

**Work With Flow Workshop
(Module Two):
Fractal Planning**

with Jim Stone, Ph.D.



Copyright notice:

All contents copyright © 2011 by Fractal Solutions and Jim Stone. All rights reserved. No part of this document or the related files may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, by any means (electronic, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the publisher.



Limit of Liability and Disclaimer of Warranty:

The information provided in this workshop is provided "as is." Fractal Solutions and Jim Stone make no warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this workshop, and shall in no event be liable for any loss or damage that results from following the advice in this workshop, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

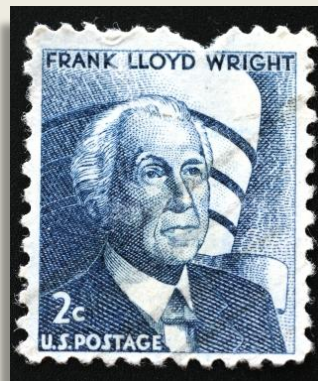
Contents

1. Working Like a Genius at Play
2. Some Personal Productivity Problems
3. Stuff Causes Problems
4. Why Most Productivity Systems Fall Short
5. The Power of a Fractal Organizing Structure
6. The Fractal Planning Tools
7. The Fractal Planning Procedures
8. Putting it in Perspective
9. Homework: Setting Up Your Creative Genius Studio

Part 1: Working Like a Genius at Play



A Few Geniuses



How does a Creative Genius Work?

- Excited about a challenge
- Shielded from distractions
- Intense natural focus
- Create toy solutions and play with them
- Develop a succession of better and better toys
- Bask in the adulation of the world

What would it be like??



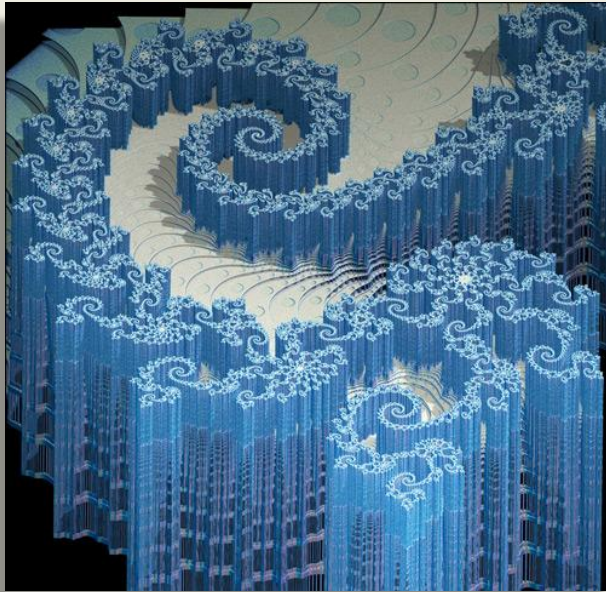
Is it Unfair to Compare Yourself to a Creative Genius?

- They were lucky
- They often didn't have families
- Little need to collaborate
- We likely have more chaos in our lives than they did in theirs

CAN We Work Like a Creative Genius?

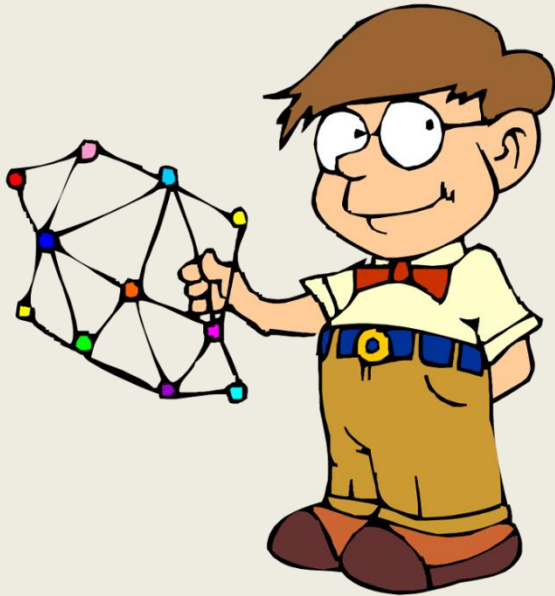
- We need to tame the chaos
- We need to find a way to let our inner genius to come out and play
- Fractal Planning can help.

Fractal Planning Tames Chaos



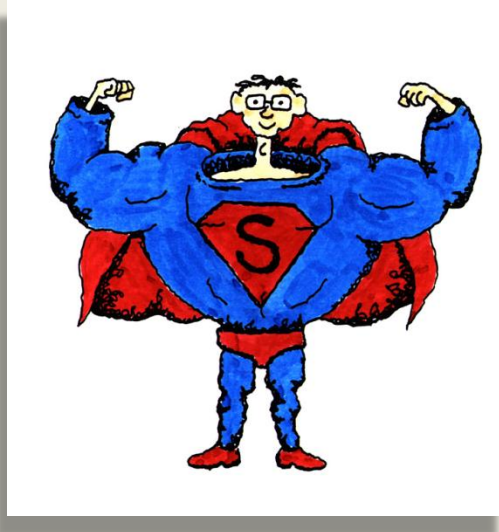
- It helps you separate signal from noise.
- It helps you **automatically organize** stuff.
- It helps you **trust** your organizing structures
- It helps you see your whole life as a coherent connected story.
- It helps you keep a clear mind all day long.

