

# Noded

THE UNTOUCHABLE BUSINESS

*A book about starting and working  
in web powered Noded teams*

*by* ANDREAS CARLSSON *and* JAAN ORVET

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This book is about our view of the world as web workers and Noded network aficionados. Feel free to be inspired, but remember that you are the only one who knows what path to choose in your life. Everyone has unique circumstances and only you can make the decision on what road to go down.

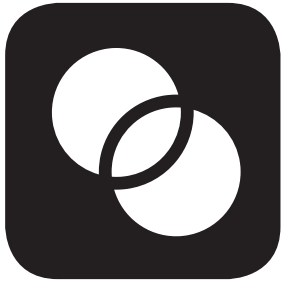
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Meet the noded icon. Where ever you see it there is a Noded team in action.

*Noded Network,  
Noded Team,  
a Noded Team*

A group of individuals, often but not necessarily geographically distant, that come together to form temporary or recurring project teams. Unlike ‘distributed teams’ Noded teams work for a wide range of clients and any member of a Noded team can take the lead to bring in work, manage work and choose their team members.

## 2. Purpose of this book

*What this book is about and why it's for you.*

## 6. Dictionary

*Five terms and expressions explained.*

## 8. This is Noded

*The “why” that makes the Noded team different.*

## 14. Noded Teams

*Noded teams beat all other team working models, hands down.*

## 22. Yes, you should start your own business

*Why it's actually quite easy to do and how you can do it without quitting your day job.*

*And we look at the downsides too.*

## 30. How to get started

*Practical tips and advice on how to start your own biz.*

### Starting up – The basics

*Register a company, open a bank account ... those types of things.*

## 36. Starting up – A space to work

*You need a place and a space to work. Ideas and inspiration.*

## 44. Starting up – The web workers toolbox

*Now that you have your physical space sorted, it's time to focus on your digital space.*

*Why your applications and files should live in the cloud and not on your harddrive.*

## 58. Starting up – Online presence

*Being a web worker is not so different from being an office based worker. Except that it is completely different.*



## 62. The network effect

*Prepare your networking and events and you will get more out of them.*

## 64. Meetings

*How to free yourself from the traditional meeting formats and make updates and group communication productive.*

## 70. “Office hours”

*The 8 hour work day is dead. As a web worker you can stomp all over it without sacrificing productivity*

## 72. Conduct and appearance

*There are no hard and fast rules, only a set of tried and true tips.*

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*Web workers tend to work very hard and not take time off. This chapter will help with that.*

## 80. Is there anybody out there?

*Most business books stay away from the more difficult emotional aspects of starting your own business. We don't.*

## 84. The wrap up.

## 86. About us.

*Who are the people behind this book? And why do they look so much alike?*

## *Work smarter*

Throughout the book you will find these little boxes. They include random, or chapter specific, short tidbits and tips on how to work smarter.

This book is about a new way of working, a way that doesn't require you to turn your whole world on its head or to buy lots of things. Instead the next 100+ pages will show why working in a Noded team is based on logical and natural ways of interacting with people, nurturing ideas, and simply doing a better job without the constraints of everything that comes with traditional “business life”.

The book will also show you how easy it is to become a web worker; a person who uses the web for communicating, networking, creating, and delivering the results of their work.

And there is no ‘mystery’ behind it all. In fact working in a Noded team can come quite naturally for many knowledge workers who already use the web as an integral part of their every day work.

Many business books consist of hundreds of pages and spend one third of them convincing you of the author’s point of view, the second third to repeat it and the reminder to repeat it all one more time. Not this book.

We keep things short and to the point. After all we want to inspire you to do even greater things, not to get stuck reading about it. If we talk about an idea, we will explain why it makes sense and how you can turn it in to reality.

The things we describe in this book will not fit everyone in every stage of their professional life. But you are not “everyone”; you picked up this book because something about it triggered your curiosity and connected with you. There is a fair chance that within these pages are ideas, tips and suggestions that will either change your life completely or at least help you lead a better professional, and thus personal, life. If not now, maybe in three weeks, three months or three years time.

*/Andreas Carlsson and Jaan Orvet*

# “Is this book really for me?”

Yes we are pretty sure it is.

This book is 100 percent perfect for those of you who are freelancers or run your own one or two-person businesses. Or want to. This book is in many ways written from your point of view.

It is equally well suited to those of you who work in small organizations. If your company or team is small enough there is no reason why you can't make an impact with new ideas as quickly as those who work on their own.

If you work for a larger company and crave change then this just might be the guidebook that will inspire you and help you to set out on your own. Or help your employer change.

*In other words, this book is for you.*

Thank you for buying it.



# www.noded.biz

The Noded blog has updates, links to all the sites and apps mentioned and a smattering of posts about being a Noded worker and running a web powered business. Read, comment and get free Noded tools over at [www.noded.biz](http://www.noded.biz)

While this book doesn't really need a dictionary per se, we wanted to explain some of the terms we use to describe our ideas, and what those terms mean to us.

## **Noded Network, a Noded Team.**

*A group of individuals, often but not necessarily geographically far apart, that come together to form temporary or recurring project teams. Unlike 'distributed teams' Noded teams work for a wide range of clients and any member of a Noded team can take the lead to bring in work, manage work and choose their team members.*

## **Node, Noder**

*Web worker in a Noded network.*

## **Web worker**

*An individual who uses the web for the majority of their work related activities including communication, networking, creation, and delivery.*

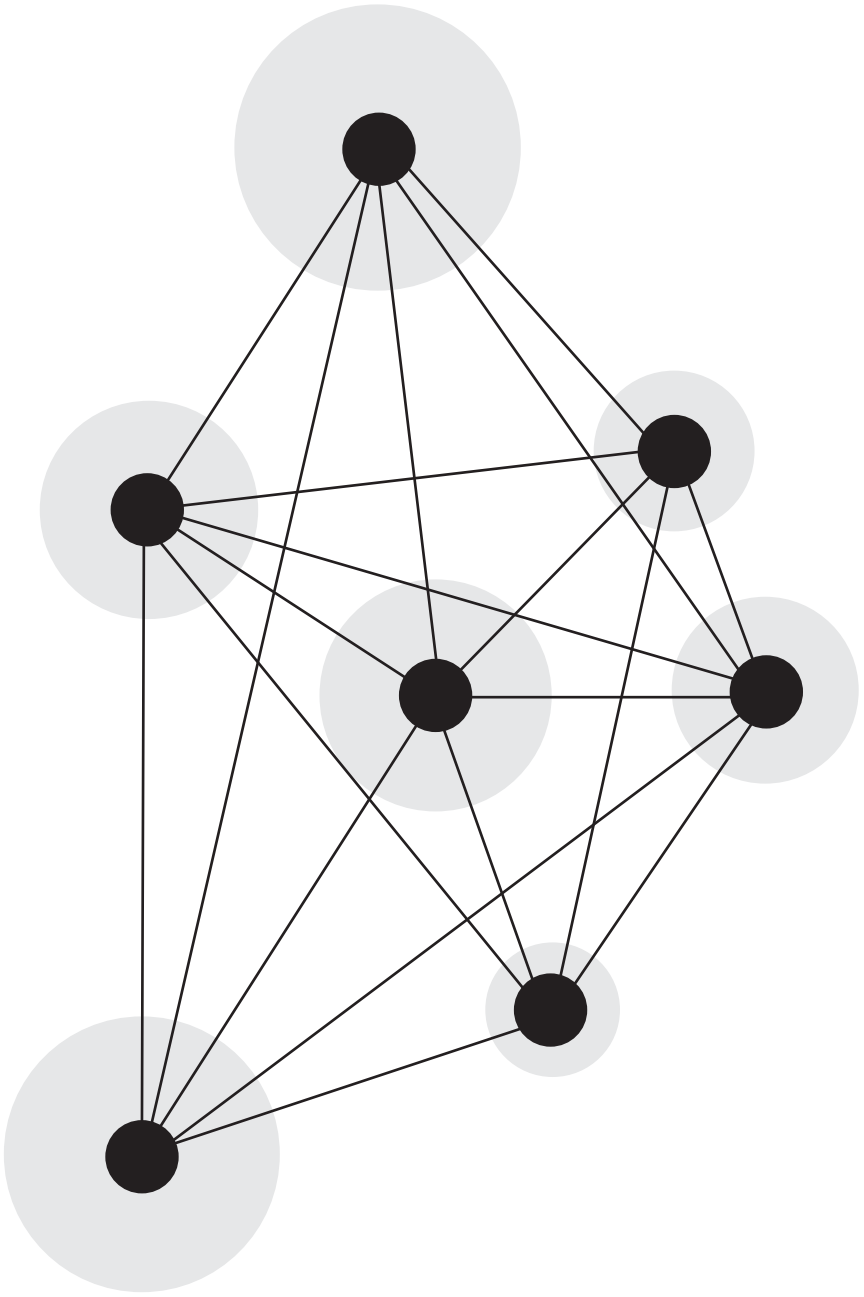
## **Web based business, Web business, Project**

*They are all used to describe the same type of activity: a business in which the web plays an integral role for a business professional (see "Web worker" above).*

## **Knowledge worker**

*A professional who works with, creates, edits or manages information in any way, shape or form. Examples include writers, designers, programmers, authors, project managers, teachers, researchers, and lawyers.*

*... so, let's get on with it.*





# *This is Noded*

Noded is a new and better way of working. It is based on logical and natural ways of interacting with people, nurturing ideas, and simply doing a better job without the constraints of everything that comes with traditional ‘business life’. The Noded philosophy is also about flexibility and efficiency in collaboration, especially among people who are geographically far apart.

## 1. The Noded personality

The main characteristic of us Noded type professionals is our desire to set our own goals, and build businesses based on our own values.

In traditional employment this rarely an option; company policies dictate how and when employees can further their careers and what if any impact they can have on the companies direction.

This is why the Noded philosophy is so appealing to us knowledge workers. Individualism is celebrated, there are no set values or visions to subscribe too, and the only agenda is our own; but within a collaborative atmosphere.

## 2. The Noded team

In a Noded network each member is an individual professional, running his or her own business. We come together to work on projects, as and when a project calls for it. Sometimes we all work together, some times only a few of us. It's up to who ever brings the project in to choose who, and when, someone contributes.

And our only obligation is to ourselves; if we don't want to participate in a project we don't have to. No hard feelings.

## 3. Noded leadership and roles

A Noded team cannot and must not have a leader. For us team members to develop and reach our goals, we need to own our client relationships and our individual ways of working, acting, planning and executing in our individual businesses.

This ensures that we can take on different roles in different projects. From Project Manager in one, to developer in another, to Account Manager in a third.

This rotation of *project* leadership, as opposed to *team* leadership, also keeps us open minded.

## 4. Noded goals

The over-reaching goal of a Noded team is to function as a vehicle with which we, the individual team members, can reach our individual goals.

The Noded network itself should not have a goal. The minute we start defining common goals and values for the team we start acting as a traditional organisation.

Traditional organisations care about the long-term organisational develop-

ment. The individual employees and their goals are interchangeable. Noded teams exist to facilitate the individual team members' goals. The organisation is interchangeable.

Noded teams must be 100 percent about the team members, or else it's not a Noded team.

## **5. Noded is for everyone**

Anyone can fit in to a Noded team. The traditional member is a freelancer but it can just as easily be a person who is building a 15-person company, or even employees of large or small companies.

A single Noded team can accommodate them all and everyone will benefit. The freelancer can help the entrepreneur launch his or her 15-person company, while the entrepreneur may learn from the person who is employed by someone else.

This type of collaboration will bring everyone closer to their individual goals.

## **6. No Noded branding**

A Noded team should never be branded.

Everyone, whether they are an individual freelancer or a small company, likely have their own identities and brands that have a value on the market and among their clients. A new brand, aka the Noded team, would have a diluting effect.

