterns and explaining why this thing is a priority over that thing and why that thing is delegated or why that thing isn't ever going to get done and just keep reiterating those points. Very quickly you're then role-modelling the behaviour that you want to see, and you'll see that coming through in your team, I'd say.

Liggy Webb: And encouraging the team as well to share best practice because when I work in teams, I learn so much in terms of how people manage their time.

Opening up that discussion and being able to share lots of different techniques, because we are living in a world where we need to become more and more efficient at what we do. Certainly learning some of those time saving habits is really good. The other key thing around role modelling time management is being well organised because that really underpins our ability to be great time managers. If we arrive in our day without any plan, without any kind of organisation, then the chances are we're going to be chasing our tail on a regular basis. So definitely being well organised sends out a really good message.

Adam Lacey: Yeah, I've recently read a book called Timeboxing by Marc Zao-Sanders, who is actually an old former boss of mine and is a genuine guru in regards to time management. He's incredible at it. And he's written this whole book, just search timeboxing and Marc Zao-Sanders, and you'll find it. I can't remember the full name of the book, but his whole thing is about just being more purposeful with your day and your time and timeboxing is the technique that he talks about in the book, allocating specific times to completing specific tasks in your day.

And how he does it is he puts it into his calendar and his calendar is normally publicly available to the team so people can put in calls or see what he's up to. Publicity almost is a way, a really powerful way, of role modelling that particular technique just to show that these are the priorities, these are things that are being worked on.

These are things that are important as well. And I think that transparency is really important. I really like that about timeboxing, especially if you're using an electronic calendar, which, let's be honest, most of us are these days in the world of knowledge workers. That's a pretty nice way A) to be more organised, but B) to show others and promote that amongst your team.

Liggy Webb: That's an excellent example of time management, that transparency, because so often we don't understand each other's priorities because we don't really know what's going on. We assume that everybody else has got loads of time, but we're really struggling. Having more transparency, more open communication within the team, this is why I think, having those morning huddles is really good or standups or whatever, however you want describe them, if you're working as a team on some kind of collaboration, if you get together from the outset and everybody can explain what they're working on, you've got that transparency, haven't you?

And you're communicating and you have more respect, I think, for what people are doing and their priorities. So open communication and transparency is really helpful.

Adam Lacey: Okay, brilliant. So what are some of the barriers that we're going to face here? Role modelling this as a leader, where are we going to come up against issues?

Liggy Webb: One of the biggest barriers that I'm seeing at the moment, I'm working with quite an eclectic range of organisations and there seems to be this common theme at the moment that there is just way too much on people's plates.

I think we're moving at such a relentless pace that sometimes we don't take time out to just stop and think "What are we actually doing here?" Because there is this expression called busy where we're all running around and we're being really busy and we've got loads to do, but actually when we take some time to step back and reflect, it may be that some of those tasks that we're doing they're not that productive, there might be even be quite redundant. One of the barriers is just too much on our plate. One of the solutions to that is to take time to really reflect on what we're doing and challenge all the time, what we're doing.

Adam Lacey: And I guess as a team leader, building that practice, maybe into team meetings, is a good first step, isn't it? You can talk about what, what is being worked on, what are the priorities, reiterate those and help people refocus if they are wandering into different areas. I feel it myself actually all the time, because I definitely get asked to do more things than I have time for a lot of the time, like recent examples, I've been asked to host, be a guest host on two different podcasts and I said yes, because I'm really excited about it. I definitely want to do it. It's really nice to be asked. Is that a real big priority for the organisation right now? Probably not. This is one that's more for the soul, but if I was looking at it from an organisational point of view, I probably just, I should say no to that type of stuff from a time management perspective, especially if you've got a very busy window coming up. It's really tricky and it's not easy. And I think as a leader explain why you say yes to some stuff and why you say no to other things, I think that goes a really long way to helping others model that behaviour as well and that's not something that we would necessarily implicitly do either, but that can really help people in your team understand what's important and what isn't.