Fractal Planning Enables Your Inner Genius to Come Out and Play



- No elaborate strategic planning sessions.
- No lengthy daily or weekly rituals to regain clarity
- No planning things in detail when they are still weeks away
- No planning when there's no need to plan.
- No organizing when there's no need to organize.
- No consciously or proactively maintain someone else's awkward system.

A New Super Power in Every WWFW Module



- Module 1: The power of efficiently forming new habits.
- Module 2: The power of organizing and running your whole life like a genius at play.

Part 2: Some Personal Productivity Problems



Problem 1: Overwhelm

- Get more website traffic
- Do SEO on your site
- Try Facebook ads
- Try Google ads
- Try Twitter
- Try JV with person with email list.
- Try direct ad placement
- Try a viral report
- Comment on other people's blogs
- Do a guest blog post
- Network on LinkedIn
- Run split tests
- Try a quiz
- Try video
- Try a long form sales letter
- Intermediate sales page
- Add a bonus
- Try an upsell
- Develop a product for an upsell
- Try a downsell
- Deliver an unexpected bonus to cut down on refund requests
- Interview an expert so they send traffic to your site.
- Collect email addresses
- Work on the autoresponder series
- Segment your traffic
- Develop new products
- And on and on and on.

Problem 1: Overwhelm



- Frustrating
- Keeps your mind cluttered all day long
- Feel guilty
- Feel shame
- Feel inadequate
- Affects family and friends.

Problem 2: Can't find stuff.



- Too many lists
- structure doesn't organize automatically as you put things in.

Problem 3: Distractions



- Gloria Mark's Research at UC Irvine.
 - Interruptions every 11 minutes
 - Takes 25 minutes to get back on task
- External Interruptions
- Internal Interruptions

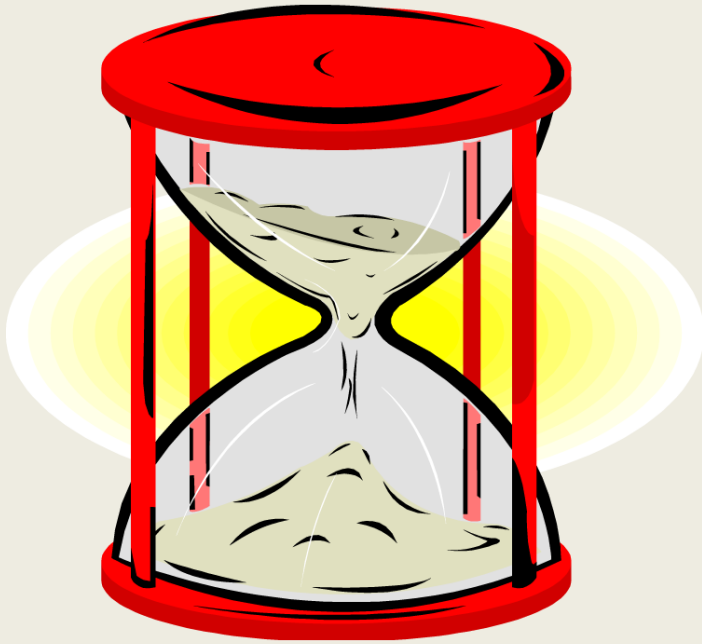
Problem 4: Unexpected Complications



- Example: Can't find password
- Example: software not working together
- Example: you just noticed your plot has a hole in it
- Example: the place you want for your wedding reception is already booked.

Problem 5: Projects Take Too Long

- You're two months in with two months to go, and you're filled with doubt and impatience.



