

Funding the Future

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Having posted my [comment on solution-focused thinking](#) here yesterday, which was a response to PSR's request for an explanation of how I worked, I then realised that there was another possible interpretation of his question, which was a lot more pragmatic.

Many people here are suggesting, and by implication asking, how I produce so much work in a day. In truth, I doubt that my work output has increased significantly since I supposedly retired earlier this year. It is just that since I have not:

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Been working on university-related research, and related report and article writing.

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Been working on grant-funded projects outside the university sector, e.g. on something as big as the Taxing Wealth Report, which eventually came to 126,000 words.

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Been having to deal with the admin related to these issues, which was, on occasion, quite time-consuming.

Instead, my efforts now go into producing videos, writing blog posts, dealing with comments, undertaking a bit of admin, and thinking, which is something that neither university nor my other work really demanded in the way I now do it, and there is now time to do it.

That said, with regard to time, it is true that I put in quite a lot of hours. I am usually planning blog posts from soon after six in the morning. Publication usually begins by seven, with most blog posts for the day being completed by nine, when the focus shifts to video production and editing.

Time is also allocated to working on some of the series we've been producing, and thinking about how to develop outreach for the work that I do, plus planning future productions, particularly with regard to videos, where the lead time for development is often longer than it is for a blog. That is why it is often the case that a blog post here may be translated into a video two or three days later. Reading and approving a normal level of comments, which often exceed well over 100 a day in number, also takes a fair

bit of time.

So, an output that, amongst all those other activities, which often exceeds 5,000 words a day, and sometimes does so by a comfortable margin, is, I know, not normal. And maybe that is what I am being asked to explain.

The first thing to say is that I never get as much done as I would wish. There are always more ideas and articles to write, videos to make, and series to create than there is time available to deliver. That said, I rarely have a list of blogs that need writing, because they are usually much more reactionary pieces, but when it comes to videos, I have a list of maybe 50 or 60 that could be created at present, with more than 15 of those having teleprompts available, meaning they could be recorded tomorrow if need be. These, of course, are the ones on more general themes, which are not usually time-critical. The time-critical ones often happen on the spur of the moment, and are not always scripted at all.

Saying this, I should explain how I usually translate ideas onto the page and into videos. The normal routine is to dictate my ideas into my iPhone, quite often whilst out on a walk. That is, in fact, how this post began life. It was dictated during the course of a 15-minute walk from the centre of Ely to my home on the return from having a work session over coffee.

I usually dictate into a very basic note-making piece of software called iA Writer, but Apple Notes works just as well. The software is available on all my Mac machines — whether that be a MacBook, an iPad, or an iPhone — and so the material I dictate can be instantly accessed anywhere when I want to use it.

iPhones are now very good for this purpose if you are used to the discipline of doing so, including dictating things like punctuation and paragraph breaks. I have been dictating material in one way or another for more than 40 years, so I am entirely happy writing in verbal form, which does take some time to get used to if you are unfamiliar with it, because spoken and written English are, of course, very different things.

That said, it is rare that the material produced from the iPhone is completely correct, so what I usually then do is transfer the material into ChatGPT. I ask it to do what I call a "very light edit". This changes none of the arguments, or their ordering, or even the paragraph breaks, but it does try to resolve ambiguities, correct errors (including typos if they exist), and improve flow, which is part of the specific instruction I give it. The result is a piece of work very close to what I dictated, but potentially more usable. I then, of course, take careful note of the output and ensure that it still makes sense — which it does in around 98% of cases, with the other 2% being potentially embarrassing if I failed to notice them.

From there, two things happen. Either the material becomes a blog, as has happened in this case. That always requires further editing, but the ChatGPT stage invariably

reduces the time involved. Alternatively, the material, after checking, goes back into ChatGPT, where I ask it to turn the material into PowerPoint slides for use as teleprompts for making our videos, following some very precise instructions that I supply in the AI prompt. Again, editing is inevitably required to make this material usable. Then, when we record, I use the prompts to keep me on track, but given that the prompts are brief, I have to speak naturally to make it all work as I face the camera.

Finally, there are two other ways I use ChatGPT to help work these days. One is to use it to summarise long articles and even news reports to make sure I think I pick up key issues. This can speed work production, and is very helpful, but never stops the need for the thinking process. The other is that I also sometimes ask ChatGPT to draft material based on rough notes, often in combination with a document summary. On occasion, that is incredibly effective, and sometimes it is not at all. The point is you always have to stay in charge of the process, as our series on AI, which might start this week, will highlight, and whatever ChatGPT produces, an edit is always required.

Put all that together, and that's how usual my day works.

It starts at 6 am. I usually clear the last comments for the day at 9 pm. In between, at least twelve hours of work is done, for all the reasons [I explained a couple of days ago](#). And the fact is, I enjoy doing it, or I would give up. But there are no plans to do that.