Liggy Webb: And you've just given a really good example, Adam, how sometimes with our enthusiasm we can end up committing ourselves to doing things because we might get excited.

We like the sound or the look of that. Again, getting that balance is really important between being reactive and being responsive. If we're being reactive all the time with firefighting, we're shooting from the hip, and that's not going to help us to use our time in a really smart way. And what we need to do is to be a bit more reflective on occasions so that we can be more responsive. It's that balance between urgency and diligence. I don't know if you've ever come across the Eisenhower principle. There's a matrix where we really look at the sort of tasks that we've got, what are important and what are urgent and really understanding that taking time to step back and consider things that we might be very reactive to. They might not be the important things. They appear to be urgent, but they're not necessarily the most important. So getting that balance is really important.

Adam Lacey: It's a bit like the Pareto principle, isn't it? 80 percent of whatever revenue, say, if you're a business, will come from 20 percent of your work.

You've really got to identify that 20 percent and focus on that rather than getting lost in the other 80. Great. Okay. So let's move on to stories. If you've got any stories you'd like to share around time management, good, bad, or ugly?

Liggy Webb: I think there's a few examples, but I always remember my dad saying to me, the most precious gift that you can ever give to anybody

is time. And it's so true, isn't it? Because when you actually create time and space for people, that's a real compliment, isn't it? And I think that when we think about time as a gift, then that, that helps us to respect it more. So when we're organising our time, we need to be considering making space for our team as well.

Sometimes I see leaders who are just very busy and they simply don't have time for their teams so when we're factoring in prioritising things, we need to also think what amount of time are we giving to each individual in our team as well? It's getting that balance between process driven and getting things done, but also making sure that we're very people-orientated as well. That investment, that time investment that we put into people, is going to return multifold in terms of building up that relationship.

Adam Lacey: Yeah, no, I agree. That's a really good point. And it's also one of the more difficult things to give as well, isn't it, in a leadership scenario, especially when you're getting stuff thrown at you left, right and centre and an overwhelming number of requests.

My advice is hold a few things sacrosanct and one of those should be a regular catch-up with the people that are your direct reports. I think encourage them to make the most of that time. Explain how to work best with you, if you want stuff in a certain format, if you want to see some numbers, if you want to talk about those numbers, whatever, just make sure the organisation is there, both from yourself and from the people working for you, make sure they come along prepared, but then yeah, protect that time.

And if you can't do that particular slot, for whatever reason, you move it to another time that week, rather than canceling it if possible. I think that would be my top advice. Move, don't cancel.

Liggy Webb: Another story that always springs to mind when I think about time is the hare and the tortoise.

Do you remember that story? There's the hare rushing around at breakneck speed; you expect them to win, but of course the tortoise wins in the end. And I think this is a classic example of sometimes if we want to go a bit faster we need to slow down and that can be very powerful in terms of helping us to manage our time building in reflection points into our daily plan to just take a little bit of time as a leader to stop back and reflect and think about you know Is this the best use of my time?

Challenge yourself and the other thing as well is encourage your team to do that. If your team doesn't feel that you're spending your time in the best possible way, have that open, honest environment so that they can feed that back to you because sometimes we get into habits, we are creatures of habits

and sometimes we're not always consciously aware of what we're doing perhaps with our time.

Adam Lacey: Yeah, exactly. I'm forever telling certain people in our team, delegate that to somebody else, because I know that they love doing it or they really love getting deep into a problem and solving it. And then as soon as they've solved it, I'm like, "Okay, well, if it needs to be solved again, then get that off to somebody else and you move on to the next problem." Encourage your people to play to their strengths as well and be both critical of their own leaders of how they're spending their time, but also inwardly critical of how their time is being used. And like you said, that self-reflection piece is incredibly important for that. How do you encourage that? Model it for a start and explain what you're doing and have that open and honest conversation and debate around where time is being spent and what's really important and in any leadership position in a business, if you're really clear on what the business objectives are, what you're trying to achieve that month, that quarter or whatever, and where the priorities lie, that goes a really long way to helping others work out how to then spend their time.

