

The Beauty of Starting from Scratch

I have a lot of ideas. I write a lot of them down. Sometimes in great detail, mapping out how things would look under such and such conditions, what this or that change would do, the best way to handle rapid growth in this direction, etc.

A few action items get culled from the ideas, then I move on.

Months, or sometimes years later, I'll be working through the same or similar ideas again. But I don't go back to my old notes. Not at first anyway. I start from scratch. Why?

I want to get the new, raw ideas, untainted by my past self. I also want the best of my previous ideas to make it into my current work, not all of it. I figure the best of those ideas seep into my subconscious and become a new part of my paradigm, so I don't need detailed notes to draw them out.

I hammer out all the ideas from scratch. Then I might go back and look at my previous deep dive. It's pretty cool to see how much of it is almost verbatim, even though I don't consciously remember it, and also to see which parts got left behind. Nine times out of ten, the things forgotten were worth forgetting.

I try not to cling to my past ideas tightly. If I work through them fully, get them out, and treat them with respect in the present, the parts that matter most tend to get embedded and carry forward silently until needed in the future.