How we do 'stuff'

An #OnTheReg discussion guide by Professor Inger Mewburn
and Dr Jason Downs

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Look we've been a bit busy…

Neither of us had time to take the lead on a 'deep dive'.

We talked about it on the phone twice and sent a lot of texts.

So the vague plan for this one is… answer people's questions on how we get specific things get done.

We have slightly different systems, so it's a chance to tease out our individual strategies.

Also, starts to document 'stuff'... you know for, maybe - a book? Or something,

Start with the three I get asked about most…

1) How we do 'inbox zero' and how often… this could be long… I want us to focus on the tools and workflows. How often we check it. What strategies we use to make sure it doesn't become our 'to do list made by other people'.
2) How we get writing done, on top of **everything else**. We write for different audiences and purposes, so I expect this one to be different… or maybe not?
3) How we make this podcast. Yes, let's lift the lid on this (ahem) 'process'.
4) Does ChattieG make any of the above easier?

Jason's inbox zero process

- Teams and Email are different beasts. Only ever tackle them one at a time and individually/seperately.
- Email: set the expectation that I only check it infrequently. Say, 2x times a day. Then do that. Batch process when open. You'd only go to a physical mailbox once a day. Treat email in the same way.
- The classic: Delegate, Decide, Do, Defer, Drop. Only hold an email once. I've added "Detour" to this list. Move it out of email into a more appropriate space such as Teams for minor chat stuff or a formal project / meeting for more [serious stuff](#).
- Capture email that needs drives more effort into Omnifocus inbox and then batch transfer to BUJO as tasks. Manage from within BUJO.

Inger's inbox zero process - I am there 3 days a week

Years of timing data has told me that it takes on average 40 minutes a day to stay on top of my email. But it's lumpy. This morning was an hour for instance. I didn't really do any on Wednesday.

I try to either 1) do all in one batch at the start of the day and then spot check the rest of the time or 2) spot check and then do the batch at the end of the day.

Depends on what I have on in terms of cognitive effort. EMAIL WILL USE UP MY CAPACITY TO WRITE CREATIVELY. Only so many words inside me each day. If there's lots of meetings at the start of the day, my chances of writing are hosed anyway and I might as well.

I do all the 'one shot' emails in a go, no matter how long they take (ie: I do not abide by the 2 minute rule). I pass anything that needs more than one step to complete, no matter how short, into Omnifocus and then schedule it for later

How Jason writes 'on top of everything else'

- There's never enough time. Ever. I have more words within me than on paper. I'm going to die in that state. I've accepted it.
- So, if I'm going to write something down, I need to be certain that I want to write it down and that it'll be worth the opportunity cost of writing something else down. Usually I freak out about this for months at a time and don't write anything. Then, I get obsessed and hyper-focused, just like all the maniacs in the horror films that we've all seen, and I WRITE DOWN ALL THE THINGS. Then I'm done. (This is not healthy, and I don't recommend it).
- Obsidian lets me capture small bits as they happen. The 'daily note' plug-in is a wonder - especially cross-ref with BUJO.

How Inger writes 'on top of everything else'

I have a good track record here - 8 books in 10 years. This is the first sabbatical I've done and I am not going to finish a book like everyone else does. I need it to start a book!

To be honest, my writing always starts with my teaching. My teaching notes get more and more elaborate until they make their way into the blog. I also use myself as a 'body recorder' - I joke 'press play on my chest' and the teaching comes out. After so much repetition, it will flow out of you as words too.

I blog once a month, seems to be around 2000 words now, but used to be once a week 1000 words. Blogging is a good way to package your thoughts and make them audience focussed.

Then I start putting it in scrivener. I use scrivener because it enables me to write 'in chunks instead of chapters' as Pat Thomson says.

Always looking for better ways - writing is a craft that is never mastered.Recently introduced Obsidian into the process and even plugged in ChatGPT. We'll see how it goes.

ChattieG as helper?

Uses Inger has found:

- Great at outlining stuff, from papers to podcasts. Especially if you give it a bit of guidance
- Helps me do stuff in Excel and MaxQDA. Have started to use it as a co-pilot to help me deal with difficult programs
- I gave it all the memos and notes I created in MaxQDA and asked it to summarise … the results were… well, let's say I wrote the report in about 10 minutes. I had given myself seven days….
- Integrated it in Obsidian - have not had much time to play with it.

Collabs - the podcast process

Idea development - we pitch at each other really? Contrasts with severance pod, which is highly scripted.

The show notes process helps us develop it up - we have a TextExpander snippet for the whole structure.

Record on riverside

Edit in descript

Buzzsprout for distribution

Lots of my thinking goes into pod first, then teaching, then writing these days.