HOPEWELL

(Hey, it's Ami again 👋)

What's Working...

There used to be one way to see a TV show. You had to tune in at the designated time on the predetermined channel and bear through several commercial breaks just to find out what was going to happen on ER this week. Along came streaming and, in a few short years, the entire paradigm that had existed since the Golden Days of Radio was suddenly irrelevant. In another life, I wrote a lot about the democratization of media and content. And I believe that we're experiencing a similar wave of change in the world of work now. Like it or not, many workers no longer need to report to a designated place at a designated time. There's no turning back, just as we're not going to see the cable-cutters reverse course.

But there's something to be learned about the new world of work from the old world of media: the value of episodic thinking.

Now that we're able to binge our way through all 15 seasons of Dr. Doug Ross' riveting career at County General Hospital, we no longer stop to think about the anticipation and importance we once invested into sitting down on Thursday nights in 1994 to witness the thrilling melodrama that was the first season of ER. Now we might put it on in the background while we do the dishes or simultaneously browse DSW's website for sandals while it plays. Many of us have lost our ability to deeply focus on a single episode of anything — work included.

We're constantly juggling the task at hand with digital notifications from chat, email, texts, in-person interactions, and more. We've created a situation where we expect ourselves to be perpetually available during working hours to ensure that no one ever perceives us as maybe not working. But it's created an inability to regularly access deeply focused work.

The danger of this new 'work binging' is burnout.
The remedy is to turn away from the streaming, always-available mindset back to one that is episodic and planned. When we plan our weekly tasks at Hopewell, many of us block time on our calendars to accomplish one finite goal within a period of time. We often make these calendar blocks transparent to our teammates so they know not to bother us during those times. We turn off notifications without guilt, fear, or worry,

and dive into deep, beneficial work episodes. We know that when we come out the other side with something awesome completed we'll feel like better members of the team and we'll never think twice about the 90 minutes that we might not have been available to answer a slack.

Thinking about work episodically frees us from the guilt and fear that plague us when we're constantly worrying about whether others perceive us as digitally 'available.' Think about it this way, would you rather look like you're working or actually get killer work done?

Here's how we think about creating successful work episodes:
TIGHT GOALS:

- Do you know what you are trying to achieve?
- Is your task broken down enough to be realistically accomplishable in the timeframe you've set aside?
- Will you be able to know if the thing you set out to complete was satisfactorily finished when the work episode ends?

TIME CONSIDERATIONS:

- Do you know when (what time of day and week) you will have the right energy and motivation to accomplish the task you're setting out to do?
- Are you going to be able to shut out other distractions for this period of time?

SITUATIONAL ELEMENTS:

- What environment is going to be the most conducive to this type of work?
- What else do you need to get your head in the game? Coffee? Headphones? Whiteboards? Graham crackers with cream cheese and blueberries? (<<*I highly recommend these.*)

Ready or not, asynchronous and autonomous work are increasingly becoming the way of the future. Shifting your view of work away from a 9-5 huge block of hours to more concentrated, project-based, goal-focused episodes means more likelihood of success in the new world of work.

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