Problem 6: Don't Know How to Do the Project

- Did you get in over your head this time?
- Confusion

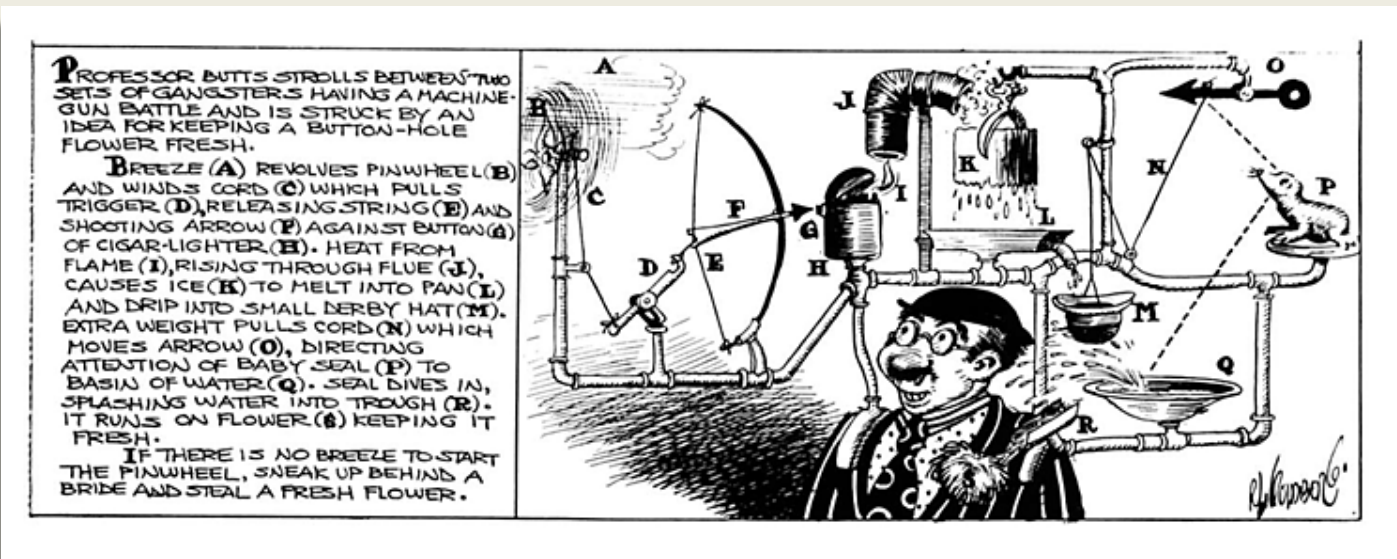


Problem 7: Don't Know Which Work Is Most Important



- Keep switching projects
- Project file box is a graveyard of unfinished projects
- Haunting feeling you should be working on something else.

Problem 8: Awkward planning system



- Can't break things down as fast as you can think.
- Double and triple handling of information

Problem 9: Forced Meaning and Purpose.



- Premature Mission Statements
- Like a square peg in a round hole.
- Better to let the peg and the hole evolve together

Problem 10: Ritual Disconnect

- Rituals get stale
- Rituals take time that could be spent on other things.
- Rituals can feel unnecessary



Our Work is Often No Fun

- overwhelm
- distraction
- consternation
- impatience
- frustration
- anxiety
- boredom
- uncertainty
- confusion
- friction
- alienation
- guilt
- shame
- BURNOUT

Part 3: Stuff Causes Problems



The Big 4 Stuff Handling Problems

- A. Can't quickly and effectively integrate new stuff with old stuff.
- B. Can't find stuff
- C. Can't quickly and effectively break big stuff into little stuff
- D. Can't quickly and effectively make all the stuff have a coherent meaning

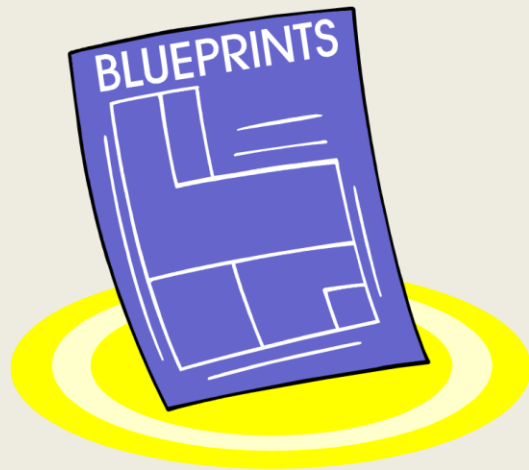
A. Can't Effectively Integrate
New Stuff With Old Stuff

We have goals and values



- Publish a novel so we can have validation of our talent, or get our story out, or get fame and adulation.
- Get the remodeling done so we can relax in the hot tub and invite friends over.
- Make client X happy.

We have plans for reaching our goals



- Business plans
- Client handling procedures
- Wedding plans
- Remodeling plans
- Outline of novel and publication checklist
- Random to do lists

The World Throws New Stuff At Us



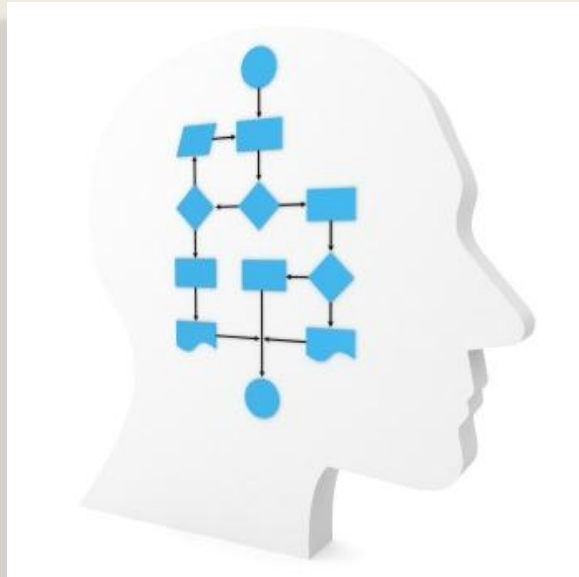
- New facts
- New opportunities
- New goals
- New models of the way the world works
- Opportunities to re-evaluate our values
- And time keeps on marching toward our deadlines.

We lack a good **structure** for integrating new stuff with old stuff



- No place to put the new stuff.
- Several places to put the new stuff
- Wrong structure for organizing new stuff
- Can't separate important stuff from unimportant stuff

We lack good **procedures** for integrating new stuff with old stuff



- Screening procedures
- Prioritizing procedures
- Clarifying procedures
- Conflict resolution procedures

What would an ideal system do?