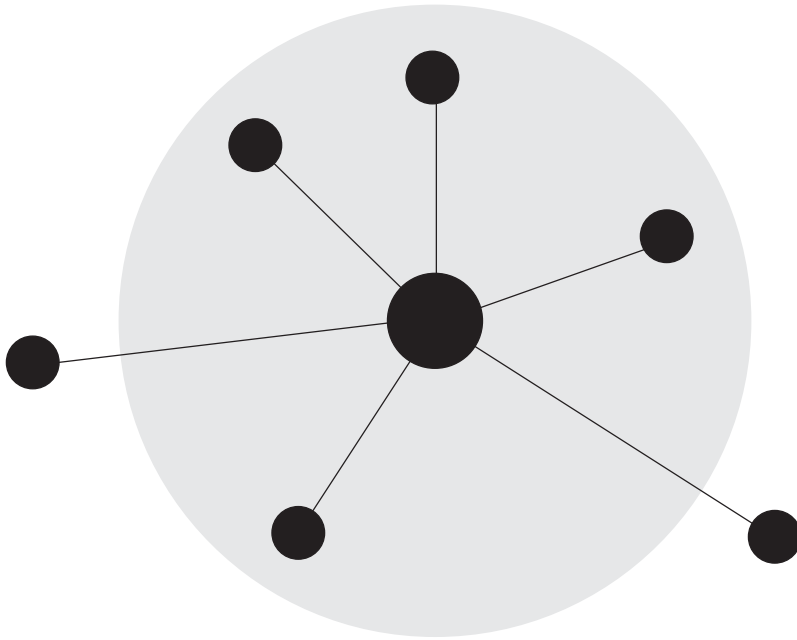
One small piece of "labelling" how ever is encouraged. Using the Noded icon and linking to a description of the team members, and why they are good at what they do, is a very good way of introducing the Noded network without branding it.

This allows everyone's existing clients and partners to learn about the Noded network, but not to the detriment of the individual brands. See [www.noded.biz/network/](http://www.noded.biz/network/) for an example of a team page.

## **7. Noded means business**

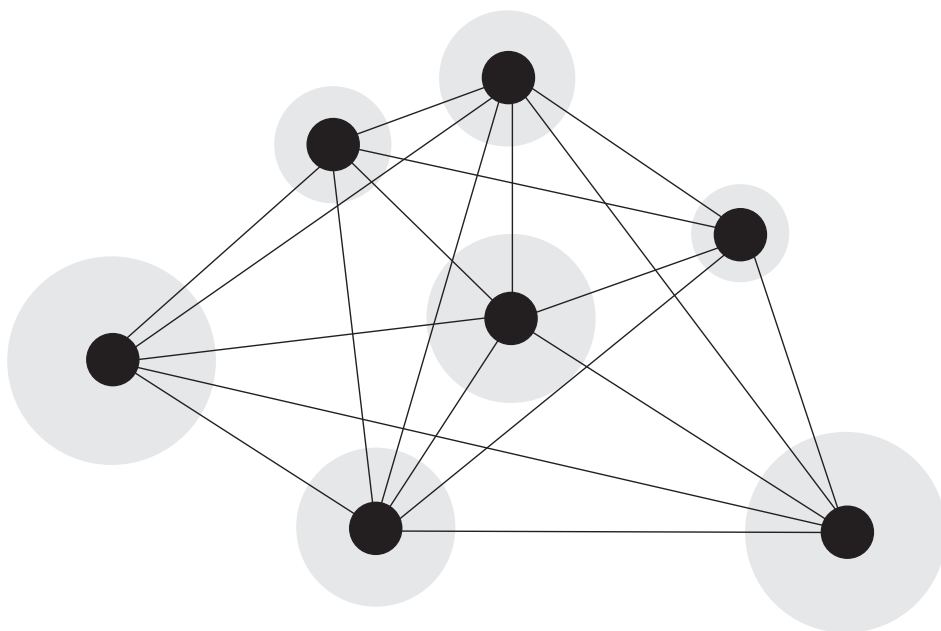
Noded means business. In fact it's all about business: doing a fantastic job for clients, growing and learning as individuals and professionals, loving what we do, and being able to make a living out of it.

Noded is about business, but with you the individual, your goals and your way of doing it, at the heart of it all.



### **Traditional Organisations and Distributed Teams**

- ★ Short term personal goals. Longterm organisational goals.
- ★ Fixed values, vision and culture.
- ★ Top down leadership no matter how flat the organisation.
- ★ Fixed leadership
- ★ Leaders and followers



### **Noded teams**

- ★ Long term personal goals. Short term organisational goals.
- ★ Individual values, vision and culture. The combination of them is put to the test in every project.
- ★ Rotating leadership (Noded teams have structure and “hierarchy” but it changes from project to project)
- ★ Equal team membership

# *Noded Teams*

Noded teams are all about the individuals (see point two in the previous chapter). That's why a Noded team can be made up of members located all over the world and still create incredible results.

In fact Noded team members are often, but not always, geographically far apart. There's a simple reason for this: The chances of finding the best people in a particular city are mathematically slim. Noded teams look further afield.

When Noded teams come together, they do it to form temporary or recurring project teams. And herein lie some of the key differences compared with the more common 'distributed team' model.

- ❶ Unlike 'distributed teams' Noded teams work for a wide range of clients and any member of a team can take the lead to bring in work, manage work and choose their team members.
- ❷ In order to work in a Noded team you have to be very good at what you do or you won't be hired by your fellow Noders.
- ❸ Noded teams consist of people who have created a working situation that fits them to a tee and allows them to put their passion into practice, resulting in a better output.

The last point explains why Noded teams are usually made up of people who work for themselves and run their own businesses. But it is not exclusive to those who have ventured out on their own. There are individuals and teams in both small and large companies that have taken a Noded approach to heart.

They have usually done this by removing obstacles: flattening hierarchies, limiting the need for traditional work processes, created highly fluid teams, or simply decided to think and act as if they were working for themselves.

Or to put it bluntly - They are interested in results and being effective rather than the mechanics and "rules" that traditionally come with managing work and "business life".

To put the Noded concept in to context, let's look at how the Noded Team differs from the more common Distributed Team (DT).

## **The Distributed Team**

A Distributed Team (D T) consists of a group of people who work for the same company, but are not located at that company's physical location. The D T workers are usually full time employees or on long-term contracts.

Rarely do people join or leave the D T team, and the same people work together on all projects whether their skill set are best suited for it or not.

D T teams will eventually inherit the characteristics of its parent organisation. A hierarchy will form, some people will step up as leaders, others will fall back and assume the role of followers and soon enough the D T team is a mini-replica of its parent.

The result is an inefficient team with a majority of non-passionate team members.

## **The Noded Team**

From the outside, the Noded Team may look like the Distributed Team. Yet it operates with dramatically different dynamics. It has no set structure, no leader and thus no hierarchy, no center that the participants must orbit around.

Instead Noded Teams have practical and creative vision and freedom. Noded Teams are characterised by drive and passion coupled with personal responsibility. Each participant is a driven individual who through their skills and experience can bring in work, manage clients and oversee projects.

This means leadership is rotating – sometimes you bring in the work, at other times you focus on just, for example, coding while some one else takes the lead.

This means each person (Node) in a Noded Team is very – very - good at something that the others need. They have a speciality, something they are dedicated to and passionate about, an area in which they constantly learn and grow as professionals.

Every person will also have their own clients and be involved in projects outside the Noded Team. This is good for primarily two reasons.



❶ You can bring new knowledge and experience to your fellow Noders.

❷ You can bring skills to your non-Noded Team projects by tapping the Noded Team's knowledge base. In a traditional organisation you would need to convince your managers, get their approval, write up a request document, maybe even get the Human Resources department involved in order to bring in someone from the outside.

### It's up to you

Working as a freelance web worker in a Noded team lets you run your own show, and at the end of the day success or failure is in your own hands. This can sometimes be intimidating. But honestly, who do you trust more to move your professional world forward: an employer or a Project Manager who is content to putter along, or yourself?



J A A N: "If you work in a Noded team that is geographically very far apart my advice would be to get everyone together in person at least once or twice every year to just hang out and reconnect.

It helps with the everyday "sync" too if you have some shared real-world experiences.

I work in teams with people across 8 or 9 time zones. We meet regularly, usually every quarter. It's always time and money well spent."

### Exceptions

Like any good rule, there are exceptions to this one too. Companies of moderate size within creative and knowledge industries tend to enjoy the same drive and passion as Noded teams do, whether they are D T or not. It comes down to the people and the way they approach their work. Or are allowed to approach their work.

## **Noded vs. Traditional - it's a mindset**

Noded teams, and people who share the Noded mindset whether they are employed or self employed, have numerous benefits over people who are forced to work in more conservative and hierarchical business environments or in strict DT teams.

★ We live and breathe the web of today; it is the way we do our work every hour of every day!

★ We benefit from ideas, skills and inspiration gained from more places and more people, in part because there may not be other people geographically close to work with.

★ Those of us who subscribe to the Noded mindset need, want and must constantly evolve and stay ahead of the curve in terms of skills and knowledge.

★ We learn to become better at communicating with people as we often need to satisfy a wider array of "colleagues", clients, and partners than if we only fulfilled one narrow role in a company hierarchy.

★ International Noded team have people available for more consecutive hours in the day thanks to the difference in time zones.

★ Noded teams are by choice and necessity often more cost effective. We don't have to cover huge overhead costs (office space, HR departments, reception staff, etc).

## **Start your own noded team**

This one is incredibly simple.

You come across people that you like all the time, either in real life or online. Instead of “just” becoming friends, try a small project together. If things work out, you start collaborating on client projects. You have found your new Node. Done. (If not, at least there is a new friend in the mix.)

Want to formalize things more? Resist the urge! Simply express an interest in working together, create a team network page (see “Introducing your Noded network to the world”), and start working.

This is how 9.9 out of 10 Noded teams are formed. Trial and error are part of it, but as you will likely get recommended people by the other Noders, clients or people you know, there is a better chance that it will work out than if you went down the resume-and-official-interview route.

## **Why freelancers and small businesses are better co-collaborators and Noded team members**

As a freelancer your best partners are other freelancers and small dedicated creative businesses. Why? Simply because they do what is best for themselves and for the group. Not only what’s best for themselves.

In a group of people representing larger companies or organisations there will often be hidden agendas that can put the project at risk or at the very least limit its potential. It’s not that people in these companies are ‘bad people’, it’s just that the organisations and processes they work within create these limiting situations.

As a freelancer, the only people you need to satisfy are your team members and your clients. They are your keys to future work. They are the ones that will bring new projects your way. If you fail them you have nothing to fall back on.

Hence in a team made up of freelancers and specialized shops you and your fellow co-collaborators automatically do what is best for the group, yourself and the project, and that is something your clients always benefit from.

## Why you and your co-collaborators always have the upper hand

Large traditional organisations often have a very hard time understanding what it is that's moving their industry forward. It is no coincidence that when big organisations want to do something 'new' they do one of two things. Either they hire people from the outside to tell them what's going on. Or they set up a satellite entity, in a different location, so that it doesn't get tainted by the ways of the mothership.

The reason is that businesses with 20+ employees can get too focused on their internal issues and lose their ability to look ahead. Soon they are set in their ways and only take in a small sliver of the outside world. Everyone is on the inside looking out which distorts their view.

In a large corporation the situation is even worse.



ANDREAS: "In the larger corporations I have worked with, people tend to be less involved in terms of passion and happiness compared to people in smaller businesses. Why is that? Is it the sheer size of the group of people that kills off the dynamics? Is it that larger corporations always attract 'safe mode' type employees? Is it that the employees have been working in the same position for far too long?

In my opinion it is as simple as the distance from the people doing the work to the end user or client. When a company or department reaches a certain size it starts to focus on its internal goals and development, and loses sight of the bigger picture. More people are added, responsibilities are diluted, power struggles happen. And the client gets further and further away.

Employees in these companies are faced with no option other than to start the day in safe mode. Intentionally or unintentionally they are focused on protecting their position. They start approving and denying stuff on a will-this-make-me-look-good-in-front-of-mypeers basis instead of from a will-this-benefit-our-clients-andbusiness-goals perspective. That's when the machinery becomes greater than the business, when regulation is greater than improvisation. When process trumps innovation. If that happens, how far away from losing their clients is a company

at that stage? I'm scared senseless to stumble on to one of those people when I work with large organizations. They can, very effectively, within a couple of days kill a project. And in a couple of years kill their employers whole business."

