

But I never heard the builders¹

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Space is not necessarily about solitude, as I said before. Constantine P. Cavafy, a poet who died in 1933, wrote a little poem called *Walls*. This is how it goes:

Walls

*With no consideration, no pity, no shame,
they have built walls around me, thick and high.
And now I sit here feeling hopeless.
I can't think of anything else: this fate gnaws my mind, because I had so much
to do outside.
When they were building the walls, how could I not have noticed!
But I never heard the builders, not a sound.
Imperceptibly they have closed me off from the outside world.*

Many people in our organisations reach late age surrounded by walls (their own career pathways, the single track pursuit of success, the 365/24/7 busy-ness as leader), only to realise that there are walls when it is too late. Those people will shout, "*But I never heard the builders! I was doing my emails on my Blackberry and there was nothing in Outlook about any walls of any kind. Did I miss a meeting about walls? What's happened to me? Julia! (calling his last PA) Julia!*" Julia can't answer. She is not deaf but those walls are so thick!

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► ***Those who hear the builders***

People who leave an organisation do so for a variety of reasons. One of them is sometimes the feeling that 'the walls' are getting thicker and taller. They realise at some point that their personal or professional development requires that they push themselves outside those walls. In some cases, it means the next job, next context. In many cases, it means to start a business on their own. In the last decades, there has been an explosion of people 'going solo', 'liberating themselves' from corporate life, 'becoming their own boss', etc. This has been particularly noticeable in the US. There is a healthy, entrepreneurial, adventurous side of this that fits very well in the traditional 'American dream', in whatever version there is these days. But there is also a sad side for 'the company'.

You can read more about this dimension (Time and Space) by choosing from this list:

- [It's time, stupid!](#)
- [Protecting time](#)
- [The 'always on' leader](#)
- [Leadership and the end of time](#)
- [Leadership is creating spaces](#)
- [Social space](#)
- [Sitting quietly alone](#)
- [100K investment lost](#)
- [Intrapreneurs at the gates](#)

You can also read more about the other two dimensions by choosing from this list:

2. [Homes](#)
3. [Legacy](#)

If you want to read more about leadership or want to continue reading from the above, you can read it all in my book [*The Leader with Seven Faces: finding your own ways to practice leadership in today's organization.*](#)