



## Creating a “No Excuse Zone” around you Professional Development Series

By Laura Lee Rose

Below is Part 2 of a 3-Part article designed to help IT and database professionals stay on top of their game in an ever-changing trade. Part 1 highlighted some IT scenarios. In this part 2, we will take a closer look.

Part 3 offers several steps toward creating ‘No Excuse Zones’ in our home, office and thinking. For more examples that fit your specific work environment, please feel free to contact [LauraRose@RoseCoaching.info](mailto:LauraRose@RoseCoaching.info)

We all have ‘excuses’ as part of our normal, default speaking and thinking patterns. It’s normal. It’s human. We often entertain ourselves with stories of how we got to where we ‘don’t want to be’. We do not readily acknowledge these stories as ‘excuses’ or blaming something or someone external to ourselves for our predicament; we’re simply ‘explaining’ ourselves. But the longer we stay in the ‘explaining’ stage of the current situation; the longer we are stalled and not making forward progress.

### Let’s look closer:

*My task was to contact 3 hospitals to collect meaningful metrics on these five database features. Only one hospital has responded on only one database features. I am late with this project and don’t know how to proceed.*

Our developer had not been keeping his team and stakeholders involved in his progress. He had been struggling with the 3 hospitals without conveying the obstacles he was encountering. He allowed the deadline to pass without a word of status. He was nervous and ashamed about his lack of progress on this task.

**Note:** Your project can not be late if you are constantly informing the stakeholders of your status and progress. This allows your teammates to assist and develop alternative solutions to the problem. This also allows an extension of the schedule based on the current state of things. You are only late if you fail to include others in your progress and allow the deadline to quietly pass.

Our developer understood the reason for the task. The team wanted to verify that the new database design would cover all the significant features that the 3 hospitals would use. But the developer lost sight of the real purpose of the task. By creating a presentation and model of the new database design to the hospitals’ representatives, our developer could gather the same type of feedback.

When that suggestion was mentioned, our developer quickly dismissed it because he said that it wasn’t the task that was given to him. By not bringing his roadblocks and alternative solutions to his stakeholders, he arrogantly made the decision for them.

As you can see, our developers had many more options at his disposal then he was willing to explore.

*I have to review these database reference books and install these new applications, but I don’t have any time. My other two projects are late; therefore, I can’t take the time to catch up on my other to-do lists and application training. It’s just that I have had to put this off because there were other things happening in my life*

As many of us, our developer is blaming ‘lack of time’ as a reason for not achieving his training goals and accomplishing his other to-do items. “Lack of time’ is an imaginary excuse. We all have enough time for the things we feel are important. Therefore, it’s not the lack of time; but rather the lack of importance.

If our developer feels that self-development is important, he/she can block time every week (for example: Friday from 3:00-4:30pm) for that type of training. He/she can block some time every week to chip-away at that to-do list (for example: knock one item off before we leave work every Wednesday).

If something is important to you, deliberately schedule/block the time on your calendar.

*I don't think I can get it done by Wednesday because I'm waiting on a routine from the California department. They have been unresponsive to my request for status. So, I'm stuck on my project.*

Our developer could create a stub routine to simulate the various results that the California feature would return. This allows the developer to complete the program on time, and simply plug the California feature in at the last moment.

*I continually get interrupted at work and am constantly called into useless meeting. I never have time for real work.*

Our developer can schedule his day with these interruptions in mind. I call this technique "Sprints and Buffers". We divide our tasks into small, self-contained tasks with buffer time between. This allows us to move from one mini-task to another. When someone interrupts us, we can tell them when we will be at a good stopping point (since the mini-tasks are small enough to complete in a reasonable timeframe), and accommodate at that time. Incorporating interruption time in our individual (and therefore project schedules), we can handle the interruptions and stay on schedule.

As for meetings, if you are agreeing to attend useless meetings, that is totally on you. If you don't understand the goal and purpose of the meeting, you don't belong in that meeting. If the goal and purpose of the meeting isn't in line with your role and professional responsibilities/goals, you don't belong in that meeting. If you don't belong in that meeting, just decline the invitation with a diplomatic explanation of your current schedule and project schedules.

As you can see, there are endless ways to take control over your own calendar and time. Using external people and event as excuses for your lack of progress is very natural but not very beneficial. We won't be able to totally avoid our very natural and human reactions to things. But we can continually improve upon our recognition of what is more beneficial in moving us forward faster. Here are some steps.

At first glance, these may look like 'explanations' and not excuses. In Part 2, we will detail each example to show how we could have better managed the situation.

If you are interested in more detail professional coaching or a professional coach to help you stay on target with those goals, please consider one-on-one coaching sessions to propel you forward faster.