PKM

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Personal Knowledge Management

Personal Knowledge Management or PKM has a fairly "does what it says on the tin" kind of name. It's all about managing your personal knowledge and making sure that it remains useful and that you have access to the things you learned.Review

Digital Gardens, Zettelkasten and Second Brains

Chris Aldrich has some interesting thoughts on these topics here

Someone is maintaining a really cool collection of second brain stuff here

Learning In Public

Learning Exhaust

This blog post by swyx highlights the benefits of learning in public:

> “You already know that you will never be done learning. But most people “learn in private”, and lurk. They consume content without creating any themselves. Again, that’s fine, but we’re here to talk about being in the top quintile. What you do here is to have **a habit of creating learning exhaust**:

I'm not crazy about the metaphor - there's something a bit 'ickly' about an exhaust - but the notion that my learnings and notes are out there in public for others to see and benefit from is nice. I've also found that I'm more likely to hold myself accountable and follow through with learning if I write in public. It is much too easy to be lazy when things are private.

I consider this site my learning exhaust but I'm also trialling hypothes.is as a way to gather notes too.

Working with the Garage Door Up

I really like this analogy that Andy Matuschak pinched from author Robin Sloan.

The idea is that we should, wherever possible, work work in a public place, talking openly about problems we've yet to solve and stuff that doesn't work yet. In doing so we:

1. Help others who are facing similar problems and our future selves. I'm certainly guilty of solving problems transiently and then months later thinking "hang on a minute, I swear I've done this before".



XKCD 979: Wisdom of the Ancients

Sharing knowledge benefits everyone so we should do it openly and frequently!

2. Get to hold ourselves accountable and be held accountable: if you promise something in public you're much more likely to go through with it than if you kept it to yourself.
3. We fight back against unrealistic "instagram" success and give a more authentic glimpse of what incremental progress looks like. Things don't magically pop into existence, they often take weeks, months or years to be built. We are used to highly curated feeds of social influencers who present themselves as magically successful and hide their labours and I think that's a bad expectation of what life is like for us to be setting for each other.

Publish, Don't Send

In this blog post, Herbert Lui talks about how it is often better to write publicly than it is to just send stuff as an email (and if full public isn't an option then you could write an internal team blog or something along those lines):



15/5 Updates

In this blog post (mirror) Shaun 'swyx' Wang writes about a practice called 15-5 reports: a weekly report that you spend 15 minutes to produce that can be digested by readers in 5 minutes. Send your report to your managers and peers to let them know what's going on and avoid keeping your progress bottled up and siloed.

This format was originally created by Yvon Chouinard of Patagonia in the 1980’s. As Swyx explains:

> “
> - Chouinard’s format uses 4 sections:
>   - This week (completed activities, notable wins, what’s working)
>   - Next week’s priorities
>   - Challenges/Roadblocks
>   - Lessons Learned/Opps for improvement

Many of the folks that Swyx talks about in his blog post capture information about what they've completed throughout their week somewhere private and then spend a few minutes at the end of that week tidying it up.

Availability

As tempting as it is, there is no need to be always available to others via instant messenger. Always being available s bad for your mental health and productivity and sets poor expectations for others.

https://dailystoic.com/you-dont-need-to-be-so-reachable/

Quotes

> “Science is more than a body of knowledge; it is a way of thinking. I have a foreboding of an America in my children's or grandchildren's time—when the United States is a service and information economy; when nearly all the key manufacturing industries have slipped away to other countries; when awesome technological powers are in the hands of a very few, and no one representing the public interest can even grasp the issues; when the people have lost the ability to set their own agendas or knowledgeably question those in authority; when, clutching our crystals and nervously consulting our horoscopes, our critical faculties in decline, unable to distinguish between what feels good and what's true, we slide, almost without noticing, back into superstition and darkness."
>
> **Quote from “The Demon-Haunted World” by Carl Sagan**

La Rentrée

La Rentrée scholaire - literally french for "the return to school" describes a mood or vibe for reinvention and new thinking. I first encountered this description here.

Atomic Habits and Incremental Improvement

For personal development, prevailing wisdom seems to be that rather than setting big lofty goals for ourselves, we should make small incremental improvements and commit to small behavioral changes that we can develop into healthy habits.

Set Priorities

Ryan Holiday suggests (mirror/archive) that we prioritise the things that we think are most important and get them done early in the day whilst our energy reserves are full. He gives some celebrity anecdotes about this point for Hugh Jackman and Camilla Cabello.

Avoid Shiny Outcome Syndrome

Shiny Outcome Syndrome is what happens when you focus on outcomes and outputs generated by yourself and others rather than focusing on what is actionable right now. The term appears to have been coined by Justin Welsh who talks about it (mirror/archive) in his Saturday Solopreneur newsletter. However, it also fits with stuff that many other productivity gurus have written about.

In this blog post (mirror/archive), Kurtis Pykes calls this concept "the positive fantasy trap" - time spent fantasising about positive outcomes of a change you haven't yet made activates the reward centre of your brain so you are less motivated to actually do the thing. Alternatively, this view might make the outcome seem impossible and the task insurmountable.