## **Introducing your Noded network to the outside world**

Do not brand your Noded network. Every participant in a the network, whether they are a single freelancer or a small business, have their own identities and brands that are well known to their clients.

A new "brand", aka the Noded team, can have a negative effect on this. Focus instead on the people and skills that make up the network. Describe them, and explain why they are very good at what they do.

From a practical perspective every person in a Noded network should set up a Noded network page, for example on [www.yourDomain.com/network](http://www.yourDomain.com/network).

The team then creates copy and imagery for each member and replicates this information on every team member's network URL.

This allows each Noder's existing clients and partners to see that the Noder is part of a network but that they are also still their own independent business.

This network page can be hidden and only referred to when relevant. Or it can be linked to via a team-specific badge from each Noder's site or blog.



We recommend using the Noded icon to discreetly show that you are part of a Noded team. It can be used on its own or incorporated in to the team's own badge.

**Download the icon files at [www.noded.biz/icon](http://www.noded.biz/icon)**

## **Nodes can not be owned**

Within the Noded network it has to be clear to everyone involved that no one 'owns' relationships within the team. Everything has to be run on a skills needed, person included-basis.

For example: A and B work closely together. B introduces A to C. Later on if A needs C for a project A does not have to handle the project through B. Instead A is free to work directly with C if B is not needed for the new project. In this way the network keeps growing and expanding.

**Ye**

es,

*you should start your own business.*

Now that you have learned about Noded it is time to take care of the practicalities. Usually this means setting up your own business.

There are many reasons for striking out on one's own and becoming a “freelancer”, “free agent” or indeed a “freelance web worker”.

*The three most common are:*

- ★ Freedom to schedule your own time.
- ★ Freedom to work from home or anywhere you choose.
- ★ Freedom to pick and choose the projects, people, and clients, you work with.

There is no doubt that these freedom-based reasons are among the best reasons to start your own web based business. After all, freedom of mind and body is the natural state of being.

But if those three things are all that drive you, we would ask that you give your decision some more thought. Freedom alone will not a happy freelance web worker make. You need something more. Among the people we know who have left “secure” jobs to do their own thing, the most successful and happy ones are those who saw a goal beyond just “freedom”.



Here are our goals and reasons for running our own businesses:



“The opportunity to introduce people to new ways of working and thinking as it relates to all aspects of the web. I really like helping others do better and it’s always fun to introduce new and different ways of solving old recurring problems. That can be hard to do as an employee.”



“I’m a bit of a control and idea freak so the ability to be in 100 percent control of the development of my business, and the ability to extremely quickly kick-start or kill any idea I come up with, is very appealing to me. And also the unprecedented satisfaction of having an idea, throwing it out there and then finding that people appreciate and use it.”

Think hard about what it is that makes you want to go it alone.

*What is your main driving force?*

### *Ten good reasons to start your own business:*

- ★ Your output is better when you choose how to do the work.
- ★ Your output is better when you choose who to work with.
- ★ You are a better communicator on IM, email and your blog than you are face to face.
- ★ You can set aside more time for improving your skills.
- ★ You can continue living in that small town in the middle of nowhere.
- ★ You don’t like other people that much.
- ★ You want to keep your business super lean when it comes to over-head costs.
- ★ You thrive on the uncertainty that running your own web based business can bring.
- ★ You can make more money.
- ★ You can bring change to a stagnant company or industry.

What ever your reasons for going solo are, think about it as something that is above and beyond your work. Try to identify the passion. It is the passion that will help you slog through the difficult periods (seeing as you won't have a boss to push you). And it is also what will make you truly successful.

### *Four really bad reasons to start your own business:*

- ★ It sounds cool.
- ★ Everyone else is doing it.
- ★ I don't want to work that much.
- ★ It will solve all my problems.

## *Work smarter*

Thin-slice your projects. When a project has been completed and we see it "live", we tend to feel rewarded and elated. We feel motivated and ready to take on what ever comes next. Unfortunately projects often run over a long period of time, and milestones and launches can seem distant. In order to still feel these positive highs you should thin-slice your projects. Break them in to smaller, manageable sub-projects, and break those in to small projects that you can manage day-by-day. Not only will you gain a better overview of the your projects, you'll also achieve that feeling of accomplishment every day and your motivation will be sky high.

What ever you decide to do in your soon-to-be web powered business it is important that you focus on one thing.

The biggest and most common misconception we see among people starting web based businesses is a perceived need to offer absolutely everything under the moon.

“It’s an online business so it’s easy to offer everything”. Just because you can doesn’t mean that you should. This is especially true for people building software or launching web services, but the same applies if you are planning to start any service business.

The project management app that is also a social network, a travel planner, a micro blogging tool, and an image repository with strong Flickr integration straight out of the gate is going to end up in the dead-pool\*.

The solution is simple.

*Start small, focus on one thing.*

\* [www.techcrunch.com/?s=deadpool](http://www.techcrunch.com/?s=deadpool)

It will be infinitely easier to sell your services when you can easily explain what you do and when your potential clients can easily grasp what you have to sell.

The best way to do this is to gain a clear understanding of what is truly unique about your idea or service. How will it solve a problem, or make life better for its users or customers? How does it differ from the competition?

When you know what it is – focus on that, and make it work really, really well.

If you cannot come up with a clear answer to why your idea is unique, move on to something else.

And don't feel hemmed in. We don't believe that any field is out of bounds. When Jaan told people about Matt Biddulph's Dopplr ([www.dopplr.com](http://www.dopplr.com)) some chuckled about "online travel being done already". True, but no one had done the Dopplr thing. (Dopplr lets travelers share their future travel plans with other chosen travelers.)

As long as your offering is unique, or satisfies an overlooked need, or even if it's something due for a refresh, then you have a shot. But only if you stay focused.

## *Work smarter*

When you are done working for the day, get started on something you are supposed to be doing the next day. It will be much easier to get going if you have something "in progress" waiting for you. Try it, you'll like it.

## *Work smarter*

### **Ask more questions**

The best project managers, designers, business leaders, account managers, and entrepreneurs ask a lot of questions.

That's how they find out what someone really means, wants or thinks.

This might sound blindingly obvious, yet every single day we spot instances where someone should have asked more questions. Lots more questions.

If you're in the web dev business make sure you know what clients are actually after when they say "I want it to look like a 'web 2.0' site" (as horrid a statement as that is, it still means something to the client). Do they mean larger font sizes to improve legibility? Or do they just mean gradients galore? Or did they happen to look at a nice friendly site earlier that day, labeled it 'web 2.0', and now want theirs to look equally welcoming?

Ask more questions. The more you ask the more you'll know, which in turn leads to less uncertainty and frustration, which makes you happier, your output better and the user or client more satisfied.

# How to get started

The two biggest obstacles to starting up are time and money, closely followed by well-meaning but flawed advice. While money can sometimes be hard to figure out, initially you do have complete control over your time.

## *Starting up - the basics*

There is a perception that setting up a company is a time-consuming difficult process. It's not, in fact it is the really easy part. As you get all the basics sorted, remember that simple is good. The key is to get you going on doing business rather than administrating it. In other words, get these things out of the way quickly!

## Time

You don't have to give up your day-job to start a business or to pull off a project. In fact it might be better to start slow and see if there really is a market for the services or products you want to offer. Evenings and weekends are good options, as are down-sizing to a 4 day work week, using the fifth day plus the weekend to focus on your venture.

If none of the above are an option, then despite a full-time job, kids, domestic chores and so on there is always time to start a small side project. Our best tip – Throw out your tv (or at least keep it turned off). By just freeing up 30 minutes to an hour a day you can get a lot of things done if you are really disciplined.

Working evenings or weekends with something you are passionate about is ideal for many people. It can also make an unbearable day job manageable and probably make you a happier person.

## Money

Despite what you may have heard most people don't need huge amounts of money to get a business off the ground.

If you are in to designing clothes buy some fabric, make shirts, print them by hand and sell them to friends at a profit. Use the money to buy some more shirts and have them professionally printed, and that's it, you're in business. Or offer to act as a fishing guide for your friends and use the money to place ads for your fishing trips in the local paper. More simple ideas on page 31.

### **Incorporating your company**

Start simple, pick the easiest way of incorporating your business. In Sweden that would be a "enskild firma", in the UK a "sole trader", and in the US either a "sole proprietorship" or a "LLC". You can always change later on.

### **Accountant and lawyer**

In the early days you might not need an accountant and business lawyer. But it is still a good idea to talk things through with someone who knows the financial and legal aspects of your business. Especially if you are based in the US where lawsuits

are more common than in, say, Sweden. A one hour meet with an accountant or lawyer is not going to be expensive and it will give you peace of mind.

When you need regular access to a lawyer or an accountant, we recom-

Unless you have your boss' approval, working with something that directly competes with your day job is probably not a good idea. And even if it is OK with your employer, you might find it hard to choose where to put the best ideas.

Advice:

## *Kill your dream, nurture the plan*

Once you declare your intent to go it alone, you will probably get lots of advice from people around you. You may even seek out advice at places that specialise in these types of things. In our experience most of the advice you get from the latter is rooted in outdated ways of “doing business” and don't really help as much as hinder. Most of the advice from the former, unless it's from people with good track records, is probably safe to listen to but not necessarily act upon.

There is however one piece of advice that you should take to heart. In fact it may be the most important advice of all: Kill your dream, nurture the plan.

Dreaming about starting your own business, web based or not, might sound harmless. In reality it can be devastating. If you start off by labeling your idea or project a “dream” you will mentally block yourself and find just as many reasons for why your idea can't be made real as you will find reasons to actually make it happen.

To avoid this mental block you should label your idea a “plan”. Plans are tangible, we can all relate to plans and best of all we know how to

mend recommendations. Talk to people in your industry and ask who they work with. There are so many details that apply only to specific industries and no single lawyer or accountant can know them all.

### **Bank**

Open a dedicated bank account. Apart from it being essential to keep your personal cash separate from your business resources, it is a requirement in some countries.

Get a business credit card, or use one of your private cards

only for work purposes. Keeping track of expenses and paying bills becomes much easier if you do it this way. If you can, pick a credit card that lets you collect frequent flyer miles or other types of rewards that can help you save money on the things you need.



make plans happen. You will subconsciously put the idea in relation to other plans, like planning a vacation, changing jobs and so on. By having a plan instead of a dream you prepare yourself mentally for making the idea a reality which will actually make it easier to turn it in to something real.

The idea is also more likely to pop up at times when it would otherwise have gone unnoticed had you stuffed it away in your subconscious as a “dream”. Now the idea will be part of your every day life as a plan and you will be able to add new dimensions and elaborate on it.

## *Dreams make your idea passive Plans make it active*

Take the very first step.

Now that you have a plan start by writing a simple to-do list:

- ★ Identify potential clients
- ★ Research their needs
- ★ Write a short pitch explaining how you can satisfy those needs
- ★ Contact at least five potential clients

Without knowing it you have started actioning your plan and are well on your way to running your own business. Instead of being intimidated by the thought of the end result (for example get your own design consultancy up and running with clients chasing you to do work for them) you have listed actionable steps. You have a plan.

### **Business cards and stationary**

In the world of the web worker the need for nice stationary is pretty low. Having said that, you still want your invoices to look nice, crisp and clean when they come out of the printer. Make a nice digital template and print it on a good printer instead of

having letter heads (“brevpaper”) printed.

Plus a good business card should not be underestimated. Depending on your business you might want to have a very traditional card, or maybe something from Moo.com (highly recommended) if you are in a

less conservative industry.

### ***That’s it!***

Now you are “in business”. Just sit back and enjoy your first moments as a business owner.

*A tip:* If you get stuck at any point in writing your list, ask yourself direct actionable questions:

What do I really need to start up?

How can I get that?

Who can assist me?

What is a next step that I can take right now?