- Filter out new stuff that isn't important
- Identify new stuff that is important
- Identify when new stuff conflicts with the rest of your plan.
- Allow you to quickly resolve conflicts between new stuff and old stuff.
- Make information come back to mind exactly when you need it (not before or after).
- Require no overhead

B. Can't Find Stuff



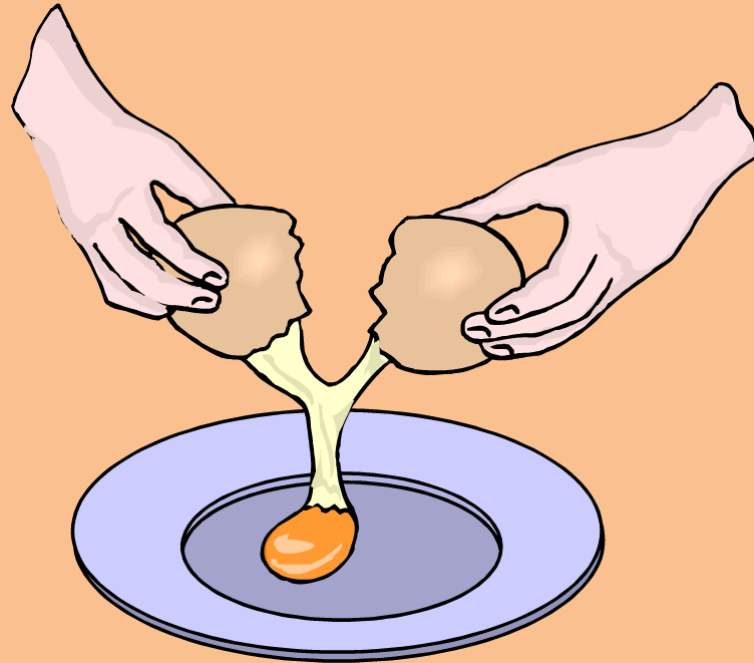
Typical Practice

- Spend a lot of time looking for things.
- Sometimes you find it
- Sometimes you don't

The Ideal

- Find it quickly every time
- Find it right when you need it

C. Can't Effectively Break Big Stuff Into Small Stuff



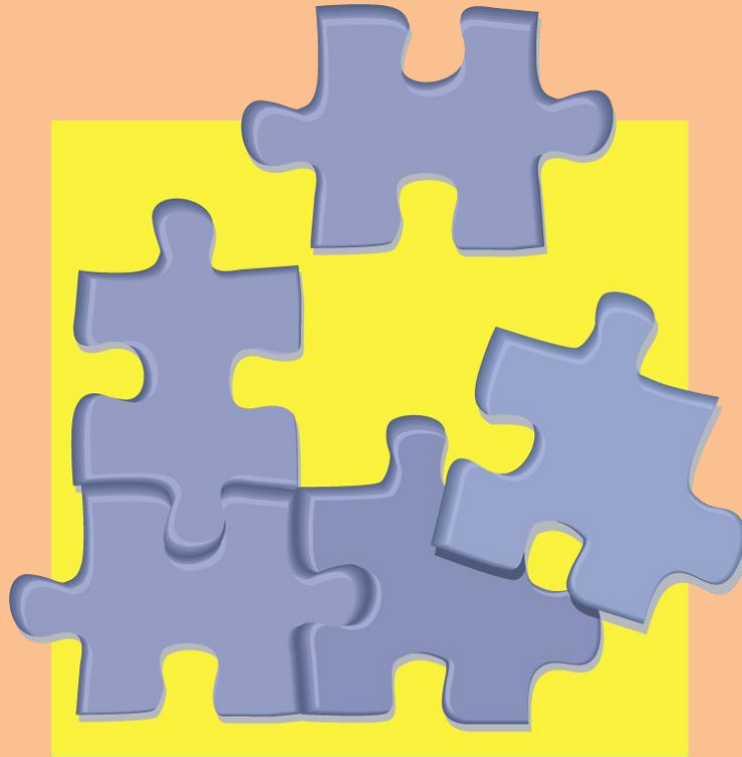
What we currently do

- Don't break things down far enough
- Can't break things down far enough due to our planning structure
- Break things down before we're ready.

Ideally we would . . .

- Be able to break things down to any level of detail we want
- Keep nothing in our heads as we work, but get it all in to the plan.
- Break things down only when we need to

D. Can't Make Coherent Meaning from the Stuff



How we currently try to manage meaning

- We don't

OR

- We force meaning on the stuff (mission statements, weekly planning sessions, morning rituals)

Ideally we would . . .

- know our most important goals
- know how all our stuff relates to our goals.
- quickly make comparisons to easily detect gaps, overlaps and conflicts in our plans.
- easily rearrange stuff
- organize only when we need to.
- let meaning evolve and bubble up from below more of the time

Part 4: Why Most Personal Productivity Systems Fall Short



What is A Productivity System?

Productivity System

=

Organizing Structures

+

Productivity Procedures

What is an Organizing **Structure**?

- **Examples**
- **Working Definition:** An organizing structure is the place you put, arrange, and find the stuff you need to complete your project.
- **Note:** Your memory and other brain structures are part of the set of planning structures.

What is a Productivity Procedure?

- **Working Definition:** A productivity procedure is a general purpose series of steps you use frequently on different projects to move yourself closer to your goals (as opposed to a specific series of steps that are unique to a particular project).
- **Examples:**

Notes about Productivity Procedures

- **Note One:** Our productivity procedures need to work well with our organizing structures and other productivity procedures.
- **Note Two:** Our productivity procedures need to work well with our native thought procedures.
- **Note Three:** Some of our most important productivity procedures will be directed at getting us into an internal state conducive to effective planning and execution.

