Introduction

This is my user manual. A living document that I adapted from [This Medium post by Cassie Robinson](#) a few years ago. I've been carrying it with me since then. It's purpose is twofold. Firstly to help me to write down and clarify some things about myself, the way I work and why I do what I do. And Secondly, to provide some insight to folks who work with me about what kind of behaviour and interactions will make our relationship the most effective.

This is written in the knowledge that not all needs will be met all the time, but that there is still value in making them explicit for the people around me.

Conditions I like to work in

When I'm on my own I like quiet contemplative spaces, Where I can be myself, maybe put some music on, and properly focus on what I'm doing with few distractions.

If I'm struggling to find motivation to work on the project/task at hand, then I find that a change of scene can help, so I will occasionally head to a local coffee shop instead of my home office.

When I'm working with others I love to pair (either remotely or in person), and in that kind of environment I get energised by activity, I love it when my pair and I really get into a groove that allows us to move fast, switch roles fluidly and communicate constantly while we work.

Times/Hours I like to work

I normally start around 0830 GMT and finish around 1730 GMT. I'm a pretty early riser, and definitely not a night owl so I like to keep things boring.

A couple of days a week I shift my schedule later so that I start at 1330 GMT (0830 EST) and finish at around 2230GMT (1730EST). I do this for a few reasons:

- I get to spend the morning with my wife and kids
- It gives me a couple of days a week with better crossover with my team
- I get to grab a beer and be around for the occasional team social at the end of the day

The best ways to communicate with me

Slack DM's are probably the best and easiest way to get in touch in the first instance (although I will always answer a video call during my working hours without hesitation).

I treat Slack as an asynchronous protocol. I have notifications turned on for messages and keywords only. I try not to join many channels and will often close Slack if I'm working on something complex or deep, although I keep DM notifications turned on on my phone. I control my notifications closely so please feel free to DM me at any time, it's not going to disturb me and I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

For more detailed or technical stuff, I like to work in shared documents, as it gives me a bit more of a blank canvas to properly organise my thoughts, transcribe them, edit them, and make sure I'm confident in what I'm saying before I give a response. I'll often throw something together as the starting point for a conversation and then expect people to comment, make changes and iterate on it with me.

I also love video calls. I don't mind jumping on a call just for a couple of minutes to talk about anything (it doesn't have to be work related), or for longer things like pairing sessions or deeper conversations. It's nice to see people's faces, read body language and helps me feel more connected to the team.

Ways I like to receive feedback

Quickly and directly and preferably in person/video. I've got a thick skin and imposter syndrome and the way I've found to make those two things play nicely is to receive prompt direct, and actionable feedback. Don't worry about offending me or sugar coating things.

Being able to rely on people telling me candidly and promptly when I'm doing something wrong saves me burning brain cycles worrying, and allows me to feel confident in what I'm doing.

The same applies for positive feedback. It helps me massively to know when the things I'm doing are helpful and appreciated - it gives me an immediate energy boost, and stops the constant nagging feeling that I'm doing everything wrong.

I always reflect on feedback positive or negative and try to work out what changes I need to make to make myself a more pleasant and effective human.

Things I need

- **Communication**: I need to know that I'm on the right track and that I'm not alone. I need to know what's happening with the company, I need to know what direction me/my team/the company is heading in - it helps me ground myself and point myself in the right direction.
- **To be learning:** I thrive in environments where I can learn new things, especially when I get to work with other people to learn them.
- **A sense of purpose**: I need to know the 'why' of what I'm doing. Who's it going to benefit? I need my work to have meaning as much as possible.
- **Decent coffee**: It makes me happy.

Things I struggle with

Occasionally I can disappear down rabbit holes, often reappearing in a completely different place, and barely remembering why I went down there in the first place. This is frustrating for me as it can sometimes result in losing a lot of code. It's something I try to mitigate by always having clear and fast communication and feedback cycles about what I'm doing.

On a similar note I often find it tough to ask for help, it's something I'm actively working on but I've been doing what I've been doing for so long that I sometimes feel like I should have all the answers and that I'll be seen as a fraud when I don't.

I can also be a procrastinator, especially when I'm trying to do a task that I am scared of failing or find intimidating. Writing blog posts or talks or doing anything that will put me in the path of receiving feedback or criticism from a wider audience than I am used to are the things that trigger this most acutely. I try to maintain a positive attitude and break tasks down so they're easier to manage! But it's definitely a challenge.

Things I love

More than anything, I love my wife and kids, and spending time at home with them, especially doing jigsaw puzzles with my daughter and cooking as a family.

I love concise, well factored and readable code - especially in tests. I love writing command line tools and utilities.

I love exploring different programming languages and paradigms, operating systems and other low level stuff, although this isn't really what my background is in so I often don't know what I'm talking about.

I love learning new things, and being able to help people in any way I can.

I love manga and anime, although I read more than I watch.

And I love building mechanical keyboards, seriously! I could talk about keyboards for hours.

Other things to know about me

I enjoy video games, mostly retro and obscure. I once played Dance Dance Revolution for 6 hours straight. It was exhausting.

I love good beer, and I brew my own. Expect me to get very excited about a decent Porter.