The more direct the question, the easier it will be to find the answer.

And remember, you are in charge of your idea. No one knows about it, no one has seen it, no one has used it, no one has experienced it so it is impossible for someone else to stand in the way. It's all up to you if your idea lives or dies.



“I come across a lot of people with ideas and projects they want to launch, but nothing ever happens. They blame it on a million different things, “I don’t have the education”, “I don’t have the equipment”, “I don’t have the time”, “I don’t have the money”, “I don’t have the connections” and so on. My reply is always but you have the idea, damn it! The idea is the hardest part and you’ve got that sorted. Now get going!”

If you really want something, you can make it happen. It’s not a cliché, it’s simply the truth. The road may not be as straight as you want it to be, but if you can get where ever you are going despite all the twists and turns, you know you’ll have what it takes to succeed.

## *Work smarter*

Get rid of the TV, PSP, Wii or anything else that will distract you and steal hours of your time.

As we said at the start of this chapter – you are in control of your own time. When you start out your time doesn't cost you anything. Once serious money starts coming in your time will have a monetary value attached to it and you need to be more economical with how you spend it. For now, enjoy the freedom to do what ever you want.

## *Things you can do to earn some start-up cash that probably won't clash with your day-job*

- ★ Be a once-a-week personal chef for a busy relative or friend
- ★ Fix people's computers
- ★ Daytrade
- ★ Buy vintage shirts and make pins out of the fabric and sell them at DesignTogel, on Etsy, at UpMarket or at your local design or craft fair
- ★ Work at a book store two evenings every week
- ★ Sell your own music online
- ★ Design logos for your friend's companies
- ★ Help people understand Bebo/Facebook/Jaiku/Twitter or blogging
- ★ Clean and tar boats
- ★ Play poker (really well)
- ★ Babysit
- ★ Walk dogs
- ★ Pick apples
- ★ Help people move
- ★ Develop an iPhone/iPod Touch app and sell it in the App Store.

# A space to work.

As a web worker you can work from any place you fancy – a library, coffee shop, or park bench. Most of the time however, it's nice to have a more personal place to work from.

Creating your personal work space is one of the purely fun parts of setting up your own business. It is less stressful than some of the other things you need to do plus it is all about making yourself comfortable and productive.

This chapter will cover both the physical and the digital space, and some smart ways of using them. It will not cover things like ergonomically correct posture, lighting and similar “good workplace” topics. Google for it, there are people out there who are much more trustworthy than we are when it comes to things like that.

### *Real world:*

Desk

Chair

Collaborative space

The Triangle of Work

Storage

### *Digital world:*

Desktop

The Cloud

Collaborative space

Storage

## ***Real world***

### **Priming your ‘office’**

Where ever you choose to work, at home or in a rented office, you will associate that space with your business. If the business is not doing well you will be reluctant to go to your place of work as the office itself may get in the way of your productivity.

This is why you have to prime the office with things you feel positive about. It sounds like new age mumbo jumbo but your place of work is not a passive player, on the contrary. Just as people who work with large complex systems tend to think in large complex ways, and people who work with user friendly operating systems tend to create user friendly things, the office will have a similar impact on you. Crappy office, crappy output. Nice inspiring office, nice quality output.

By priming your place of work you are constantly reminded of the positive things you have done and experienced. Decorate your ‘office’ with anything you can think of as long as it has positive memories attached to it;

a print out of a successful delivery, the sleeve of your favourite Kent album, your favourite baseball ballpark cup, toys, an old computer. Anything that reminds you of your positive past will be good for your business in the future. Why? Because all these good things from the past is part of the reason you are sitting in your own office running your own business.

## *Let's start with the basics. A desk and a chair.*

Get the biggest desk you can get away with and then keep it nice and empty. The more work space you have available, the quicker you can get going on what ever it is you need to do on any particular day. Plus, you need somewhere to put all those inspirational magazines you picked up on your way to work, plus your mug of piping hot tea, right?

From a more philosophical view the desk is not a transit area where you pile papers, store “important” things, put up notes, dishes or any thing else that is on its way to somewhere else in the office. The desk is a place that should make it easier for you to focus on your work.

Get something from I K E A if you want to save money. Combine a desk-top with some nice sturdy legs and you're ready to go. Or plop an old door on a few concrete blocks if that is to your liking. The point is that if you like it it will be good for your business good.

### **Time for the chair.**



“I use a wobbly dumb-bell shaped little stool from I K E A. It lets me tilt, bob and weave like a crazy monkey throughout the day. It works for me, and it keeps me from getting to comfy and lazy. Andreas uses ... actually I don't know what he uses these days, but it's probably something a bit more proper.”



“I have a regular adjustable office chair but it fits in to a very well thought through desk set-up. I call it my “forced-solution”. I like to be close to objects that inspire me, and I need easy access to music. In other words I need to truly feel like the master of my domain, it needs to be all mine and I should be the only one with

access to it. That is why I have built a minimal standing-desk in two sections. The top part is just big enough to hold my laptop and a notepad. Nothing else fits on it. I call it “clean desk policy by brute force”. If someone tries to leave something here for me there’s simply no space for it.

On the section below I keep external harddrives, Wacom-boards, cables, CDs, my iPod (for all that music I crave) and other bits. The bottom section is for magazines and coffee. The chair can be used with all the different levels depending on how I feel like working.”

## **The collaborative space.**



“I’m have a nice round table with a bunch of colourful chairs around it in addition to my desk.

This is the space I use when clients, or someone from the Noded network, swing by and we want to sit and work on something together. I keep this space empty at all times. In part because it is practical, but also because it instills me with a sense of calm to know that the space is there when I need it.”

If you don’t have the need or space for a permanent collaborative space, use your living room (if you work from home) or grab a table at your local Wayne’s Coffee or Starbucks. Anywhere will do as long as you have decided before hand where your collaborative space is and you can get to it easily.

## **The Triangle of Work**

So we’ve covered the desk and the collaborative space. Before moving on to storage, let’s explore this thing Jaan invented that he calls The Triangle of Work (“Arbetstriangeln” if you are Swedish).

While the desk and the collaborative space form two of the sides in this geometric shape, the third can be almost anything you choose. Jaan’s triangle is completed by his sofa.



Jaan's collaborative space



Andreas' collaborative space





“My sofa is great! When my mind gets stuck on something, or I sense that a phone conversation is going to drag on in perpetuity, I head for the sofa. Pillow under my head, feet up on armrest, body stretched out ... bliss. Don't confuse this with laziness. Sometimes sitting or laying on a couch is what your body, and mind, needs to unleash another stream of brilliant ideas. Or simply to relax for a moment. There's nothing wrong in that.

And it doesn't have to be a couch, that's the beauty of it. A friend of mine uses an over sized bean bag to complete his triangle, my wife lays down on the floor, my former neighbor gently swings in his ceiling mounted hammock (Swedish: “hängmatta”) when he needs to get away from the desk but still get work done.”

Andreas has a different solution that creates a similar result.



“I have a collaborative-space-get-away-combo with a range of alternative hide outs; the collaborative space in my office consists of a raised section with a low table and four triangular thai-pillows. This is where I hold meetings and hang out with visitors. It is also a nice place to read or work when the desk feels too limiting. One of my alternative hideouts is the old cinema chair in the corner where I also have a fake open-fire. This is right next to alternative hideout number two: the two hammocks gently swinging in front of the large street level windows.”

Create your own triangle and you'll never run out of places, or ways, to work.

## Storage

This is the least sexy part of your workspace but you need to get it sorted. Whether you prefer a closed cabinet, a random selection of plastic crates, or (in case you live in Scandinavia) a large white bookshelf, is up to you. As long as you know where stuff goes, you're fine. One of the biggest time wasters and productivity killers is piles of ... crap ... laying around being in the way. Store it, throw it away or recycle it.

For the things you keep, divide them in to two types of storage. We, brilliantly, call them archive and non-archive.

The archive stuff is self explanatory. Contracts, clippings, financial records and other things you want or need to keep go in the archive. It doesn't have to be fancy. In Jaan's case the 'archive' is a couple of cardboard boxes in the cupboard and the bottom drawer of his filing cabinet.



“The ‘non-archive’ stuff, for lack of a better name, is the stuff I refer to on a reasonably regular basis. My dictionaries, current issues of *.net magazine* and *Cap & Design*, active proposals, pitches and miscellaneous project stuff. All this stuff lives in my bookshelf and in the top drawer of my filing cabinet. None of it lives on my desk or by my collaborative space. Stuff needs to have a home or else it gets thrown out.”

### Your digital work space

There is an ongoing debate over whether a larger computer screen makes you more productive. Jaan was certain that this was complete cock-a-bal-loo. Until he bought a 23 inch screen and his productivity sky rocketed. So, he is partial towards the bigger screen theory.



“My PowerBook has a 15 inch screen so all those extra inches of screen real estate really made a huge difference. But a bigger screen might not be the answer. Andreas works on a 17 inch PowerBook with a higher resolution, meaning he gets lots more space on a screen that is only a wee winker bigger than mine.”



“Well, I'm all in for the bigger screen theory. Where you get instant overview I get window-layer-mayhem.”

Try different options and choose the solution that works for you.

Earlier in this chapter we stressed the need for a clean physical work space. The same is true for your digital desktop. Keep it tidy. File your stuff away.

More on this in the next chapter, *The web workers toolbox*.

## *Work smarter*

To make your day as productive as possible, create a schedule for your daily maintenance tasks and stick to it.

First of all try to get to your place of work an hour before everyone else. Work hours are a very individual thing, but the more you get done before everyone else logs on, the better it is. (And your morning usually sets the tone for the rest of the day, so make it a good one.)

### **Morning Maintenance:**

20 minutes – If it's Monday, compile your to-do tasks for the week.

5 minutes – If it's not the first day of the week, pick out the days' tasks from your weekly list (see above).

15 minutes – Kick your feed reader in to action and check the latest posts and headlines.

30-60 minutes – Write, research or tweak posts for your own blog.

15 min – Check your email/inbox

### **Lunch:**

If you are having lunch by yourself listen to some podcasts or view an online lecture.

### **End-of-the-day Maintenance:**

5 minutes – Sync all your devices.

15 minutes – Check and complete your time tracking.

30 minutes – Send off invoices to your clients, follow up on invoices that are due.

### **Any-time-of-day Maintenance:**

15 seconds – When you create or are given a task, add it to your Getting Things Done (GTD) inbox immediately. That way you will always be able to plan your time with the most up-to-date information at hand. And it keeps you from having to actively remember things.

# The web workers toolbox

One way of keeping your digital desktop tidy, and your hard drive uncluttered, is to let as many of your files and applications as possible live in ‘the cloud’.

(The term comes from the habit internet people have of illustrating the internet as a cloud when they need to explain one technical thing or another.)

## The Cloud

When we talk about ‘the cloud’ we mean the internet as a place to store, access and use both information and software applications via the web.

In short, almost anything that lives on your computer’s harddrive can live in the cloud. Even software. If you are used to having a piece of software that installs on your computer it is quite likely that there is a web based version available too, possibly from a different vendor. These web applications, or web apps, are one reason why the cloud works. As both the application and the data lives in the cloud you basically don’t need anything on your computer. Talk about freedom!

You can even work in the cloud itself.

Google Documents ([docs.google.com](https://docs.google.com)) is a good example of this. If you haven’t tried it yet, Google Documents is like Microsoft Office, but you do everything through your web browser and all the files live on Google’s servers instead of your hard drive. If your laptop crashes, gets stolen, or if you need to access a file when you’re on vacation in Thailand, you can access and work on your documents from any Internet connected computer.

Keeping things in the cloud also lets you collaborate easier. If everyone in your project can access a document or an online workspace you can all contribute to the end result faster and easier than if you had to email documents around.

Having said that, be careful with confidential data, or information that you don’t own, like someone else’s media. By sticking a client’s project files in the cloud you might not only be violating your own contract with them, but you may also be breaking copyright laws.

