Twitter Thread by Matty G



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1/ I really enjoyed interviewing @xuenay about his writing strategy for bridging different perspectives. My writing has improved a ton from integrating this strategy!

So how does @xuenay do

> 5/ But I don't want to have to wait to share these models! I've already begun to share them with coaching clients, with great results.
>
> So over the next few weeks, I want to do a few tweetstorms sharing the https://t.co/WlcYFIARFW models. I'll quote tweet them in this thread.
>
> — Matty G (@mattgoldenberg) January 7, 2021

2/ Like with all of these models, this is inspired by interview @xuenay but not necessarily endorsed by him. There's a necessary translation process that goes from his head to my head to paper!

3/Let's first talk about beliefs and motivations. What's his primary motivation to start this process?

For him, it's a process of seeing people disagree, and feeling a visceral sense of frustration at people talking post each other.

5/ For him, it's almost a proprioceptive sense of two different shapes. One person is saying circle, and the other is hearing square. It's really important to make these shapes match up!

6/ There are two underlying values here. The less salient one is wanting a sense of admiration from others. It's really nice to get praise for creating good explanations that unify two viewpoints.

7/ The more salient value is a sense of Harmony and Beauty. If you can create a beautiful explanation, people can understand each other. The universe is just a bit more harmonious if you can take two perspectives and integrate them!

8/ In terms of what initially motivates him and lets him see the opportunity for this sense of Harmony and Beauty is when he sees people talking past each other, and feels like he sees where the disconnect is. Or he has a sense of what could be said

instead.

9/ So those are some of his underlying beliefs and motivations. But how does he actually craft these beautiful explanations? What is his strategy?

10/ First, there's a few background processes he is running when he's writing. Tests to make sure that what he's writing will lead to that beauty and harmony, and resolve that frustration.

11/ The first test he does is recalling specific criticisms from earlier and the conversation, and sort of imagining the general type of person that would have those criticisms. He's checking if what he's writing is actually answering those criticisms in a convincing way.

12/ Second, he's sometimes imagining a specific skeptical person reading what he has written, and seeing how he imagines they would react. He's asking:

1. Do they understand what I'm saying?
2. Are they convinced by what I'm sayng?

13/ So those are some of the background tests he's continually looping back to. What are the actual strategies he's using to write things that satisfy those tests?

14/ Let's start with his Primary Strategy. In order to meet those tests, first build a model of what both people want. Begin generating some explanations, and see if they're satisfying that model!

15/ As you begin to generate ideas and explanations, make some bullet points that capture these ideas and explanations. Keep doing this and jotting down notes until you feel you have enough to be convincing!

16/ Then begin to use this strategy recursively to flesh out each of the bullet points. At this point you can also begin to edit what you've written, and bring in related ideas. You can also begin to look up specific details that would help.

17/ So that's the primary strategy. But what does @xuenay do when using this strategy still doesn't sufficiently meet his criteria to create harmony and beauty, resolve frustration, and satisfy the skeptical person in his head? That's where the secondary strategy comes in!

18/ First, check if there's a lack of consistent frame or narrative that would tie the bullet points together. It's important not only two have harmony and beauty between the two perspectives, but between the individual bullet points as well!

19/ The way to do this is to begin to brainstorm a bunch of different narratives or frames, and loop back to your tests and your sense of harmony and beauty to see which one would be best. You can also look at other explanations of similar things and see what frames worked.

20/ Another related failure mode that can happen here is that you're wishywashy between two different narratives or frames, because both feel natural to use.

21/ In this instance, you need to accept that you can only take one path. @xuenay likes to remind himself of the phrase "Kill your darlings" to help himself with this.

22/ So what if he's tried his primary strategy, and he's tried his secondary strategy, but no matter what he tries he can't make any headway. That's where his tertiary strategy comes in!

23/ If you keep trying to add bullet points and creating a narrative, but it's still not working, It's often because you're trying to explain too much or to too general of an audience.

24/ The strategy here is just to explain a smaller subset of what you were trying to do. You can also give the piece to someone in your target audience, and get very specific feedback of what's not working.

25/ Alternatively, sometimes you're just trying to explain something that you don't have a full grasp of yet. In this case, ask yourself if you anticipate reading to be useful. If so, go back and read some more to get a firmer grasp and jog your creativity.

26/ So in general, those are his cognitive strategies for writing. What is the sustaining emotion that his carrying him through this process?

27/ There are actually two different modes @xuenay can operate in here.

28/ One is a sense of *URGENT EXCITEMENT*. It feels like he has a million ideas in his head, and there's this sense of urgency to capture them, which leads to this sense of exciting momentum as they begin to take shape.

29/ The other is more of a sense of *QUIET SATISFACTION*. It's almost like building a physical thing, like a house or a bench. There's a sense of building something slowly and deliberately, and watching it become more real.

30/ So that's how he's feeling, what is he actually DOING on the outside? What are the behaviors that can help here?

31/ First, @xuenay will often go on walks to think, he needs something that he can put his attention on so he's not obsessively thinking about writing.

32/ Second, listening to music can be really helpful. Find something that has the vibe you want in your writing.

33/ Third, he likes to have one browser window that ONLY has the google doc he's writing in, and a separate browser window with all of his tabs for research. This allows him to get less distracted when he's writing!

34/ Are there any other factors that help @xuenay do what he does? Yes, here are are a few that seem the mot helpful.

35/ First @xuenay has a giant google doc for capturing everything that may be relevant. Whenever he stumbles upon something that might be useful, he tries to add it to this document.

36/ Second, he often tries to create an uninterrupted space and time to write. This really makes the process go smoother.

37/ 3rd, the use of bullet points is his secret weapon. Sometimes writing narrative paragraphs feels hard. So by using bullet points, he can pretend he's not doing that! Sometimes he'll write the whole piece in bullet points, then simply remove them and he has paragraphs!

38/ So that's @xuenay 's writing strategy. Are you a writer who wants to incorporate this into your own process? Here's the process I recommend.

39/ First, think of a time in the past when you could have used this strategy. Go down each point one by one, and slowly and cumulatively "change your imagination" to add each point to your memory. Notice how it would have been to use this writing strategy!

40/ Then, think of a time in the future when you'd like to write, and what you'd like to write about. Slowly and cumulatively add each element of this strategy, and imagine exactly what you'll do as you write using this strategy and these emotions.

41/ Finally, use the strategy in the present. Set aside some time to write, and slowly and cumulatively add each piece of the strategy until you've written something amazing.

42/ Are you impressed by the depth of the model? Would you like to learn more skills in depth like this? Sign up below for the Intentional Podcast interest list. I've interviewed ~20 people in depth just like this and will soon be publishing!

https://t.co/ODXWhUEbx5

Thread may be of interest to @michaelcurzi @m_ashcroft @theorangealt

Also @jasoncrawford