The Structures are Primary

- With bad organizing structures even the best procedures will seem convoluted.
- With good organizing structures, even a novice can create simple, effective procedures.
- The right structures are 80% of the battle.
- The right processes are the other 20%

Most Organizing Structures Are Clumsy Ways To Handle Stuff

- A. Integration of new stuff with old.
- B. Finding stuff
- C. Breaking big stuff into little stuff
- D. Creating coherent meaning from the stuff.

This can lead to awkward processes

- Example, David Allen's "next action" process
- Remember, GTD is a very good system. About as good as you can do in the paper and pencil world.
- But there is some awkwardness to the "next action" procedure.

Next actions can be clumsy

1. Sometimes next actions aren't sufficient to clear your mind
2. Sometimes next actions aren't necessary to clear your mind
3. Sometimes several next actions are possible
4. Choice out of context

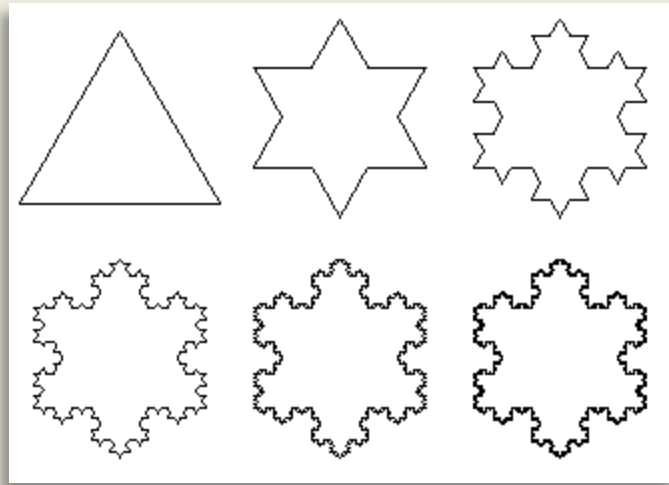
Is There a Better Organizing Structure?

- Yes.
- There is a structure that works the way our brains do when they break down problems.
- This same structure also matches natural hidden structure of all the things we create.
- This makes planning and creating a very natural, organic process.

Part 5: The Power of a Fractal Organizing Structure



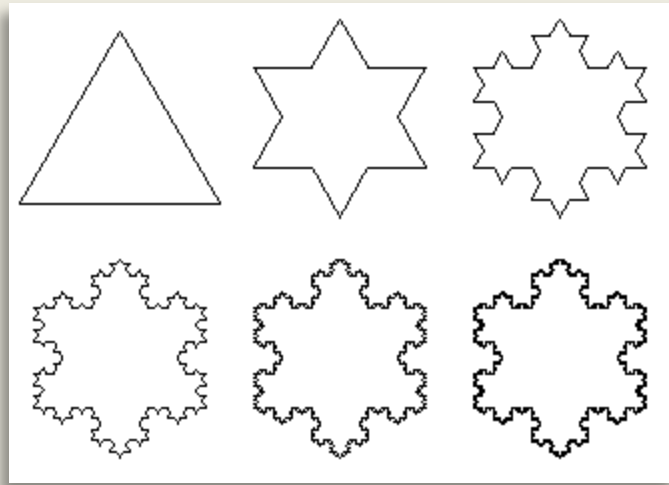
What is a Fractal?



"a rough or fragmented geometric shape that can be split into parts, each of which is (at least approximately) a reduced-size copy of the whole, a property called self-similarity. "

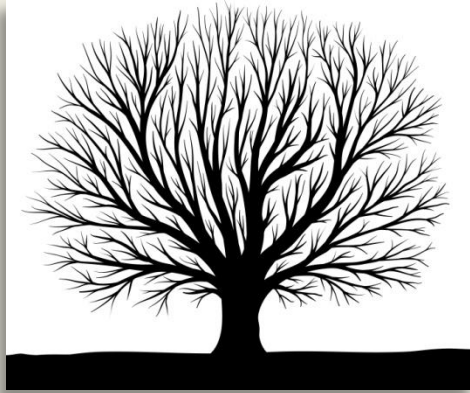
– Wikipedia ("fractals")

What is a Fractal?



- A structure that results from a process of repeatedly breaking things down
- OR from a process of repeatedly building things up
- Self-similarity
- Example: Koch Snowflake

A Tree Illustrates Fractal Planning Better



- They have some random variation
- There is a stopping point
- But they are still “potentially” infinite.
- The self-similarity is approximate.

What is a Fractal Planning Structure?

- Basically a fancy outline (but the “fancy” matters).
- Every plan is made up of other plans which are made up of other plans, and so on.
- There is no distinction between projects and tasks.

A Fractal Planning Structure is

- An outlining tool, with:
- Focus Features (zoom/pan/show/hide)
- Break Down Features (Fast/unlimited)
- Rearranging Features (Parent and Children a single unit)
- Task Processing Features (various)

[screen capture]