*Apart from that, the cloud rules.*

## A few words on which applications (software) to use

Your main tool for running a business is your brain. Period. That is essentially the only tool you need to rely on to run your business. Your brain makes the majority of the calculations that guide your decisions. It uses logic, new and old information, it takes in to account relations and actions, including things you have done and the things you want to do. Based on all of this it delivers a result, analysed and ready.

In other words the majority of your business support tools and project management systems are located in your brain. Granted, it helps to support this brain of yours with some clever software, web based or installed on your laptop (for the sake of simplicity we refer to both as “software” or “application”). However it is important to remember that when you launch your software you should be launching a place to store the results and decisions that are coming out of your brain.

The bad alternative is to launch a piece of software that through its interface, architecture or functionality forces you to redo all the sorting, calculations and decisions your brain has already made. Or at the very least forces you to adapt your way of doing things to fit the software instead of the other way around. This is enormously counter productive and ultimately leaves you frustrated and stressed out which will affect your business and clients in a negative way.

Software that supports split-second decisions, instead of interfering with the natural progression of decisions, are the applications that will be good for you and your business. Usually this type of software lives in the cloud, or at the very least is free of the complexities of large software suites. Examples include Basecamp ([www.basecamp.com](http://www.basecamp.com)), Google Docs ([docs.google.com](http://docs.google.com)), and OmniOutliner ([www.omnigroup.com/omnioutliner](http://www.omnigroup.com/omnioutliner)) They do just a few things but do them really well, things that fit in to your natural flow.

Forget about the Big Software Suites and create your own personalised cloud of mostly web based applications and you will have a working environment that is more in tune with the logics and behaviours of your natural way of working.

If you are relying on certain features in those Big Software Suites you are 99.99% likely to find them in easier to use, cheaper (or free) web apps that you can customize with or without third party components (much of it is Open Source) to fit you perfectly. You will be webified, likely mobile (Big Software Suites rarely have good mobile interfaces, if they are accessible online at all) and raring to go in no time.

*Your brain will thank you for it.*

## Why “function” trumps “feature” in any application

The way you behave is ruled by split-second-decisions that you make but can not control. You make subconscious decisions before your brain has reflected on the decision you just made. You feel that something should be a certain way long before you know what it was that made you feel that way. They are what we call instincts or gut-feelings, and most of your daily behavior and actions are based on them. This is why function is more important than feature.

If you look up the words “function” and “feature” in a dictionary you will find that function translates to “working”, and feature to “show”, “demonstrate”, or “characteristics”.

**function:** an activity or purpose natural to or intended for a person or thing

**feature:** a distinctive attribute or aspect of something

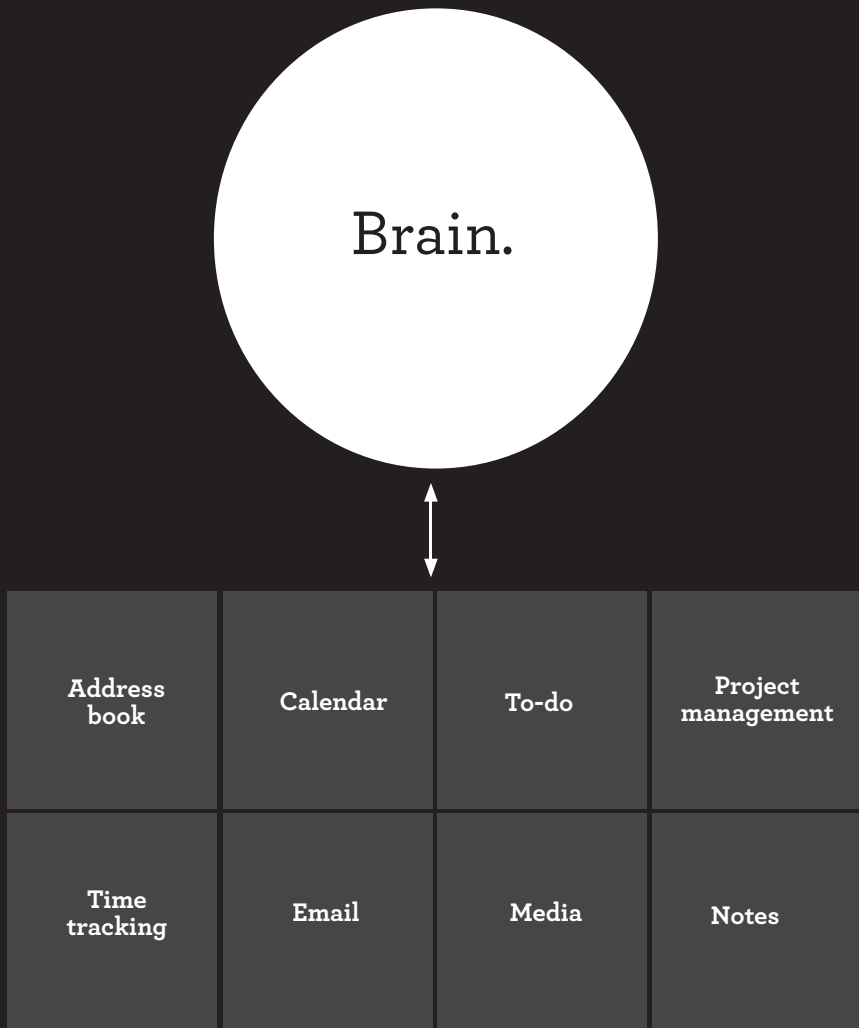
In other words “feature” does not relate to work or working in any way. And that is the most significant difference between the software applications that will survive and the ones that will end up in the deadpool. Functions are important and help you achieve. Features do not. Functions live, features die.

Big Apps have lots of features, small applications and web based apps have functions. The choice is simple.

### *Work smarter*

Listen to radio stations from around the world. You’ll get an instant cosmopolitan buzz. If you write in a foreign language, say English, listen to BBC London to improve your linguistic range. French? Listen to one of the Parisian or Côte d’Azur stations. German? There’s a lot of good Berlin based radio. Google for it or listen via iTunes radio.

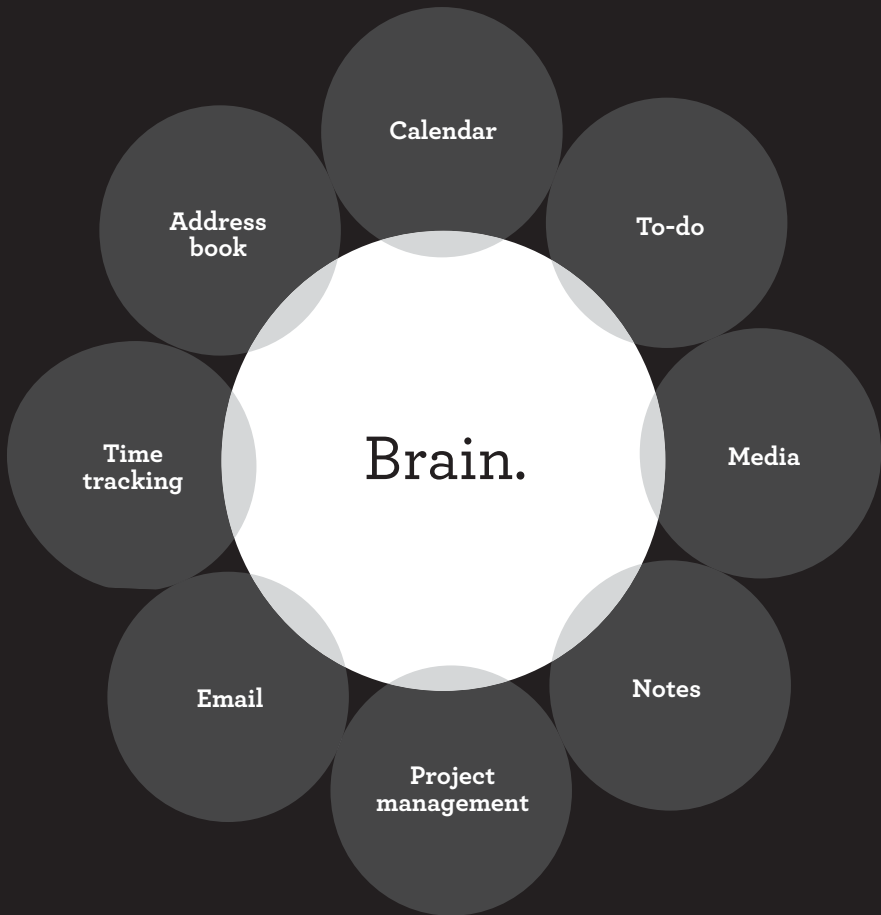
*Bad*



With larger applications you are forced into unflexible and fixed solutions. The features might be there but they might not be what you want or act like you want them to act. The application forces its logic and structure on you, and puts you in the hands of the developer when it comes to updates and real customization. And it probably doesn't have a mobile or online interface.



*Good*



If instead of using the big applications you create your own cloud of webapps you will have a working environment that is far more based on your own logics and behaviour. And when you find an alternate application you can easily change or update your cloud. The features are still here but now you can customize them to fit your needs by using third party components.

# Things to keep in the cloud

## ADDRESSBOOK

Keep all those contacts up to date. After all your address book is not just an address book, it is also your Human Resources and Sales department. It's one of your biggest assets when tight deadlines loom, large projects start piling up or when there is no work on the horizon. This is especially true in a Noded network.

### *How is that?*

Well, your flexibility is dependent on the people you are connected with. Therefore you need a large network of people. The number of people you know is also directly tied to your ability to bring in work. You are more likely to receive a commission if you have 400 contacts in your address book than if you only have 40. So from day one start “collecting” info on everybody you meet, keep the info updated and stay in touch. And keep it all safely in the cloud. You never know when you need to look someone up.

*Tip:* Use the notes function that is available in many address books. Jot down some keywords or notes about each person so that you can search for everything from “project manager”, to “always late”, “php” or “reliable”.

## EMAIL

Use Gmail for your email. The ability to “tag” every email with one or several “labels” (i.e. categories, like “financial” or “work”) and the email search capabilities are as of the Summer of 2008 unsurpassed. Plus you can make the emails sent from it look like they came from almost any other email address you are using. Smart.

In Jaan's case, all his different email addresses, faxes, Facebook notifications, and in voice mail messages, get delivered to one single online inbox.



“This is especially handy as I like to travel without my laptop whenever possible. Instead I access the inbox on my iPhone, or from a borrowed computer, when I am out and about. As the inbox is up in the cloud it doesn’t matter what device I use to access it – it’s all there all the time.”

#### CALENDAR AND TO-DO LISTS

The most important thing in running your business is delivering, meeting your deadlines. Daily planning is therefore crucial. Use a *Getting Things Done*\* (GTD) application as the center of your activity and consult it every morning to outline the day’s deadlines and milestones.

But use the calendar as an extension to the GTD-app. Update your calendar daily, everything that has a date or deadline attached to it must end up in your calendar. The GTD is for “what” but the calendar is for “when”.

*Why not keep every event in a GTD-app?*

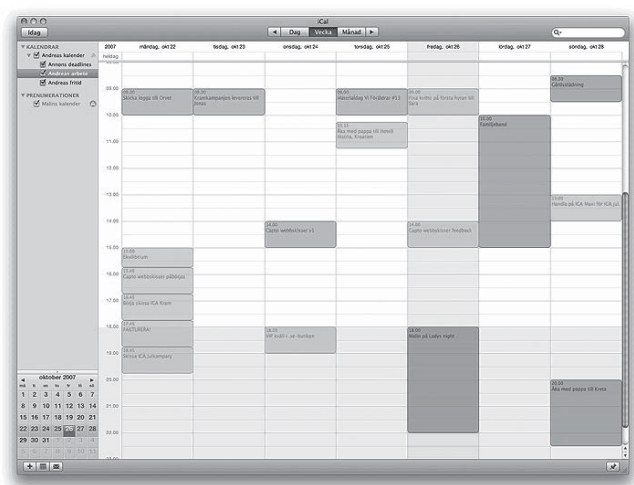
Simply because the calendar aids you with a visual presentation of the linear relations of events, the to-do list lacks that aid. If you see your tasks for the coming week you will quickly make a decision on what is important and what can wait.

