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## The method

JL Murtaugh

*There is a bright flash. Their presence is tangible—liquid, even—a full second before entering a room. You don't know exactly who **they** are, but you know **they** came on a mission of acquisition; and will walk away in a matter of minutes with something you value deeply.*

When confronted with ambition and commitment in the raw form, outside of a news feed—unfiltered, direct, meat-based, musty—our own goals seem further away, unattainable, overwhelming. For many of us, bred-in digitization of our organized minds and our diaries and make the world as a corporeal experience somewhat like a dirty, scratched, and unfocused lens. We tell ourselves we cannot see clearly unless mediated by a third party content provider.

How can we re-establish our daily life as a plausible, approachable enterprise?

Alongside and integrated with the production of this book, I've assisted Magdalena over the last 12 months in developing a new method for structuring the ubiquitous personal work that comes with independent practice. That is, the mountain of emails, phone calls, logistical correspondence, travel planning, and fundraising we all face every day; each deeply integral to a creative career but always pretentiously unmentioned or hidden in the background. We each do two or three days-worth of tedious work every day—as producer, executive assistant, and fabricator; before mentioning any life maintenance and money jobs of course—often alone, usually unpaid, →



and always unnoticed or ignored by those collectors, curators, benefactors, and the public-at-large to whom our activity is mostly aimed. Hiding this considerable effort, pretending it comes easy, drains even more energy.

Our solution took some patience to discover, but is sharp and simple, as are all the best answers. Instead of endless, undead 14-hour days, work for just one hour. Every morning. After coffee. We call it Office Hour.

It may sound impossible, or flippant in the abstract to recommend a reduction of 80% of your working time. Yet, it's quite logical, and eminently possible for anyone with some priming and a few weeks' practice. Firstly, it's essential to categorize your work, not by its skill difficulty or supposed urgency, rather by its magnitude of unpleasantness.

There is a great deal of pleasant work: meetings, drinks with friends, sketching, studio time, installing shows. But this method directly addresses the unpleasant work, the tasks we all avoid as long as possible: cold-calling that collector you don't really like about their funding your next project, making a friendly email to an international colleague you only sort-of-know (and believe you made a strange impression on) to connect you to another person you need to meet, or making funding or art fair applications. The type of unpleasant work will vary by your circumstances, but it's almost always either about finding and getting money, or getting another person's approval to pass into another stage.

To ensure the smoothness of the Office Hour, establish the unpleasantness of your tasks and choose your targets before bed the night before. This has the additional benefit of →





incorporating lingering items from the previous day, and avoids the identification of tasks itself becoming unpleasant and stressful the next morning. Mainly, you will require this time for another matter, as classification is only the second-most important preparation.

The most important preparation is coffee. That is, exactly two consecutive very hot espresso drinks (preferably with milk) before fully getting up. The temperature should be only just cool enough to hold without dropping or burning your fingers. Drink slowly, take your time, 30 to 45 minutes. The beans must be of a high-quality Italian espresso (or equivalent), from (at least) a better-than-average machine. If used, the milk should be very fresh and whole-cream; it's acceptable to get up slightly earlier to go out and get it from the market first thing in the morning.

Office Hour's timing is far less significant than its duration, other than it must take place in the morning. It can be adjusted to your standard sleeping pattern, though we find it is most effective and relevant when awakening around 6 am and completing coffee by 7. This also means any correspondence will await others beginning work after 8.

It is difficult to overstate the significance of the unpleasantness factor. There is absolutely no pleasant work during the Hour, or even the thought of it. It should be a solid, steaming time chunk facing all the daunting and demeaning, awkward and ill-respected parts of career maintenance too commonly postponed—at least three such tasks per day. The end of each hour should see more than one of these items completed, with others pushed along to the next stage, faster and more effectual than spreading this work, as is typical, over the course of an entire day or week. It is anathema to procrastination. →



All your most odious points to accomplish must be done intensely: early, quickly, and with quality. The mediums used to do the three-plus tasks over the Hour are inconsequential: though written correspondence is usually better-suited for most situations, you may phone if the timing is appropriate.

Some of you may have the feeling you have no regular unpleasant work. This is a problem, a far worse sin than being overwhelmed. If on any day your calendar is devoid of unpleasant tasks, this is like the engine warning light on the dashboard of an aging car. Ambitions must be continuously tested. It's perfectly acceptable to invent unpleasant work in these situations, so long as those tasks are both unpleasant and lead to something important which you want and cannot achieve in the current moment. Write the person you think is unapproachable, ask directly for the funding you need.

If on the other hand you come away from Office Hour feeling you've achieved nothing of substance, this is a signal that the work chosen was not unpleasant enough, or the intensity level was too low. Our tests showed that while fully ramping up into the method (where it becomes automatic) takes 2 to 3 weeks, its most dramatic effects are near-immediate. The method should be consequential from the very start.

Office Hour should be immediately followed by an opposite activity, tailored to the user's preferences. I prefer a brief workout and 3 to 5 km run, Magdalena instructs me she prefers shopping, your response will vary. Ultimately and ideally, your day from 9 am onwards will see the day's true work completed and advanced meaningfully before a significant percentage of your colleagues have only begun their routines. •