I think that's another one and you probably can't do enough of it in terms of reiterating, "Right this is what we're trying to get done this month" or "This is what we're trying to get done this quarter, this is what we're trying to achieve. These are our goals" and things change, they always do, but the more you can be super clear on that the more it just helps to refocus people on to, "Okay, well, this contributes to that so I'm going to do that first and then this is a little bit more fringe so I'm going to do that later or that's going to go further down my list."

Liggy Webb: Oh, yes. And you've just used a lovely word. A magical word, in fact. You talked about delegation because when it comes to leading time management, delegation is so powerful.

I see leaders who perhaps get a little bit too bogged down with the process and the nuts and bolts, and it's probably something they really enjoy doing, or I see leaders who are control freaks so they think they're the only ones that can do things well, and they don't particularly like to delegate.

A huge part of successful leadership is the need to be able to develop your team through delegation. And as you say, they're going to be people who really like doing things. It might be things that you delegate that people don't particularly like doing, but it's good for their development as well. We need to be able to stretch people, sometimes, encourage people out of their comfort zone. And delegation is so powerful in terms of helping to tap into people's potential and help them grow. It's also incredibly helpful for leaders to be able to release a little bit of space for themselves.

If they need to spend a bit more time with individuals within their teams, then it may well be that some of the process pieces that they're working on, they need to delegate. So delegation, yeah, absolutely hugely helpful for time management.

Adam Lacey: I think teach – don't do things for people, teach them how to do it and follow that.

Liggy Webb: And there's a saying that says give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.

Adam Lacey: I'm glad you remembered the wording though.

Fantastic. What can we proactively do other than delegating, we've just covered that, to empower, enable and develop people's time management, Liggy? What other practical things are we looking at here outside of modelling the right behaviours?

Liggy Webb: Opening up conversation. I think a good conversation about time, getting people talking about what they're doing with their time, being able to encourage them to talk about what they do well, what they don't do so well.

You've just mentioned a great book to read. There are loads of really good books. I personally like Brian Tracy's Eat the Frog book. It's a really good book. There's so many good books and podcasts and programmes and models to explore. Opening up conversations and educating people, as you said earlier, to understand what those tools are, that can really help to empower people, encouraging people to take time to slow down and consider what they're doing. This is about working smarter, not harder. And I think just being much more self-aware of what we're doing with our time as well. And again, empowering people to respect and value other people's time.

Adam Lacey: Yeah. I like all of those. I would add setting clear goals and expectations as well. I think that's one thing you can do upfront, whether it's at the beginning of someone's journey at the business or the start of a new project or a new quarter or an appraisal or whatever it is. But being really clear on those goals and expectations, again, links back to that thing we're talking about around priorities.

If people know what the key core objectives of the business and the expectations are, they're much more likely to be able to make the right decisions. You're empowering them to make the right decisions then instead of them hitting and hoping a bit in terms of the work that they're getting done, because let's face it, inevitably, too much stuff will be thrown at people.

I think pretty much any modern knowledge worker has too many things on their desk to do each week. Everybody is prioritising or sacrificing or delegating or deleting or whatever. And as a leader, helping people navigate that is probably one of the most powerful and important things you can do.

That's number one. And then I also want to mention, and I think this is super important, especially around time management, is just protecting your team and protecting their time, so let's be honest, time thievery comes from all different places, whether it's your kids that are ill one day so you have to take the morning off or whatever it is to someone in another department, who's maybe more senior asking you to do something that's a little bit outside your job role, but they want your time on it or this kind of stuff.

I think as a leader for that internal stuff, at least if you can protect your people's time as much as possible, to focus on the things that they need to be focusing on. That's where you can be A) a real advocate for them but B) you're going to win their respect very quickly if they find themselves in an awkward position, having to say no to someone more senior in the business and can't do it.

