Personal User Manual (README.Mark)

Mark Wilson

What's this about?

- A Personal User Manual is simply a document that explains the conditions needed to work well and enjoy the things that we do together!

- We often (incorrectly) assume how others work which leads to wasted time, energy, and negative emotions

- We learn about one another's likes, dislikes, and ranges of human experiences through trial and error over a long period of time

- A Personal User Manual is a shortcut to a deeper understanding of others in their own words which allows us to communicate and collaborate in a much more effective, efficient, and enjoyable way

- Read more about Personal User Manuals

Some of the basics

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LOCATED IN OLNEY (NEAR MILTON KEYNES/NORTHAMPTON)

30 YEARS IN TECHNOLOGY… AT LARGE SYSTEMS INTEGRATORS, OUTSOURCERS, IN-HOUSE AND WITH SMALLER MICROSOFT PARTNERS

8 YEARS AT RISUAL, NOW NODE4 (PREVIOUSLY AT ICL, CAPITA, CONCHANGO, GORDON & GOTCH AUSTRALIA, POLO RALPH LAUREN AND FUJITSU)

Logistics

- I work 4 days a week (I'm 0.8 of an FTE, not compressed hours)

- My normal office hours are Monday to Thursday 9:00-17:30 but I'll often work into the evening when I need to get something done

- I value face-to-face collaboration and will travel to meet where there is value in doing so
  + But I like to know what value I can bring to a meeting – whether that's in person or online

How I can help you

- I'm a Strategic Thinking Technologist who can cut through the hype and see where tech could help solve business problems

- I can communicate well with both technical and non-technical audiences
  + I've helped marketing teams to communicate technical messages and to provide thought leadership to potential clients
  + I enjoy writing: white papers; industry press; and more
  + I use social media to good effect and have won awards for my blog

- I have good knowledge across most of the Microsoft technology stack (except Dynamics)
  + I was given a Microsoft Most Valuable Professional (MVP) award three times
  + These days I'm no longer an expert, but I am a good generalist

- I keep abreast of technology developments across a broad spectrum of topics

Recent work examples

- The creation of a security strategy for a local authority adopting Microsoft 365 services using a zero-trust model

- Creation of a cloud transformation strategy for a luxury hotel/resort management company

- Creating a business case for a leading cancer charity's migration to the cloud

- Providing technical advice and project management as part of a programme to modernise a local authority's end user computing approach

- Supplier-side technical lead on a programme to migrate a core policing application to Microsoft Azure for a consortium of six Police Forces

- Providing advice and guidance to a police force that's trying to overcome inertia on its long-running cloud migration programme

- Aiding a government agency with a review of its Information Technology policies and drafting their new Digital Policy

How to get the best out of me

- I work best when I have time to think and respond
  - + I can be impulsive if required, but I'm naturally a logical thinker – I'm not naturally suited to reactive work (though I can keep my cool in a genuine crisis)

- I can work with ambiguity, but I need context
  - + If you want me to input to something, it helps if I know why we're creating it and where it will add value

- I really care about having control over my calendar
  - + I prefer to start the day slowly and often get into flow late afternoon, continuing into the evening if necessary
  - + I often block out chunks of time so that I can get work done

- I need a balance of remote (home) working and in-person client/colleague contact
  - – 100% remote work is bad for me!

I prefer to communicate via…

- …for `quick responses, instant messaging` (Microsoft Teams)

- …for `a more considered response, email` (but not for anything time-sensitive)

- …for `a discussion, a video call`

- My work calendar is open and available for all to view

  + Feel free to book time for a discussion

- Just so you know, I won't check messages when I'm not working

  + I find that some of my best ideas come to me when I'm disconnected

- Similarly, I can be a bit of a night owl so don't be surprised if I message you late at night! I don't expect you to respond outside your working hours

I know it's a cliché but…

- …I genuinely have an eye for detail

- It means I sometimes focus a little too much on the small things, but it's also what makes me good at what I do

You'll know I'm stressed when

- I get a little irritable

- I'm working on that, but I apologise in advance

- (I generally have very little patience for a situation that has been caused by others' lack of care, planning or preparation – but I'll help a colleague or friend if I can)

If you would like me to do something

- I respond well to "asking assertiveness" ("Mark, can you help with X?")

- I react poorly to being told what to do ("Mark, do X.")

The best way to give me feedback

- Be direct with me

- It's good to know when I have done well

- It's even better to know how I could do better next time
  + I may be disappointed at first, but we can discuss what happened and I can learn

- **I like to have a pulse of how I'm doing (i.e. what's going well, what isn't)**

I do my best work when

- …in brainstorming/strategy: I really enjoy collaborating with clients/colleagues and bouncing ideas around; I'll be one of the first in a room to get up and write on the walls

- …in execution: when executing, I prefer having significant blocks to work on my own, to get things done

- …in selling: consulting-led sales beats tender responses/bids, every time

I feel most satisfaction from work when

- The purpose and context is clear, but I have the autonomy to work out how to get there

- I have the time to deliver to a high standard

- I can see the value in action

- I love to work things out and to solve technical challenges… but that's not my day job any more

When I'm struggling with focus or falling behind the most likely causes are

- Workload (too high, or too many small things)/prioritisation (of more important/urgent tasks)

  + Context-switching/interruptions are bad for productivity

- Frustration (for this task or others that are distracting me)

- Purpose (a lack of)

Outside work, I'm passionate about

- My family
  + First and foremost, I'm a husband to Nikki, a Father to Matthew and Ben, and the human who takes Coco (the dog) for a walk most lunchtimes
  + Supporting Matt's cycling all over the country
  + Watching the enjoyment that Ben gets from his team sports and social activities

- Photography
  + Mostly on an iPhone these days, but I love to see other people's inspirational images and sometimes create some decent ones myself

- Exercise
  + I would say keeping in shape, but I'm not…
  + I do cycle a bit (less than I used to), run occasionally (to keep fit, rather than for enjoyment), walk every day, and regularly attend strength and conditioning classes

- Creative hobbies
  + A bit of DIY; tidying up the garden; technical projects and building models; occasionally cooking

Nuance

- I am an introvert – that doesn't mean I don't like to be with people, but it does mean that prolonged exposure to people is exhausting for me – particularly if I haven't met them before

  + And yet, I can appear outwardly confident if I know enough people in the room

- I may be socially anxious 1-1 but when presenting (performing) that's a different persona

  + If I know I know my stuff, I'll be fine… which is why I tend to over-prepare

Other things to know

- I care about my colleagues and their progression

- I'm sometimes too honest for my own good – my last manager said it was both my greatest quality and my greatest weakness
  + I tend to wear my heart on my sleeve and will tell you if something doesn't feel right
  + And BS is just too much effort to keep a story straight!

- I struggle with anxiety but have developed a number of coping strategies over the years
  + I guess this document is one more of them…