

What is the point of knowledge if it doesn't help anyone or produce anything?\* Whether your goal is to lose weight, get a promotion at work, start a side business, or strengthen your local community, personal knowledge management exists to support taking action—anything else is a distraction.

A common challenge for people who are curious and love to learn is that we can fall into the habit of continuously force-feeding ourselves more and more information, but never actually take the next step and apply it. We compile tons of research, but never put forward our own proposal. We gather untold business case studies, but never pitch one potential client. We study every piece of relationship advice available, but never ask anyone out on a date.

It's so easy to endlessly delay and postpone the experiences that would so enrich our lives. We think we're not ready. We fear we're not prepared. We cannot stand the thought that there is one little piece of information we're missing that, if we had it, would make all the difference.

I'm here to tell you that that is no way to live your life. Information becomes *knowledge*—personal, embodied, verified—only when we put it to use. You gain confidence in what you know only when you know that it works. Until you do, it's just a theory.

This is why I recommend you shift as much of your time and effort as possible from consuming to creating.† We all naturally have a desire to create—to bring to life something good, true, or beautiful.<sup>9</sup> It's a part of our essential nature. Creating new things is not only one

\* The word “productivity” has the same origin as the Latin verb *producere*, which means “to produce.” Which means that at the end of the day, if you can't point to some kind of output or result you've produced, it's questionable whether you've been productive at all.

† The consumerist attitude toward information—that more is better, that we never have enough, and that what we already have isn't good enough—is at the heart of many people's dissatisfaction with how they spend their time online. Instead of trying to find “the best” content, I recommend instead switching your focus to making things, which is far more satisfying.

of the most deeply fulfilling things we can do, it can also have a positive impact on others—by inspiring, entertaining, or educating them.

What should you create?

It depends on your skills, interests, and personality. If you are highly analytical, you could evaluate the many options for camping gear and create a list of recommended products to share with your friends. If you like to teach, you could record your favorite dessert recipe and post it on social media or a blog. If you care about a local cause such as public parks, you could create a plan to lobby the city council for more funding.

All these actions—evaluate, share, teach, record, post, and lobby\*—are synonyms for the act of expression. They all draw on outside sources for raw material, they all involve a practical process of refinement over time, and they all end up making an impact on someone or something that matters to you.

Information is always in flux, and it is always a work in progress. Since nothing is ever truly final, there is no need to wait to get started. You can publish a simple website now, and slowly add additional pages over time. You can send out a draft of a piece of writing now and make revisions later when you have more time. The sooner you begin, the sooner you start on the path of improvement.

I've introduced a lot of new concepts and terms, and I know at this point it can seem a little overwhelming. It may feel like you have to learn and do a lot of new things to be able to build a Second Brain.

Here's the surprising truth: you are already doing most of the work required.

You are already learning new things—you couldn't stop if you wanted to. You already consume interesting ideas—note the dozens

\* Other synonyms for expression include publish, speak, present, perform, produce, write, draw, interpret, critique, or translate.