Ryan Holiday writes about (mirror/archive) James Clear's Atomic Habits:

> ...repetitive actions accumulate and add up in a big way over time. Don't promise yourself you're going to read more; instead, commit to reading one page per day.
>
> Thinking big is great, but thinking small is easier. And easier is what we're after when it comes to getting started. Because once you get started, you can build.

The 5 Whys

Use the 5 whys to really drill into why you want to achieve something as recommended by Kurtis Pykes (mirror/archive):

> It's pretty simple; ask yourself why you want what you want, answer, and repeat the process four more times.
>
> For instance, take the following scenario:
>
> > **Why #1:** Why do you want to be one of the best professional footballers playing in a top-four club that competes for titles in England and Europe? **Response #1:** I have a chip on my shoulder. I want to prove people who doubted me wrong.
> >
> > **Why #2:** Why do you want to prove yourself to people who doubted you wrong?**Response #2:** So, in the future, people do not give up on me.
> >
> > **Why #3:** Why don't you want people to give up on you? **Response #3:** It kills my confidence
> >
> > **Why #4:** Why does it kill your confidence? **Response #4:** Because I'm very attuned to what people think of me.
> >
> > **Why #5**: Why are you very attuned to what people think of you? **Response #5**: I have low-self esteem, and it hurts me when I feel like I'm letting others down.
>
> **Boom!**

Be Selective about Opportunities - Don't Be Afraid to Say 'No'

Something I learned pretty early in my career: you need to be open to opportunities and as a young upstart you might think you [illegible] you're starting out you do need to be more open to new oppo[illegible]ore about who you are and what you are interested in and also[illegible]ou establish yourself and your interests, it is important that y[illegible]at you have enough time to focus on the things you want to do.



The movie Yes Man perfectly illustrates this conundrum: Jim Carrey's character goes from being a boring guy who doesn't do anything to "yes man" - someone who always says yes to new opportunities, no matter what. This allows him to cultivate new friendship groups and a romantic relationship but he eventually has to learn the hard way that that sometimes saying yes can detract from the things you enjoy.

Ryan Holiday writes about saying no (mirror/archive), suggesting to keep reminders to say "No" around when making decisions in order to help you to weigh up whether or not to accept every new opportunity.

Yerkes-Dodson Law

The empirical relationship between pressure and performance. There is a sweet spot where you are under just the right amount of pressure that you perform better. Too much pressure makes your performance worse though.

Workflows and Processes

Workflows and Processes

Personal Annual Review Process

Many PKM and TFT experts advocate an annual review of your life and goals and whilst January 1st is a bit arbitrary, it still seems like as good a time as any to do some self-reflection.

> Taking the time to perform an annual review is the most effective way I know of to edit your own narrative and be the author of your own life. Don’t miss the opportunity.
>
> Tiago Forte - The Annual Review is a Rearchitecture

Resources

- https://nesslabs.com/year-in-review
- https://fortelabs.com/blog/the-annual-review-is-a-rearchitecture/
-

Workflows and Processes

My GTD Workflow

GTD and Todoist

I'm using Todoist to manage my todos. I've found a few resources online have been useful for getting my head around how to operate on a weekly basis.

- The official GTD website provides a Weekly Review Checklist template which is kind of neat.
- This page outlines a basic review format which I've copied and pasted as a recurring todoist task

Weekly Review

A weekly review provides an opportunity to celebrate your wins, commiserate your losses and plan your next move. Almost all PKM authors advocate weekly reviews of some description.

What Should I Review?

During a weekly review you should revisit the past week and consider things that went well and the things that didn't Anne-Laure at Ness Labs advocates a simple 3 column table called Plus Minus Next (mirror). You write what went well under the '+' column, what went poorly under '-' and what you will do next under '->'.

Ta-da List

A ta-da list is what happens when you complete things off your todo list - it's stuff you've finished. Having sight of all the stuff you checked off this week can be quite inspiring and help you to fight off any negative self-talk along the lines of "I'm useless" or "I never achieve anything".

I like to use Logseq to show me any tasks that I have done within a week which I've tagged with #Goals - that way I can quickly see a list of things that I've achieved.

```
- {{query((and [[Goals]] (task DONE) (between [[Jan 14th,2024]] [[Jan 21st,2024]])))}}
  query-table:: true
```

Todo List

YNAB Transactions

Resources

- The Design of a Weekly Review - Tiago Forte (Mirror)
- Ness Labs - The power of the weekly review (Mirror)

Joplin

Joplin

Joplin is a PKM system with feature sets similar to Evernote, Notion and OneNote.

Joplin Blogging Workflow

The mami tool allows you to export notes from joplin and format them for hugo and other similar static site tools.

Obsidian

I'm a big fan of Obsidian. I make use of a lot of it's features and capabilities.

Configuration and Plugins

Periodic Notes

I use the periodic notes plugin to manage weeknotes.

For weekly notes I use the format:

```
YYYY/YYYY-[W]W
```

having the year repeated in the note title prevents the tool from trying to re-use the same note every year.

Sync with Bookstack

See https://github.com/jaypyles/obsidian-to-bookstack?tab=readme-ov-file