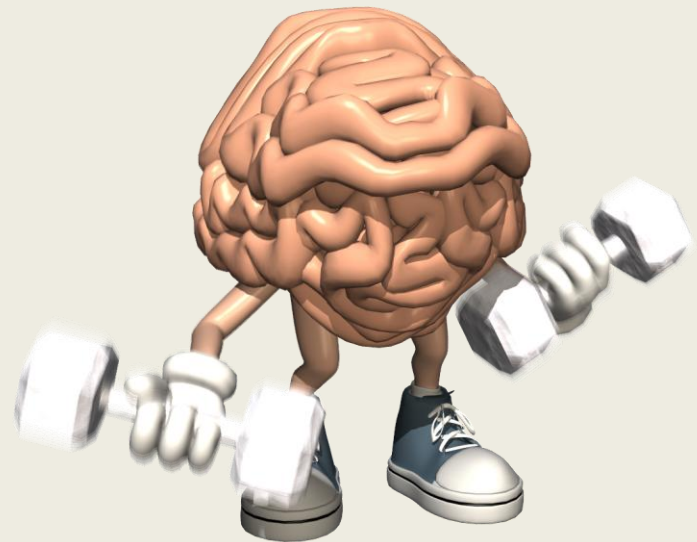
A Fractal Structure Helps Us Do the Big 4 Stuff Things

- A. Integrate new stuff with old stuff
- B. Find stuff
- C. Break down stuff
- D. Create meaning

Screencapture

A Fractal Planning Structure Allows Us to Work the Way Our Brains Naturally Want To

- Our brains already plan by breaking things down into fractals
- Our brain already assesses story coherence using fractals
- Using a structure that matches our brain's natural planning tendencies helps us stay in flow



Why aren't we already doing this?



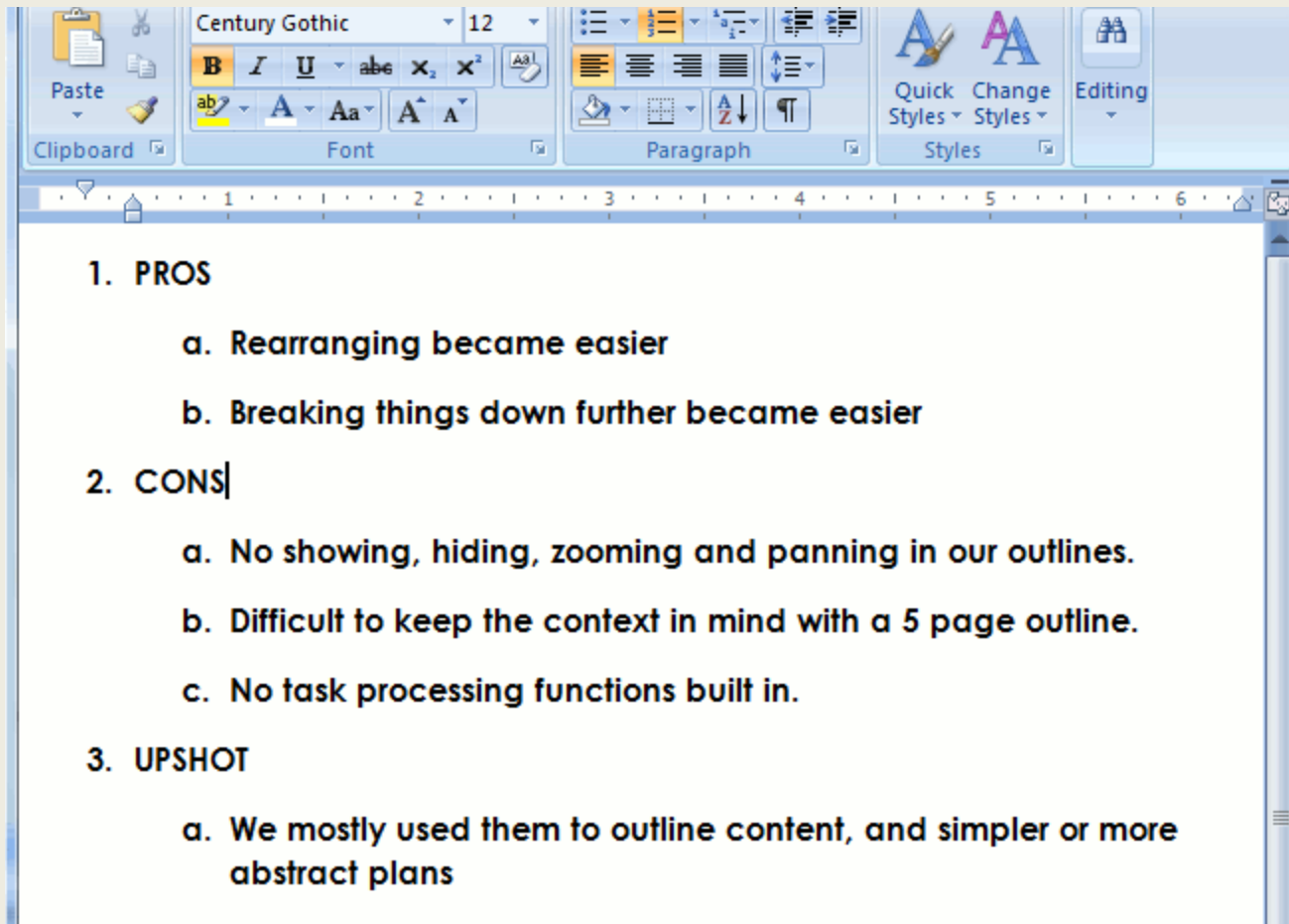
- Good Question
- Here are some thoughts.

