

Describe your working routine for a day

In this reflective essay I will be discussing the types of work I do on a routine basis as well as my general approach to this work. My working routine differs significantly depending on whether I am working in the office, on site or at an event. For the sake of this essay the below will focus on my working routine in the office, rather than any activities happening outside of it. Given that I tend to touch on a number of different projects and activities on any given day I will discuss the general type of work I do across the workday rather than diving into the minutiae of individual projects.

My workday is structured around the types of tasks I complete on a daily basis. I have found I work most efficiently when I can focus on a single task, or a group of similar tasks for an extended period of time, rather than switching frequently (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022; Young Entrepreneur Council, 2021). It is key to note that every individual will thrive under different working practices and for myself it has been a matter of understanding when I personally feel the most productive and produce the highest quality work. I use this understanding to try and organise my work day to optimise on my strengths (Thooyamani et al., 2006). The following essay represents something of a best case scenario as it doesn't account for urgent matters that may come up and change my focus midway through my work day, nor does it discuss days where I'm in back-to-back meetings. Where possible I split my day into communication, planning/creative work and catching up with other teams.

My work routine on any given day usually starts with responding to communications. While a lot of advice in structuring a work day will often cite good practice being to complete the most challenging piece of work early in the day I personally find getting an easy win under my belt provides me the motivation to tackle those more challenging jobs (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022; Young Entrepreneur Council, 2021). Responding to emails is clearly defined task that can easily completed unlike more complex tasks which can expand and change as you start working on them. I find that being able to fully tick something off in its entirety frees up mental space in my mind.

There is a number of key elements in responding to an external and non-professional audience. Responses need to be timely, as if it takes too long to hear back, enquirers can feel ignored or unsure of their message has been received. This is particularly relevant with the aforementioned groups as there is often a scheduling element which means communication needs to be clear and decisions made well in advance of any future event. For this reason I make sure to respond to all emails within 48 hours (or use an automated email response if I know this won't be possible). This timeframe represents a good compromise between managing my workload and time and ensuring a quick response.

The second key element in external communication is making the people I interact with feel valued. Ultimately volunteers are giving up their time and energy to engage with our work and support archaeological efforts. To some extent this is covered in the timeliness aspect above, as a quick response will make a volunteer feel valued, while weeks of radio silence may make them unwilling to take part in additional volunteering. In addition to this it is important to be friendly and express how much their support is valued in any communication. I also ensure that the volunteer community receives regular updates on major projects and activities as this

will make them feel more engaged with the company and maintains the pool of available volunteers.

Finally it is key to consider the specific audiences I am in contact with and how to best engage with them. While we often think of volunteers as a singular group, there is actually many different types of volunteers each with different needs and motivations (Safrit & Schmiesing, 2012). To give just a few examples of the groups I interact with on a daily basis there are:

1. School students who are considering a future in archaeology and want to get more exposure to the realities of the industry.
2. University students trying to gain professional experience outside of their studies.
3. Individuals from outside of the heritage sector considering a change in career and wanting to gain insight into archaeology.
4. Hobbyists interested in engaging with archaeology in their free time but without a desire to pursue it professionally.

It is important to tailor any communication to the needs of the group as well as bearing in mind practical requirements such as additional safeguarding requirements for students and data protection for all external parties. This is important as taking part in volunteering activities has been shown to be particularly valuable for people with disabilities and other marginalised groups (Choma & Ochocka, 2005). Considering this I make sure to use inclusive language and be aware of circumstances which may limit the flexibility of volunteers (Francis, 2021).

Delegation and team coordination is another consideration in effective communication with external parties. While some of the communications I deal with on a daily basis are directed at me personally, many are directed at the Cotswolds organisation and use shared mailboxes. This means that I need to coordinate with the other users of the mailbox and ensure there is a clear delineation as to the types of messages I respond to versus what is covered by others. In my team we split enquiries based on geographic location. Where there is a lack of clarity as to who should respond, I make sure to share with the team to avoid any duplication of work. There is also often occasions where the outreach team will not be able to answer a specific question (particularly enquires by the career change group mentioned above) and the query needs to be passed on to another team. In this situation it becomes my task to manage the information flow between Cotswolds and the enquirer, managing their expectations (e.g. in terms of timeframe) and ensuring that the relevant team prioritises coming back with a response.