People are used to looking at calendars and we naturally give tasks high or low priority depending on how far from ‘today’ they are. In a list-view there is no visual or logical distance between Monday and Friday. In a calendar there are three columns between those days and they helps us in deciding that the Wednesday task is more important (closer) than the one on Friday. The basic information is the same in the list and calendar but the visual view aids our decision making process.

\* GTD, or the *Getting Things Done* philosophy is the brainchild of David Allen. It has spawned numerous sub-sets, tools and websites. Learn more at [www.43folders.com/2004/09/08/getting-started-with-getting-things-done](http://www.43folders.com/2004/09/08/getting-started-with-getting-things-done) or [www.davidco.com/what\\_is\\_gtd.php](http://www.davidco.com/what_is_gtd.php)



“It must be said that we disagree on this point. I’m a big GTD fan and don’t keep any tasks in the calendar. More on how I prefer to do it later in this chapter.”



Compare the screen grab above to the text-only to-do list below where there are no natural or visual dividers or connectors between the different items:

#### Deadlines:

Monday 09.00: Send logotype sketches  
Tuesday 09.00: X-campaign delivered for testing  
Wednesday 14.00: Site-pitch for ABC  
Thursday 09.00: Ad-material delivered to A-magazine

#### To do:

Monday: Start R-project.  
Monday: Sketch Capto, Kram and Christmas campaign  
Wednesday 18.00: After work at Grays  
Friday 09.00: Go through disclosure  
Friday 14.00: Get feedback on Capto project.  
Sunday 13.00: Get props for ICA shoot.

#### Private:

Friday 18.00: Malin away with friends.  
Saturday 10.00: Meet the Fockers.  
Sunday 08.30: Gardening  
Sunday 20.00: Fly to Crete

You might have 30 things to do in a week. If you simply list them as text you can not sort them without adding information. This creates extra work and distraction. The to-do-list should not be separated into categories, placed under tabs or anything else. It should only be put in relation to date and time.

The calendar date and the time of day basically represent the top level of your to-do list and offer visual cues so that you are able to instantly understand the priorities without reading each item.

As we mentioned earlier the majority of your project management takes place in your brain. It automatically prioritizes (top level) on a format it is used to (linear/visual). You will automatically schedule the day just by looking at your calendar's week view.

Google Calendar ([www.google.com/calendar](http://www.google.com/calendar)) and 30Boxes ([30boxes.com](http://30boxes.com)) are good options.

*Now for Jaan's way of doing things.*

David Allen's "Getting Things Done" philosophy has taken the world by storm. The best thing about it is that it is simple and logical and really works. And apart from Allens' book there is nothing to buy unless you absolutely want to. *Brilliant.*

Most people who believe in GTD have created a personalized way of getting their things done (GTD being very customizable is yet another benefit).



"I swear by the simple way of doing things that Ryan Carson of Carsonified introduces in his gtd video on YouTube. I use the same Mac app as Ryan, it is called OmniOutliner\*. Instead of me trying to explain how it works, view the video and try it out. It might work for you too."

<http://bit.ly/gtdvideo>

"The one tweak I have made to Ryan's system is to not bother with labeling my entries. If a task is 'Check bank account' and

should be labeled ‘Business’, I call it ‘Check business bank account’. It saves me time.”

\* There are similar outlining applications for Windows including iMindmap, as well as special GTD software both web based and installed (Ryan’s and Jaan’s system only work with outliner applications). Take a peek at Things ([www.culturedcode.com/things](http://www.culturedcode.com/things)) and Nozbe ([nozbe.com](http://nozbe.com)). Backpack ([www.backpackit.com](http://www.backpackit.com)) is also really good for GTD.

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The clear winner in this category is Basecamp ([www.basecamphq.com](http://www.basecamphq.com)) from 37Signals. Fast, intuitive and ridiculously effective it is the one to beat in this field. As a foundation we both rely on Basecamp to keep our projects ticking.

In fact, this book was created entirely in Basecamp. The text was either written directly in, or copied to, Basecamp’s writeboards. The design drafts were posted in the files area, and all our discussions held in the message area. All of it filed, date stamped, version controlled and searchable.

If you haven’t tried Basecamp yet, you should visit [www.basecamphq.com](http://www.basecamphq.com), read some customer reviews and then take it for a spin (it has a free version).

## SYNCED FILES

For transferring and keeping work files in sync we recommend Dropbox ([www.getdropbox.com](http://www.getdropbox.com)). Download a small app (Mac, Widows, Linux) and choose whom to share your Dropbox folders with. Any time someone in your team adds or updates a file, everyone’s dropboxes get updated. Dropbox is also a good way to keep files on multiple machines in sync, especially

## *Work smarter*

Learn how to micro work. When you plan your day you will find that some tasks won’t take more than 15 minutes to complete. Save those for your commute or any other regularly occurring “down time”. Get a good mobile phone and use it to knock out the micro tasks. That way you can spend the bulk of your day focusing on bigger tasks.

for those who may travel with a laptop or netbook and keep a desktop at the workspace. The free account option is very generous in terms of functionality and storage, but for \$99 per year you get a full 50 GB to work with.

#### FEED READER

If there is one app that is a cloud natural, it's the feed reader. With feeds in essence being links to constantly updated online information sources there is no reason to pull them down to a device. Try Bloglines ([www.bloglines.com](http://www.bloglines.com)), or Newsgator ([www.newsgator.com](http://www.newsgator.com)). Google Reader ([www.google.com/reader](http://www.google.com/reader)) is ok but not a favorite of ours. Newsgator is very good, it syncs automatically with NetNewsWire ([www.newsgator.com/individuals/netnewswire/](http://www.newsgator.com/individuals/netnewswire/)) and FeedDemon ([www.newsgator.com/individuals/feeddemon/](http://www.newsgator.com/individuals/feeddemon/)), by far the two best free installed software feed readers on the market for Mac and PC respectively

#### FAX

Faxes can be handled in the cloud by a number of free, cheap or reasonably priced services like Drop.io ([www.drop.io](http://www.drop.io)), TrustFax ([trustfax.com](http://trustfax.com)) or MyFax ([myfax.com](http://myfax.com)). Each has pros and cons.

#### VOICE CALLS AND VOICE MAIL

Yes these can live in the cloud too. We prefer SkypeIn ([www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)) and Google Voice ([www.google.com/voice](http://www.google.com/voice)).

### **Sync it all**

It makes sense to synchronize your cloud with your laptop and phone once in a while. If you want to work on a flight for example it will help if the info is stored, momentarily, on your device.

Make syncing part of your daily ritual. We do it every morning and every evening.

### **Accessing the cloud**

Now you are hopefully ready to join the cloud. But at the back of your mind you wonder "How can I keep all these application URLs in order just to get my basic work done?"

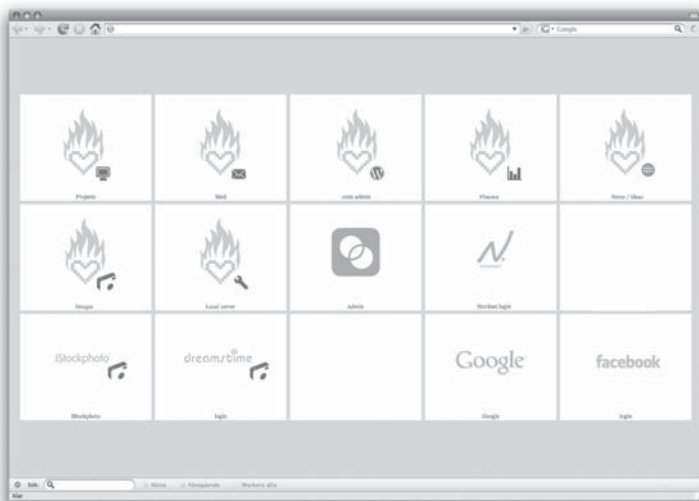
The idea of accessing the cloud effectively is to create a ‘door’ that leads to every part of it. The easiest way to do this is to create a simple HTML-file with nice large buttons that link to your tools.

Put the file on a URL like [www.your-domain.com/office/](http://www.your-domain.com/office/) and make it the default page in your favourite browser. Every time you start working, regardless of where you are or what device you use, you will see the ‘door’ to your office in the cloud and you don’t have to remember the URL for every individual tool.

If after all you prefer to keep your stuff on your hard drive, then making backups to the cloud can be a good idea. While it might seem scary to push all your financial data and poorly written poetry to an external server, it may be your one and only data savior. (At least consider at least putting your photos and music in the cloud. This will keep some of your most important memories safe.)

Good free and paid options include EMC’s Mozy ([www.mozy.com](http://www.mozy.com)), iDrive ([www.idrive.com](http://www.idrive.com)) and Box ([box.net](http://box.net))

All in all, we think that cloud workspaces are probably more accessible, more up-to-date and infinitely more safe and secure than real world, hard-drive based ones. Not bad.



Andreas’ ‘door’ to his online office.



## *Work smarter*

If your main workspace is online you will have a completely different way of using and reading email. You will rely on subject lines more than you have in the past. In part this is because in most web based email apps you need to click an email to read its contents as opposed to installed apps where you can simply high-light a message to see its content in a separate pane.

This “limitation” is not a negative thing. It actually helps with speed and email etiquette. After a while you will get really good at using the subject line to indicate what’s in the email.

### **Good:**

Peugeot campaign : Flash banners : I am missing fallback-gifs

### **Bad:**

Project A stuff

More project A stuff

### **You-will-be-hated-bad:**

Hi.

Whass up!

[empty subject line]

It’s a killer trying to follow the progress of a project with poor subject lines and even harder to back track stuff.

With good summarising subject lines you can follow project communication without having to read every email as it arrives. If you use the subject line with discipline your clients will soon do the same.

# Online presence

If you have decided to run your business online it is important that you are online 100 percent of your working day. Apart from your availability, it is important that you have a plan for how you want your online presence to be structured.

## Being online

“Being” does not mean that you can’t be away from your laptop, or that you have to respond to each IM ping or email as soon as it appears. On the contrary. When we say that you need to be online, we mean being reachable, available just as you would be in an office. In many ways it is about expectation management more than anything else. Set an example early so that people know what to expect.

If you work best in the wee hours of the morning, then make sure you are available every morning between 6.30 and 9.30. Like to have a slower start to the day? Log on at 11.00 but do it every day so that the people you work with (Noders and clients alike) know when to expect you.

But when you are online, make sure you are available! It’s your responsibility as a web worker.

Use IM-apps, be active with email, answer everything, stay in touch with people. But also make strict rules for yourself and follow them. Otherwise your online time will become “panic-there-are-too-many-things-to-respond-to” time.

Answer emails twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon if that’s what fits you and your projects (even if it’s just a “Will get back to you later” email, no one wants to feel ignored). And then do that every day.

Make phone calls once or twice a day at set times. And then do that every day.

Set aside 45 minutes every day to research or write for your blog. Do that every day.

Outside of those times you should generally be available. Unless you are ‘getting in to the zone’, that mental place where you get a lot of stuff done. Then set the status on your Instant Messaging client to “Busy”.

Being a web worker is an opportunity to work smarter and better. As you do that you also need to reassure people that you are doing your part to keep things moving. To those with a more traditional mindset, it might not always be apparent. Respect that and work with it.

## You and your business online

Apart from your availability, it is important that you have a plan for how you want you and your business to be perceived online. We’ve sadly seen quite a

few web workers flush their careers down the drain because they were too lax about this. This online presence can be divided into three categories, just as with a traditional office presence.

**B.**

**Opinions – you need to be fast.**  
Speed is everything, and being updated is more important than being correct and precise. This is where you keep the momentum of your business in public.

**A.**

**Business – you need to be precise.**  
You have to know exactly how and what you want to say about your business and how to present it. Use a clean, sharp and correct language. You have to put 90% of your time and efforts here.

**C.**

**Personal**  
You need to be yourself.

**A** is your offering and your customer care. This is where you work.

**B** is your view on the business and industry you are in. Essentially work related small talk: bits and pieces about how things are going, problems, news, inspiration and all the other things people normally share with coworkers.

