

## Have the time of your life

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Sometimes, formal education stifles, rather than hones, talent. So, be true to the words of Mark Twain: never let schooling interfere with your education.

LEGEND has it that Death is a human skeleton clothed in a black hooded robe. He wields a scythe and carries an hourglass. The scythe is the harbinger of death. The hourglass is the measure of a lifetime.

Everyone has their own hourglass. Each hourglass holds the Sands of Time. When all but the last precious grains have fallen to the bottom, Death will seek its owner.

Like all legends, there is some grain of truth behind it. Time is a valuable, but finite, resource. In a lifetime, we can make money, fulfil our ambitions and do the fun things we enjoy doing.

But beware, for there are always forces lurking around threatening to steal away our precious time. They are the thieves of time.

The most common ones are those who do not cherish the value of time. They are people who are constantly late for appointments due to traffic jams, rushing for some last-minute chore, and worse of all, losing track of time.

As for social functions, it's as if the guests all live in different time zones. Some make it a point to be fashionably late. They think that the party doesn't start till they walk in.

Punctuality is a serious issue. Every minute we are made to wait is a minute of our lifetime lost. With some little thought and time management, punctuality is not an impossible feat.

Space your appointments apart. Don't make appointments at difficult hours and locations. Start your functions on time regardless. Meet your friend halfway, right at the borderline.

Next are people who think they know best how to manage other people's time. They range from your parents, teachers, employers and the Government. To control you, they devise systems such as timetables, work schedules and KPIs.

Take school, for example. Educators naturally have a very high opinion of their ability to teach and motivate. But sometimes, formal education stifles, rather than hones, talent.

Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg: living legends and college dropouts – were they omniscient and did they know everything about computer algorithms?

Not quite. They simply had great ideas, and great determination to transform them into a masterpiece. Making a masterpiece takes time. So does formal education. Something's got to give.

True to the words of Mark Twain, another great American legend, they never let schooling interfere with their education. The rest is history, and humanity is eternally grateful to them.

Let their legacy be a lesson to all of us. Not that education is bad, but if we truly wish to make our own masterpieces, we need to first make our own time.

Parents and teachers will always advise you to go with the flow and stick to the rivers and lakes that you're used to. But if stagnant waters are not for you, feel free to go chasing waterfalls.

To be fair, most of our elders who seek to manage our time have noble intentions. But there are those with ulterior motives. They steal your time, to save their own time.

Take the video recording system recently introduced to expedite matters in the courts. Every trial proceeding will be captured on camera and burnt onto a DVD. Based on the DVD, lawyers are directed to prepare a written transcript of the proceedings for the court.

Before this, the judges and their secretaries and interpreters have always been responsible for typing out the Notes of Proceedings. But now, they can sit back and relax while the lawyers spend hours painstakingly listening to the DVD to

transcribe the Notes of Proceedings.

Why the simple alternative of employing court stenographers has not been implemented is a mystery to all.

Now take our bosses. Most of us are no strangers to working overtime and on weekends. It is fine if it is for productive work that we are truly passionate about. But more often than not, it is for mundane work that any college student can do for RM5 an hour.

Don't bother asking why, or complaining. Like all masters of time and space, they are poor in helpful explanations but rich in cryptic messages. Their template response would be "When you're older, you will understand and thank me for this", which is even less meaningful than "Save the cheerleader, save the world".

But the greatest thief of time is ourselves. In life, we strive. We are all driven to climb to the next level, much like Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. There are several roads leading up to the peak. The road well-trodden is long, winding, and filled with plateaus.

Plateaus are useful as rest stops for you to catch your breath, take snapshots against the scenic mountainside for your Facebook photo albums and pitch a tent near the laurels for a few days, then another month (okay, two months tops), and where before you know it, you're stuck there forever.

But there's also the road less travelled. It may be more steep and treacherous, but it'll take you faster to the peak, and it has fewer plateaus.

Whichever road we take, we must never linger too long. Patience is virtue, but procrastination is the thief of time. Life is short, but not simple. Good opportunities don't come around like the postman, but rather like a comet. You should strike when the iron is hot, and it's hottest when it's still young and raw.

But sadly, much of youth is wasted on the young. Most of the young folks hesitate, and he who hesitates is lost. Weighed down by a backpack filled with insecurities, excess material baggage and taxing relationships, we struggle to move on.

We think too much, and by the time we act, there's not much time left to live for. As John Lennon nicely put it, life is what happens to you when you're busy making other plans.

Don't let the precious grains in your hourglass just slip away. Be a master of your own time and space, so when Death comes knocking on your door, you are ready to welcome him with arms wide open.

So here and now, and come what may tomorrow, I hope you have the time of your life.

> The writer is a young lawyer. Putik Lada, or pepper buds in Malay, captures the spirit and intention of this column – a platform for young lawyers to articulate their views and aspirations about the law, justice and a civil society. For more information about the young lawyers, visit [www.malaysianbar.org.my](http://www.malaysianbar.org.my).