Johnny Cash couldn't have known it, but he gave first-rate fantasy hockey advice in 1956 when he told us to "get a rhythm."

Fantasy hockey is a schedule-based activity. There are any number of crucial deadlines – drafts, weekly line-up decisions, waiver-wire windows, trade deadlines – some are only annual affairs, while others are week-after-week events. We neglect these activities at our team's peril.

Yet we've all done it. From time to time, we miss crucial opportunities because we are too busy to take advantage of them.

And right now might be the busiest time of the year. Our schedules often threaten to burst over the holidays, straining like Uncle Edgar's shirt buttons after his fourth helping of mashed potatoes.

Sadly, multi-tasking can only take you so far.

Don't forget last year's unfortunate incident on the phone with grandma during the World Junior Championship when that bad goal caused you to launch into a Bruce Boudreau-style, f-bomb laced rant about your most hated Americans/Canadians/Russians (I'd include the Swedes, but does anyone really hate the Swedes? Even Jacob Markstrom's flopping about in the 2009 WJC final seemed to only produced a luke-warm emotion most closely resembling embarrassment). Or maybe that was just me.

{youtube}NwRUpoaa4rI{/youtube}

Since multi-tasking has its limits, successful business execs and military personnel have made a habit of staking out a predictable cycle of taking in information and making decisions for their organizations. These cycles go by any number of names, but military folks have the coolest label for the concept – *battle rhythm* .

In short, a battle rhythm is a routine that helps get things done.

In our world, this might mean that you plan to spend ten minutes Monday night checking out the wire because the deadline for making a waiver-claim is Tuesday morning. It might mean checking in on your team on your iPhone every Friday morning during your commute because the deadline for locking in your weekly lineup is Friday at noon. Maybe you catch 15 minutes of Roger's Sporstnet or TSN's Sport Centre over breakfast (and maybe like me, you flip ADD-like between the two). Most of us have a routine to some degree already. The point is to create a predictable minimum routine that is manageable and fits your needs.

Some will scoff at using simple scheduling as a safety net. Yet, while many of us devote hours to our squads, we remain *ad hoc* in our interactions, and this is a weakness. It works wonderfully when time isn't scarce. Unfortunately, problems can quickly arise when outside pressures intrude on our fantasy lives. Often our teams suffer in these cases, because let's face it…there are a lot more important things in life than fantasy hockey (or so your wife/girlfriend/boyfriend/boss/pet cat would have you believe).

Organizations using battle rhythms remain effective when things get hectic because their efforts have structure and are scheduled to meet their tasks.

So if you don't have enough time on your hands, and your fantasy squad is slipping through the cracks, invest a few minutes to construct your own battle rhythm. You might be surprised at how such a seemingly simple idea can help out so much.

Happy holidays to all, and to all a fine World Junior Championship!

And now I have to go watch that hilarious Markstrom video just one more time. It's so wrong, but it's the time of year for guilty pleasures.