**C** is what defines you as a person, it's what makes you a likable person on a private, non-work level.

In general it's a good idea to keep the business (A) and personal (C) stuff apart. Not to an extreme, but as in any business relationship, there's a risk of being seen as not quite professional enough. Or worse, amateurish. And online, things tend to get amplified.

For example it really is a very good idea to keep your Facebook profile away from your business contacts if there are lots of crazy party pictures of you drunk and snogging two people at once on it. Maybe your business contacts should be part of your Plaxo Pulse network instead? That way you can be your own uninhibited self in both settings online.

With "B" your aim should be to keep people you already know interested in you and what you have to offer, and also attract new people to your universe. "A" and "B" are very close to each other, both practically and alphabetically speaking. In other words "B" is where your work related blog fits in, and all that insightful commenting on other people's blogs, community involvement, and so forth.

Structuring and using these three wisely will define you and your business online, and when done right will keep you out of trouble and the work coming in.

Do however let a little of "A", "B" and "C" seep in to each other. Your work blog is going to be a less engaging read if your personal charm and wit don't shine through. No one likes to work with a super boring person, so don't be afraid to have a good time with work relations. Just use common sense, keep it clean and everything will be fine.

# The network effect

Building your brand also happens offline, albeit often with an online component. One of the best places to meet new people is at industry events. There are numerous BarCamps, conferences, expos and tweetups held throughout the year. And the better you prepare for what you want to get out of the events, and for how you want to contribute to them, the more you will get out of attending.

This is an updated, and translated, version of the feature we wrote for Sweden's Cap & Design magazine (issue 2/2009, the branding special).

- 1** Create a list of people you want to meet. Most conferences publish attendee lists.
- 2** Put a sticker on your laptop/netbook with your Twitter ID and your portfolio/blog URL. You'll be surprised how many people will follow and visit you in just a few hours!
- 3** Tag your photos, tweets and posts from the event. Everyone likes people who share, and if you make your contributions easy to find, then all the better.
- 4** Attend the parties. This is where much of the magic and real networking happens. If you didn't get to chat with your favourite session presenter during the day, your chances are better in the evening. Plus, it's nice to spend time with all those fab people you met at the event over a pint or three.
- 5** Ignore people's email addresses and phone numbers. If you just met a person the best way to get to know each other is to exchange Twitter ID's and follow each other.
- 6** Create your own side event. Invite a few people for breakfast at a coffee shop near the event venue. You don't really need a reason – people are after all at the event to meet new people and learn new things. But if you're a CSS star why not share some of your code tips?
- 7** Attend “alternative” events. BarCamps are not as common in Europe as they are in the USA, but if you hear of one - make sure you attend. With no set agenda (you are welcome to sign up to present on the day) and extremely relaxed, they are good places to get to know people.

Tweetups are another simple and effective way to get like-minded people together. Tweet your invites and use a service like Twtvite ([www.twtvite.com](http://www.twtvite.com)) to collect RSVP's. Meetups and DevHouse are other get-togethers to keep an eye out for. All of the above tend to be free (some ask for a small donation, \$5, £3 or 30 SEK to cover the cost of food or Wi-Fi).

# Meetings

We don't believe in the traditional meeting format. Large conference room, lots of people, long hours and very little to show for it in the end. Familiar, n'est pas? Long phone meetings are equally useless.

*We do however believe in quick focused meetings.*



## Flash session

A flash session is a short meeting, usually 10 or 15 minutes in duration, with start and end times set in stone. It is all about spur of the moment, top of your mind, gut reaction type thinking. Unhindered by doubt and second-guessing. It is brainstorming extraordinaire!

The ideal place for a flash session is on neutral ground, not in anyone's office or even in a meeting room. The best space is one where people can stand rather than sit down (sitting down takes time and is passive) and that is commonly shared by everyone in the company. Kitchens with high communal tables are perfect! Over the phone works great too.

The person calling the session can do so with reasonably short notice – flash sessions are about action, pace and the “here and now”.

The agenda is presented in a sentence or two, followed by the “brainstorming”. For example:

“A majority of our most active users have requested the ability to add their own notes next to our video tutorials. We have the technology to do it, the question is how do we implement it on the webpage?”

The person calling the flash session will take notes and keep track of who said what to make follow-up easy. There is a useful PDF template to download at [www.noded.biz/downloads/flashsession.pdf](http://www.noded.biz/downloads/flashsession.pdf)

Start and end on time. Follow up as needed, and at a later date give everyone an update on what happened with the project.

The better you manage your flash sessions the more people will want to participate, even if they are busy. The more people want to be part of your sessions, the better their input will be. And if an occasional session ended up with little or no impact on the final result, well, it was only 10 or 15 minutes of a person's time.

## *Work smarter*

Take snapshot images with your mobile phone to create reminders of stuff you come across. Keep the photos in your inspiration/idea box.

## *Flash points*

- ★ When you call a flash session, give a one or two sentence description of its purpose in your email together with the start and end times
- ★ At the start of the meeting be very clear about why you called the session, what information you are basing it on, and what you need to achieve (i.e. have an agenda)
- ★ Repeat the value of spur of the moment ideas
- ★ Take notes
- ★ Start and end on time – be respectful of people’s time
- ★ Follow up with your team members as needed
- ★ At a later date, provide an update to everyone who attended the session

## **Creative meetings**

It might sound like a good idea to bring together large teams of people to brainstorm and toss ideas around in order to come up with “big solutions” and generate “great out of the box ideas”. Right? *Wrong*.

- ❶ By designating this process “a meeting” sets it off on the wrong track. The people calling the meeting are likely in charge of the project and thus have the majority of the information. They will be better prepared, and likely lead the meeting. Everyone else will end up following, instead of being in charge of their own creative contributions.
- ❷ People act differently in groups and also when they are faced with a problem or challenge. Some people think, act and speak fast while others need time to mull over their ideas before they come up with brilliant solutions.

## *Work smarter*

Find and implement a good RSS feed reader in your toolbox. Let the information come to you. Start every day by reading the most up-to-date feeds to stay in the loop.

③ Ideas and creativity rarely materialize on command. It simply doesn't matter that you are in a meeting with 8 other people and need to come up with something. Instead, most people have their best ideas when they're not in a work environment, least of all in a meeting. The Big Creative Idea is more likely to come knocking on a Tuesday night when you are taking a shower. So trying to nail down everyone's creative peak times for a meeting slot is impossible.

④ In most meetings Mr, or Ms, LouderThanEveryoneElse (mostly Mr) tend to take over the proceedings and start positioning the challenge to fit their own ideas.

The better solution to harvest the collective brilliance of your team is to set up an online workspace. Do it two or three weeks before you need to have the input and invite everyone to contribute at their own leisure. The fast people can dump their ideas as quickly as they want, others might want to read a few contributions before they add their own suggestions. Everyone can come back and revisit the space and continue contributing as new ideas and suggestions are added, or they themselves have new ideas.

This way of doing it allows everyone to follow, contribute, digest and evaluate the information at their own pace, maximising your chances of having everyone's best ideas to choose from.

At the end of the two or three week period follow up with a short 15 minute meeting to make a decision on the project, or simply to brief everyone on what your next step will be.

In terms of tools, Campfire ([www.campfirenow.com](http://www.campfirenow.com)) is probably the best app out there to facilitate this type of process.

## **Web cam or video conferences**

Sometimes you want to see the people you are meeting with. Cue video conferencing, or rather the web cam conference. With most new laptops having built in cams this way of meeting is becoming less of a hassle.

We prefer Skype ([www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)). Since we already use it for all our

voice calls it's a natural fit for when we need a live video feed too. Alternatively, if you and the people you are meeting with all run OS x Leopard, then you already have all you need preinstalled and ready to go in iChat.

Using your mobile to stream a meeting or conference call has its limitations, but it gets the job done. And if reliable Wi-Fi is hard to come by it may be your only option. We like Bambuser ([www.bambuser.com](http://www.bambuser.com)).

Regardless of the service or tool you are using, it is a good idea to have a strategy for how the web conferencing fits in to your work flow.

There is no right or wrong. We tend to use the web cams for group meetings when one or two team members can't attend in person, and for presentations to people in multiple locations. The one rule we follow is to keep these meetings short and to the point.

## Collaborative online tools

While collaborative tools like Basecamp are not “meeting spaces” they can supplement, or even replace, in-person or web cam meetings. It depends on how you use them.

Outlining a topic in a writeboard on Basecamp that would otherwise have been presented live in a meeting is a good way to give people time to collect their thoughts and ideas on the subject. If you give them write access to the writeboard you can collect the feedback in written form, saving you from having to write up meeting notes.

A collaborative work space can also be of the more spur of the moment kind, like the “team whiteboarding” tool Twiddla ([www.twiddla.com](http://www.twiddla.com)). A very good free web app for those of you who need to review design drafts, comment on site layouts, review documents or comment on images.

Just as with the web conferencing tools it is important to have a strategy for when and how collaborative online tools will be used. Both you, your fellow Noders and your clients will appreciate having a clear understanding of your toolbox.



“The best way to keep the momentum going in a face-to-face or phone meeting is for the participants to remain standing up. After all the purpose of a meeting is 99 percent of the time to make decisions. And if a meeting is well prepared, and people don't

lounge around in chairs or couches, then decisions are made quickly. Try it, you'll be pleasantly surprised."



"There are two things that kill meetings. The lack of an agenda, and long meeting hours. *Get rid of both!* We dare you to prove to us that there is something that can not be discussed or decided in a 15 minute meeting. Provide people with info before hand, ask everyone to think through their stance and then make a decision when you meet."

## *Work smarter*

Project start-up info 101

We firmly believe in having the following info ready to share whenever we call a project start-up meeting (i.e. the first meet after a project has been commissioned).

If any of it is lacking, not everyone in the project team will be as well briefed as they should expect to be and thus won't be able to contribute to their full capacity.

Always make sure you know the answer to, and can elaborate on:

- ★ Product
- ★ Audience
- ★ Message
- ★ Goal
- ★ Restrictions
- ★ Timeline
- ★ Budget

Everything else will take care of itself once this info is in play.

# *The 8 hour workday is dead*

We don't believe that "being at work" for 8 hours accomplishes more than working for 4 hours, 2 days or 5 minutes. Work is about accomplishments, not measuring time. It is about being effective versus being efficient – doing your job faster and better versus simply doing more work.

These two approaches may seem similar but their underlying philosophies are miles apart.

*We believe in being effective.*

If we find a way to do our work faster without sacrificing quality, and we are just as accessible to our clients, then we have more time to do other things, both work related and personal stuff.

If you work for yourself you are probably working effectively already. If you are employed chances are that you are being told to be efficient: you need to be at work for 8 hours a day to “prove that you are working”. In addition to being demoralizing, we find this philosophy leads to a poorer quality of work.

We firmly believe that the way to go about things is to let people get on with work in whatever way fits them. As long as they deliver outstanding quality on time and on budget, why should we care how or when they do it?

If you get in to a tricky discussion about this it may help to direct the conversation to what the client (or your employer) is paying for: the result or the time you spend at the office?

Think of it this way: when you buy a music track that you really like, does it matter whether the artist spent two hours or two months writing the song? Probably not. Does a bowl of pasta taste better if the chef spent more time on it than if he spent the right amount of time on it? Probably not.

You and the people you work with may see this differently than we do. Maybe your team has members who are not yet as responsible as they should be. Or maybe you run a bus company, in which case it's probably a good thing if people are “at work” when they are supposed to be. The important thing is that you can justify the way you choose to work to the satisfaction of yourself and your team.

# Conduct & appearance

This could have been a very long chapter. Instead, we believe there are only a few things you need to do in both the online and offline world to conduct yourself with the grace and professionalism you and your clients deserve.



Be smart, be courteous.

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Respect the opinion of others, but be true to yourself.

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Be on time for meetings and call people when you say you will.

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Never badmouth a client.