If you can take that kind of responsibility on for them, that for me is really going to enable them to better manage their time. And another one actually, and this is quite a tactical one, but it's actually around technology. Get the right technology and I know not everyone has a choice in this in that sometimes technology is forced on you by an IT department and you have to use what you're given, but having the right technology and supporting the use of it through training through proper good use is so important to saving time. There are so many tasks these days that actually can be automated through technology one way or another. If there is a way to do that and it's doable within the cost constraints of the business or whatever, then find a way to do that and get your team off whatever manual process that's replacing would always be my advice. I think that's another area you can look for as a leader and be a little bit innovative almost and say, okay, we're spending loads of our time doing this, but actually piece of software can do 50 percent of that for us that would free at that time, which we can go and spend on this more creative, curious, interesting, innovative work that's going to drive the business forward. And yeah, that's your 80, 20 principle, isn't it?

Liggy Webb: Yes, and do you know, it's so interesting you're saying this, Adam, because I think there are people out there that almost have a bit of a fear of technology and perhaps they have manual systems that they really like and they're quite attached to it and perhaps they don't like change.

I'm saying this from the heart because I think I'm a little bit like that. I get attached to my little manual systems and then suddenly something comes along and you think, oh my goodness, I was spending hours on that and it can be done quite immediately. So this is where we need to open our minds to the

use of technology and what's available to us. And that's where, as a leader, encouraging your teams to get together and have those discussions around what kind of tools are you using, what makes things easier for you and share the best practice. It's going to be hugely helpful.

Something else I do want to add around time management is around personal energy because when it comes to time management, we all have lulls in the day. Some people are what they call larks and they're great in the morning. Other people are like owls and a bit better in the evening.

And we're all different in that way. And also we get afternoon slumps, perhaps some people do. So we know that we're not as effective. So it's really good to know ourselves, understand ourselves, when is my best time in the day to get certain tasks done. And the other thing we really need to do is energise ourselves because we are going to be far better time managers, all of us, if we are more energised.

Really prioritising that whole self-care, that whole wellbeing piece. And as leaders, it's encouraging people to be able to look after themselves and make sure that people within your teams are getting proper breaks because as the Roman poet Ovid once said, take a rest; a field that's rested gives a bountiful crop.

And I think that's really important. That's going to help us to be able to save and value our time and use it in the most effective way.

Adam Lacey: Yeah, definitely encouraging self-care and wellbeing and all that. And spotting for signs of burnout, which might be triggered by an overwhelming amount of tasks or a lack of detail on how to navigate through them or what to say no to and all that kind of stuff so just being hyper aware of that as a leader as well, I think that's incredibly important.

Liggy, what are your top three tips for us to round off the conversation? What are your personal top three on time management? How do we encourage others to do better at this?

Liggy Webb: Adam, my top three tips for leading time management are, number one: be a role model. When it comes to time management, it's about upskilling yourself on time management skills so that you can share them with the rest of the team.

Top tip number two would be encourage people to learn from each other and share best practice. And number three is building reflection time into your day because all great leaders balance urgency and diligence and taking time to reflect and plan can be a great time saver.

Adam Lacey: Great, I love all of those. My three are number one: be clear on your boundaries. Others will find theirs. So I think, again, this is the role model point. If you're clear on where your boundaries lie and how you're prioritising your time, you go quite a long way to helping others achieve the same thing. Two: protect your team's time where you can, and definitely question the importance of requests that come in, especially from externals or other teams or something like that.

Three: understand how your people are spending their time. And I think just be hyper conscious of this when you go into your one-to-ones or your regular meetings or sessions, if you understand where their time is being sunk. You're going to be in a much better position as a leader to offer guidance, navigation, assistance, implement technology, whatever the solution is.

Great. That's all we have time for today. Thank you once again, Liggy for joining us. We'll be back soon with another episode from Leading Future Humans. We look forward to seeing you there.