Paper and Pencil World

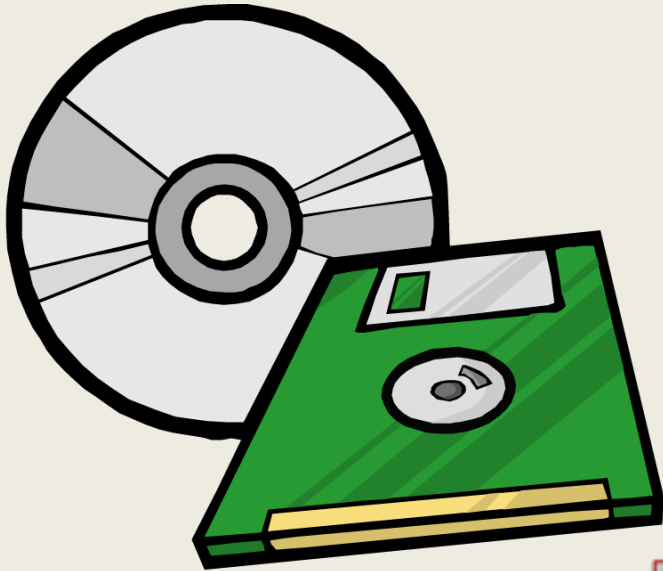


- We've done outlining for more than 3,000 years
- Very difficult to make changes (requires a rewrite)
- Very difficult to add new stuff.
- Remember index cards?

Word Processor World



Planning Software World



- Project + task oriented
- Planning was a deliberate Process
- For each task you entered, you made many decisions.

Schedule it now?

Color code?

How long will it take?

Are you sure?

Assign task?

Add note?

Choose priority?

Do you want fries with that?

Why Didn't Planning Software Go Fractal Sooner?

- Project/task dichotomy
- Projects (and all the areas of our lives) were more compartmentalized in the past.
- David Allen's clear mind procedure hadn't arrived yet.

What about Mind-Maps?

PROS

- They're fun
- They are fractal in nature.

CONS

- They take up a lot of space
- Takes time to arrange for good comparisons



Part 6: The Fractal Planning Tools



The Fractal Planning Tools

1. Master Plan
2. Maybe Later Plan
3. Calendar
4. Stock Plans
5. (perhaps other structures)

1. A SINGLE Fractal Master Plan (for your whole life)

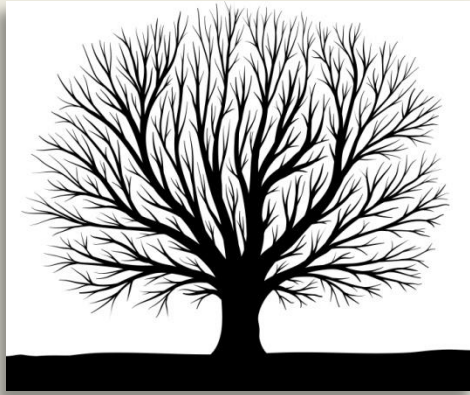
- A. A **Single structure** for your whole life
- B. A **Fractal** Planning Structure

A. A **SINGLE** Structure

- Not separate structures for personal/work
- Sometimes you need to clear your mind of personal matters while you work
- You use one brain for both work and personal matters, and your master plan is there to help your brain.
- You can still compartmentalize some in your brain and your planner



B. A **FRACTAL** Planning Structure



- Break things down quickly
- Focus and rearranging tools
- Information comes back to attention exactly when it's needed
- Task processing functions (mark to do, mark done, schedule, link to reference documents, etc.)

[screen capture of master plan]

2. A Maybe Later List

- This is very important for the clear mind procedure we'll cover in module 3.
- Ideally has the same fractal structure, but not as important as the master plan.
- This is like having the box in the garage for the kids and prevents agonizing decisions at the wrong moments.

[screen capture of Maybe later list]

3. A Calendar

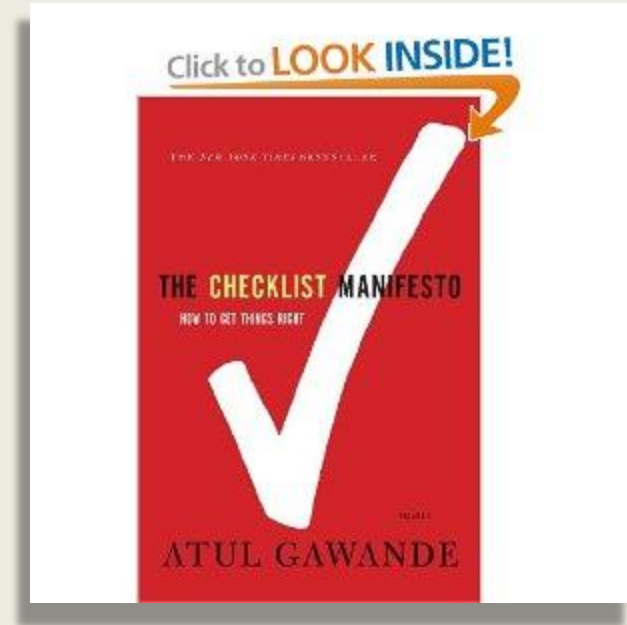


- Allows you to schedule things that have to happen at a particular time.
- I recommend Google Calendar

[screen capture of scheduling something
on Google Calendar]

4. Stock Plans

- a) Saves time
- b) Keeps you from worrying you're forgetting something.
- c) Allows you to refine the process over time



[screen capture of stock plans]

Additional Structures and Tools

- A good email program (Gmail)
- Good Document Programs (MS Office or Google Docs or Open Office, or the iWork suite)
- A phone
- Etc.