Clearing my email inbox in the morning has the additional benefit of providing me with a clear overview of what tasks need to be done on any given day. This is because I'll get the chance to look through any emails that I may miss from the previous day or what may have come in after I finished my work had started the work day and assess the priority level of the tasks that may be being asked to do via e-mail. So once I've done this I will sit down with my paper planner and write a list of what needs to be done that day, this is looking at the previous day's list and I will transfer over any tasks that still need tackling today, I always write the task(s) with the highest priority at the top of the list (Barratt, 2019) however I do not number these as a precise prioritised list, this is usually just mentally noted. I have

learnt that if I have not written a task down on a piece of paper I will not remember that task is on my to-do list. My work routine is to spend the second block of the day on creative and planning tasks, as I find these to be the most challenging and require the most focus.

This is another area where it is important to understand your audience. I do a lot of work with schools and apart from the aforementioned additional safeguarding considerations any event needs to be tailored to what they will find engaging and the ability level they will be coming in with (National Museum of Scotland, 2022).

There are usually a large number of outreach related projects ongoing at any one time. As a result I have to prioritise which of these I focus on, and where possible to dedicate longer blocks of time to each project to increase my efficiency. It is difficult to rapidly switch between different projects and still produce the same quality of work. I prioritize work according to three main principles:

1. Deadlines
2. Dependencies
3. Funded vs. Unfunded

Deadlines represent the clearest form of prioritisation. As much of my work centres around events, the date that the event is taking place represents a hard, non-negotiable deadline. If I am not ready the event will either have to be cancelled or take place at a much lower standard, both of which would reflect poorly on Cotswold Archaeology and lower its public standing. Similarly work like tenders will have deadlines after which any submission will no longer be accepted. To help manage my time and keep on top of the various deadlines I utilise my digital calendar, marking key milestones that should be met by certain dates as well as the final deadline. This also allows me to quickly identify pinch points in my schedule where I may need to draw on support from my team or where we should decide not to take work on due to a lack of capacity.

Working towards a deadline often involves many pieces of work which are dependent on each other. The most common dependency I encounter is working with the illustrations department. I often require them to produce graphics and supporting material for outreach activities but they are also producing work for the finds, field and publications teams. As such their time is allocated significantly in advance of any work and my planning has to account for this. I therefore prioritise any work that involves organising the time of people outside my department. I also need to ensure that I have any relevant inputs they will need ready (e.g. photos or descriptive text), as failure to do this will result in my task being taken off their schedule. When planning a project I make sure to consider these dependencies and plan in enough time for them, or where this is not possible to clearly communicate the timeline of the project so that their schedule can be accordingly adjusted. Dependencies are even more important where they concern external stakeholders, as projects are often dependent on permissions and approvals for the wider project. Any work concerning these approvals has to be prioritised as if these are missing or withdrawn they can force the entire project to pause.

A consideration that is perhaps a bit more specific to my department is the distinction between funded and unfunded work. Much of the work that I do is not linked to a specific client and is instead funded by Cotswold Archaeology. This includes, work experience, volunteering in the offices and attending careers fairs. While this work is important to meeting the strategic aims of the company and its charitable objectives (Cotswold Archaeology, 2023), it does not generate any revenue and therefore tends to carry a lower priority than funded projects. While there is still a high quality expectation around any unfunded outreach work, in terms of time and resource allocation it has to work around the funded work. Much of this unfunded work is relatively flexible and operates at the discretion of Cotswolds as there is no client whose timeline expectations needs to be met. As a result I will organise less volunteering opportunities or events like webinars in periods with significant amounts of project work, while increasing their frequency in periods where the team has more capacity.

The final block of my working day tends to be dedicated towards aligning with other teams and ensuring I am up to date on any developments. This timing lines up with the field team returning from site in the late afternoon. This is not a good time for focused thinking work due to the noise and distraction around the office. As project officers come in, they provide updates to the fieldwork managers. Hearing these conversations to help me understand what is happening on site and identify opportunities for outreach and digital media. As part of the outreach team it is part of my role to understand what the work the office is carrying out and be able to confidently discuss it at events. I am also thinking about the stories that can be told through this work as this will often theme any outreach we do for these activities. When we are thinking about sharing the archaeology with a non-professional audience it's often of either the people working on the site or a cohesive story of the site that is of particular interest (Praetzellis, 2014).

Taking an organised approach to my workday by splitting it up into three different task types and maintaining clear principles for prioritisation and communicating with external audiences has allowed me to effectively carry out and deliver my tasks. I have found that the key to successfully executing a project at a high standard is planning out all its requirements and dependencies and understanding the needs and considerations of key stakeholders/audiences.

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