

Nobody budgets for the hours spent explaining the program, they still get spent.



You know what your program costs. Do you know what running it costs?

Reward budgets get tracked to the cent, the hours around them don't.

They dissolve into "HR overhead" or "ops", which is why they never show up when someone asks whether the program is working.

This is a two-minute exercise, take last month and split your team's program time across four buckets.

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Where did last month go?

Assign a rough percentage to each. It doesn't need to be exact, the shape is what matters.



___% Explaining — answering how to earn, claim or redeem

___% Configuring — setting up rules, dates, eligibility, catalogs

___% Reconciling — chasing failed deliveries, fixing records, checking budgets

___% Designing — deciding what to reward, for whom, and why

Only the last one changes anything.

Explaining is your biggest slice

- **The design is asking too much of participants.** Look at the first two steps of the journey, that's where most questions start.

- **Configuring is your biggest slice**

You're rebuilding from scratch each time. Look for what repeats across programs and turn it into a default.

- **Reconciling is your biggest slice**

The problem is downstream, not in the program itself. Delivery and record-keeping are costing you more than the design.

- **Designing is under 25%**

Whatever the split, the strategic work is being crowded out. That's the number to watch next month.

Run this again in three months.

The goal isn't zero hours on the first three. It's that the fourth one grows.