Part 7: The Fractal Planning Procedures



Fractal Planning Procedures

- A. Core Planning Skills
- B. Proactive Work Engagement Habits
- C. Reactive Flow Management (RFM) Habits

A. Core Planning Skills

Idea

→ break down the idea

→ make a coherent construction story

→ build up the thing

→ **Finished product**

- **Skill One:** Breaking down your projects
- **Skill Two:** Massaging the parts into a coherent construction story

[screen capture of breaking down]

Notes about Breaking Down Tasks

- Don't break entire projects down at once, unless your brain wants to.
- 2 main planning triggers.
 - Working on project A and need more detail to proceed.
 - Working on project A and thoughts about project B come to mind.

[screen capture of coherence procedure]

[screen capture continued]

B. Proactive Work Engagement Habits

BASIC

- The Basic Productivity Formula

ADVANCED

- Work/Rest Rhythms (if your job allows for it) (more in module 4)
- Weekly project management (SCRUM 4 One in module 6)

The Basic Productivity Formula

1. Choose daily tasks for 1 minute at the beginning of the day.
2. Do stuff
3. Mark it off
4. If you get stuck, get unstuck and get back to work (using a reactive flow management technique).

[screen capture of choosing daily tasks]

- Choose daily tasks
- Do them
- Mark them off
- Work from to do list or work from master plan.
Whichever.

C. Reactive Flow Management (RFM) Procedures

1. Flow and Flow Killers
2. Reactive Flow Management
3. An example
4. A list of specific Reactive Flow Management procedures that we'll cover in future modules.

1. Flow and Flow Killers



- Flow is an amazing way to work
- We naturally work with flow when conditions are right
- Many things can take us out of the flow state (flow killers)

2. Reactive Flow Management

- a) Work with Flow
- b) If you find yourself out of flow,
 - 1) identify the flow killer
 - 2) Implement the flow restoring procedure that counters that flow killer.
 - 3) Get back to working with flow

Developing Flow Restoration Procedures

1. Identify the flow killer
2. Create a remedy that will overcome a particular flow killer
3. Train yourself to follow the rule with an implementation intention (see module 1), and with practice.

NOTE: Most of the main flow killers have been identified, and remedies are available for each. We'll cover these more in future modules.

3. An Example

Thinking about project X while working on project Y



- a) Find project X in your master plan
- b) Spend less than one minute breaking it down as far as you need to.
- c) Get back to work.

4. Some Specific Flow Management Procedures Covered in Future Modules

Clear mind procedure

Clear Vision procedure

Clear Plan procedure

Unexpected Complication Procedure

Impatience Procedure

Exhaustion procedure

Anxiety/boredom procedure

Summary of Fractal Planning Procedures

A. Core Planning Skills

1. Breaking things down
2. Making things coherent
3. Miscellaneous

B. Proactive Work Engagement Habits

1. Basic Productivity Formula

2. Daily Work/Rest Rhythm (to be covered in a later module)
3. Scrum For One (to be covered in a later module)

C. Reactive Flow Management (RFM) Habits

- A. Know your flow killers
- B. Have a solution for each one
- C. Train yourself to quickly deal with flow killers

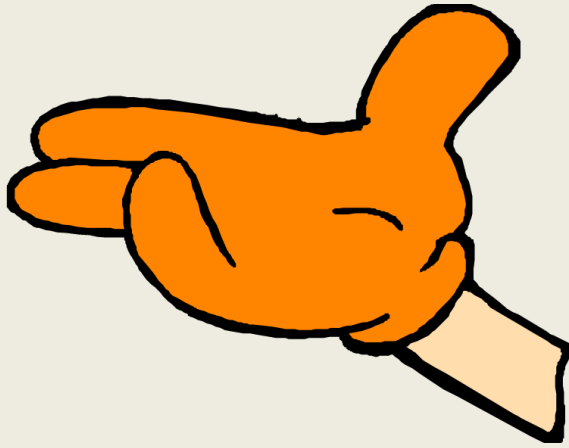
Part 8: Getting Perspective



How You Work Each Day

1. Spend 1 minute choosing what to do for the day
2. Work
3. Mark stuff off
4. If your flow is threatened, solve the problem and get back to work.

That's All? Sound Too Simple



- You mean no boring planning sessions, overhead, complex procedures, and wasted effort?
- A fractal organizing structure makes your productivity procedures fit your brain like a glove.

It Fits Your Brain, AND it Fits the Nature of Creativity



- Most things grow through iterative fine tuning.
- This results in a fractal structure in being built into pretty much all of our creations.
- See also:
 - Clear Mind, Effective Action
 - The Nature of Technology



This will allow you to Work like a Genius



- Generate lots of ideas
- Determine the most important ones to work on
- Break them down quickly
- Make them coherent easily
- Keep improving with iterative tweaking
- Work with flow most of the time
- Bask in the adulation of their peers
- **WARNING:** Once you've gone FRAC . . .

Part 8: Your Assignments



Your Assignments

1. Select a fractal planning tool.
2. Start your master plan (just start dumping stuff in and trust your brain to organize stuff naturally on the fly)
3. Use the Simple Productivity Formula every day the rest of this week and next week
4. Take the Exit Survey in the classroom area.
5. Sign up for the third module of the WWFW. We'll cover Reactive Flow Management in more detail.