

In 2019 I took a course called [Building a Second Brain](#) by [Tiago Forte](#). Throughout the course I illustrated summaries of the main concepts which you can find below.

Much like it sounds, building a “second brain” is about creating a system – outside your physical skin-and-bone bodily boundaries – for storing, organising, and eventually transforming information.

This idea is not especially new; [commonplace books](#)

for storing personal knowledge have been around for centuries. Although digital mediums have made it easier and faster to capture, browse, search, and retrieve the information in these systems.

A Small Disclaimer

In the 3 years since taking the course, I've learned much more about the world of [personal knowledge management](#)

(PKM) and its long history. Tiago's course is a light introduction to the concept of knowledge management, but not deeply rooted in the historical literature. I'd encourage you to explore beyond it.

The price tag on the course has also blossomed since I took it, and the marketing material a bit outlandish. I don't necessarily endorse or actively encourage anyone to take the course.

I also find the metaphor of a “second brain” troubling in that it doesn't speak to the significance of [embodied cognition](#)

and [tacit knowledge](#)

in how human cognition works. Filling up a “digital brain” as if it were a filing cabinet is highly unlikely to lead to meaningful knowledge and wisdom.

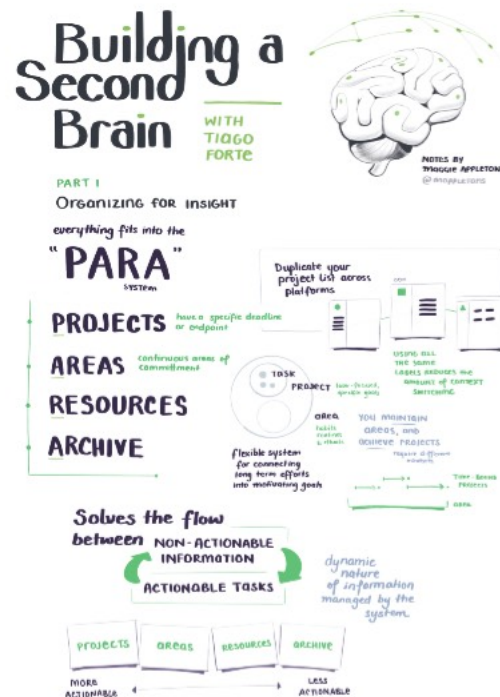
Some of the content below is good, sensible advice for managing your digital

information, but it is not groundbreaking or life changing. It also isn't based in much scientific evidence for what makes people effective thinkers, writers, and creators.

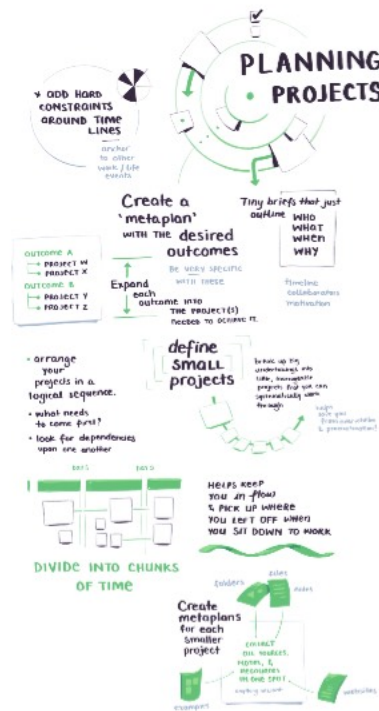
As Andy Matuschak poetically [pointed out](#)

, "people who write extensively about note-writing rarely have a serious context of use."

Exercise your own discernment here.



SETTING UP A PARA SYSTEM



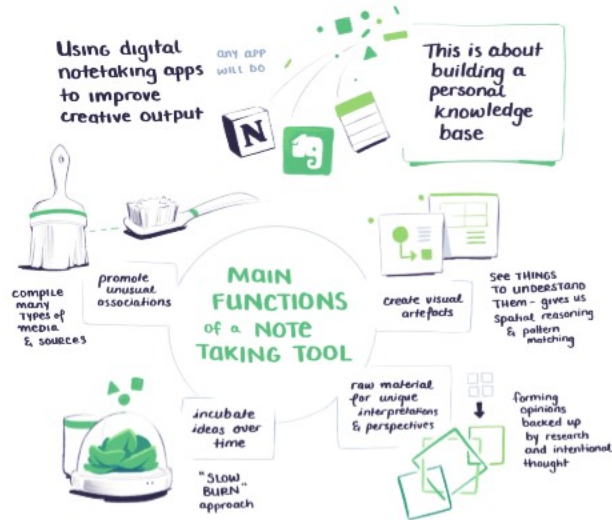


BUILDING A SECOND BRAIN

PART II
DIGITAL COGNITION

WITH
TIAGO FORTÉ

NOTES BY
MAGGIE APPLETON
@mappletons



YOUR NOTES SHOULD BE

Personal

OPTIMISED FOR YOU, NOT AIMED AT PUBLIC PRESENTATION. Informal & DIRTY

DIVERSE MEDIUMS

IMAGES, AUDIO, VIDEO, TWEETS, BOOKS, ARTICLES, MUSIC, DIAGRAMS, SKETCHES, CODE, DEMOS, SLIDES, WEBSITES, PODCASTS, AND MORE!

UNPOLISHED

MESSY, RANDOM, NON-SENSICAL & NOT AIMED AT A PARTICULAR OUTCOME

Open-ended

YOU'RE ALWAYS ADDING TO & BUILDING YOUR KNOWLEDGE BASE



✱ move notes through the layers **OPPORTUNISTICALLY**, only when you're organically reviewing them in daily work

NOT every NOTE GOES THROUGH ALL THE LAYERS



RESONATES

when highlighting & summarising

DON'T WORRY ABOUT HOW IT FITS INTO THE 'BIGGER PICTURE'

Gives us

A 'personal information landscape'

we can easily navigate & drop down into for deeper context





BUILDING A SECOND BRAIN

WITH
TÍAGO
FORTE

PART IV
MAXIMIZING RETURN
ON ATTENTION

NOTES BY
MAGGIE APPLETON
© mappletions



Valuable returns come from the state of

FLOW

PINNACLE of

ENERGIZED FOCUS,
FULL INVOLVEMENT,
& ENJOYMENT

Like a child immersed in play

experience

learning

performance



THE BIOCHEMISTRY OF FLOW

endorphins

CREATE PLEASURE & INNER CALM

nitric oxide

SUPPRESSES STRESS & CREATES RELAXATION

dopamine

IMPROVES PATTERN RECOGNITION

anandamine

IMPROVES DIVERGENT LATERAL THINKING

norepinephrine

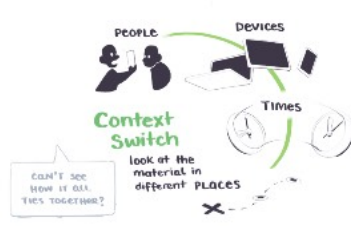
CREATES focus to IGNORE DISTRACTIONS







here's 16 WORKFLOW STRATEGIES



Change the Form



CAN'T MAKE A SOURCE CLEAR IN YOUR MIND?

Sentence Hacking

Colour Commentary