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Use strictly positive language when talking to team members about your projects. If you start referring to work negatively, “that lame/crap/boring project”, it will quickly be downgraded in everyone’s minds and your output will suffer.

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Constantly evaluate and evolve your working environment. Try new tools and apps, rethink old ways of doing things. Schedule an hour a week or half a day a month to scan the web for new tools. Try, upgrade and evolve. It will benefit you and it will help your clients who also rely on you to do better.

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Don’t ask a client for the same information twice. It makes you look unorganized and unprofessional.

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Know where you are going, literally. The night before a meeting make sure you have the street address and know how to get there.

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Don’t dress to impress – dress nicely, but dress to be you. If your deal falls through, it wasn’t because you wore sneakers instead of black loafers (and if it was, you don’t want to work with that client anyway).

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Read up on the topic of your meeting. Being well informed always impresses. If it’s a follow up meeting recap the previous meeting to make sure all of the facts are kept straight.

---

Share stories with the people in your Noded team. Have a monthly talk-through about the things you did together and the things you worked on individually. You will learn from the good and the bad, and be better equipped when you run into similar situations.

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Share experiences. Talk about the tools, apps and techniques you and your teammates have evaluated. A tool that was of no use to one person might be a lifesaver for someone else.

---

Put a goal and strategy in place for every team and project. Then give people the freedom to deliver on their tasks. Micro management kills results.

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Only ever put in place a minimum of rules and processes. A Noded working culture should (just as any other work culture, office bound or not) encourage action and spur-of-the-moment ideas and thinking.

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That's it. Everything else is irrelevant. At the end of the day business is done between people. Decisions are made by a person not an algorithm or a function. Relationships are built between individuals. You can't fool other people in to liking or hiring you. But you can be seen as a genuine, knowledgeable, honest person with integrity and passion and that will go a long way.

## *Work smarter*

Jaan likes to print 4-to-1.

“Instead of printing one paper page for each digital page, I started printing 4 digi pages to each paper ditto. This not only saves money and keeps happy green trees from becoming sad dead trees. It makes the content and structure of a document easier to grasp. Most of the documents I work with on a daily basis are between 1 and 8 pages. News releases, proposals, requirement specifications etc., they all tend to be in that bracket.

Printing them 4-to-1 gives me something akin to a bird's eye view of the information in them. I can easily judge if I have the right flow, if anything is missing. I am not distracting myself by turning pages or keeping reams of paper in check. It's all there, in (usually) gloriously simple 4-to-1. If I only need to print a one-pager, I usually go for the 2 pages per sheet layout option. The empty half of the page leaves lots of room for notes and annotations. It has come to a point where I am surprised when I get handed a printed document with full text sheets. It looks clunky!

The reason for my 4-to-1 preference in printing is probably rooted in the fact that I am a very visually oriented person. My impression is that others working in visual disciplines tend to take to this printing approach quickly too.”

- ★ The added benefit of getting a better overview of your document will change the way you write.
- ★ It saves on weight and space when traveling for work.
- ★ Helps the environment.
- ★ Saves you money on ink, paper, and electricity.
- ★ Probably prolongs the lifespan of your printer.

# When you need a break

## *Walk*

Going for a short walk is our number one stress buster/head clearer. It tends to put things in to perspective (“Imagine that, life goes on out here despite the designer using the wrong shade of gray on the mockup!”).

In addition to giving your muscles a chance to move, you also exercise both sides of the brain in equal measure when walking. Most of us use one side more than the other when we are in work mode, so this is a nice change.

Walking also offers you a chance to catch up on podcasts. Learning while walking is a good idea and you will soon associate learning with physical activity.

And when Autumn looks like this (see Technicolor-esque pic from Washington DC at [www.noded.biz/autumn](http://www.noded.biz/autumn)) you’d be crazy not to leave your office space at least once every day! Taking the occasional walk results in better results for your clients and it will keep you both sane and healthy.

## **... and make sure you eat right.**

We're not nutritionists, but it makes sense to eat smart. It's amazing that so very few people do. Plus in the world of the web worker, schedules can sometimes get thrown off track a bit. Quick and healthy eats will keep you productive longer than people chugging fast food.

### **At your desk**

- ★ Cereal of any kind with a bowl of cold (organic) milk
- ★ Raisins
- ★ Fruits
- ★ Vegetables with a hummus dip
- ★ Toast with bitter orange marmalade (no butter)
- ★ Yoghurt
- ★ Tea, water, juices. No sodas; you'll feel bloated and look uncomfortable on the web cam plus it's unhealthy. And yes, coffee, lots of coffee. Let's face it, many of us need it.

### **On the move**

Think non-sticky, clean food that won't make you feel like a stuffed piñata.

- ★ Sandwich
- ★ Bagel
- ★ Bento box
- ★ And coffee.

## *Treat the break as an opportunity*

Sometimes instead of taking a break it will be tempting to take the whole day off or just surf the day away. People that do this often excuse their behavior with “I’m seeing new things, learning new things. My project benefits from this”.

They are dead wrong.

Surfing the web for a whole day is not bad in itself. As long as you have a goal.

If you have no goal or planned activity for the things you do it won’t benefit you, you will be wasting your time.

Discipline is having a mission or a purpose with everything you do. If you have a mission when you “surf-the-day-away” you will learn much more. If you have a proverbial hook to hang the knowledge on it will last longer; Google to familiarize yourself with partners and competitors. Read blogs about the stuff you do. Find tech-solutions or something you can apply to your business.

Recreation (including hours spent on the Wii) and inspiration are good and necessary but they must be planned out and treated with the same respect as all other business activities. That’s when a break becomes truly useful for you.



## *Work out*

If you are not in to leisurely breaks and prefer something more energetic, pick an activity with a lot of repetitive movement. Work that mind-block, frustration or superfluous energy out of your body and brain with some (high energy) kayaking or boxing. Afterwards you will feel completely revitalized with your synapses firing on all the proverbial cylinders.

## *Work smarter*

Andreas has a system for the things he carries around with him.

### **Everything in its place.**

Every time you step out the door you carry things with you. If you always keep a particular item in the same place you'll spend less time fiddling and more time finding and using.

Put all your "motion" items on the table, including things you bring when travelling: iPhone, keys, wallet, laptop, cables, passport, and so on. Then find a pocket on your person, or a place in your bag, for each item and always put it there.

### **My set-up:**

- ★ Travel documents always go in the left back pocket of my trousers.
- ★ Receipts go in my shirt pocket. If I'm wearing a t-shirt they go in the wallet, which in turn lives in my right back or leg trouser pocket.
- ★ Laptop peripherals and cables go in the middle section of my Timbuk2 bag.
- ★ Project documents and the laptop slide in to the back section.
- ★ My USB sticks and keys are attached to a clip in the zippered middle compartment of the bag.

This simple system allows me to focus on my work and not scramble for items, or desperately try to find a place to stash them. In other words, it's a way to reduce stress levels and it makes me more organised.

# *Is there anybody out there?*

When you start your own business you are boarding an emotional roller coaster. The highs are easy to deal with. It's the gut turning downs that will put you to the test. Loneliness is in our point of view one of the most common issues faced by web workers.

Despite the web being all about connectivity, there will be days when you simply feel very much alone. There will be no one around to cheer you up, entertain you, or inspire you. Everyone else will be literally minding their own business. You have to do it all by yourself.

To avoid the social void you need to connect to other people as much as possible. Make it a habit to start your day by launching your instant messaging (IM) client to see who else is online. Update the status message on your social platform of choice and see what others are up to.

In a way IM, status messages, Tweets et al fulfill the function of office small talk. Andreas' wife thinks he has lost his marbles when he says that he feels connected to old friends when he sees their Facebook status.





“For me, seeing that an old friend of mine is in a meeting or on their way to Barcelona makes me hear their voices, visualise them in that situation and that makes me feel good. And when you run into a mutual friend you can say “Did you hear that Adam is back in Japan?”.

## **I am the motivator**

Motivation, or rather lack of it, is another common problem. You have to find your own ways of keeping yourself going when all you really want to do is feel sorry for yourself, sleep or start up the Wii and waste the day away.

If things get shaky – you feel sidelined and unproductive – you must act as fast as you can. If you don’t, you may fall into a circle of passivity and unproductiveness or even, we kid you not, depression.

*The best pre-emptive action is to create a routine that includes these four key points:*

### **Get up and get ready.**

Take a shower\*, eat breakfast/coffee/whatever. You will start every day fresh, unhindered by the previous day’s challenges.

### **Choose your working hours and stick to them.**

Hammer out the words, drafts or designs even if you don’t feel like it. The process of working can by itself release “inspiration”.

### **Make sure you get away from your work space at least once a day.**

Go to the local coffee shop, the park, the record store or whatever as long as you get out of your working environment. This will release your brain from repetitive thought patterns and going-nowhere solutions and allow it to start over.

### **Eat lunch away from your place of work.**

This is an especially good idea as you can combine the eating with some networking. Do this at least once or twice every week.

Doing these four simple things will help you stay on track and away from the social void.

\*It might sound like a joke to say that as part of running a successful web business you must shower and eat breakfast. But we know a lot of people who get up at 11 am, hang out all day in their underwear and just eat left over pizza for breakfast. Their deliverables differ hugely in quality and precision compared to those from the people who have a plan for their day.

## *Work smarter*

### **Create libraries and toolboxes.**

We can all take a page from the designer's playbook. By creating libraries, or toolboxes, with frequently used items we free up time to focus on our ideas and output rather than looking for the same materials over and over again.

### **Andreas' design library**

In my design library – a folder on my digital desktop – I keep a variety of things. Useful text and code snippets, “Lorem” text in varying lengths, browser screen shots, generic web page items (check boxes, text fields, buttons), icons and logotypes, keyboard setups, a list of envelope and paper sizes, maps and flags of the world in different formats, flash objects, illustrations.

It's important to keep the library relevant. Whenever I come across a new item that is likely to be used on a regular basis I name it and add it to the folder. I also remove items that have become obsolete or that I no longer use as often.

### **Jaana's writing library**

Throughout my day I constantly refer to a WriteRoom ([hogbay-software.com/products/writeroom](http://hogbay-software.com/products/writeroom)) page – my text library. In the top half of it are short standard replies to emails that I can easily tweak, a short “About me” text, proposal and pitch intro copy, etcetera. All useful for quick replies to queries.

In the bottom half I keep a list of image sizes and text lengths for the blogs and magazines I contribute to, plus hard to spell words in different languages, international address formats, my frequent traveller program numbers and a list of abbreviations and their meanings (all of it good for copy paste).



## Final word

Thank you for reading the updated and improved version of our book. We believe that the Noded way is the most exciting and rewarding way of working on the web. Hopefully you agree and find ways to make our ideas and suggestions part of your web powered business.

We will continue writing about all things Noded at the Noded blog ([www.noded.biz](http://www.noded.biz)). Drop by and pick up our RSS feed, or follow us on Twitter (Andreas is @nofont and Jaan is @orvet).

Thank you for reading *Noded – The untouchable business*.

ANDREAS CARLSSON & JAAN ORVET

*Linköping & San Francisco*

April 2009

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# Jaen

Jaen Orvet lives in San Francisco and works as a Web Strategist, Creative Director and Communications Strategist. He is also the co-founder of Silicon Valley based interactive agency Gray White Black, and a highly opinionated speaker and presenter.

Jaen has co-founded several starts up on both sides of the Atlantic, and held senior positions at companies such as Yahoo!, Sync Mediacom, Spray, Marieberg Interactive and KIO Interactive in Stockholm, San Francisco, London and Washington D.C.

He is Swedish by birth, a former Silicon Valley columnist, an ex Superjudge guitarist and an occasional contributor to magazines such as Res and Gourmet. He is married to Tiff, and the godfather of one of Andreas' sons.

# Andreas

Andreas Carlsson is a Web Strategist, Creative Director and Designer based in Linköping, Sweden. His international project roster includes work for AstraZeneca, ICA, Universal Music, Pfizer, and Telenor.

Since the mid-1990's Andreas has co-founded several interactive and traditional creative agencies. He is a popular speaker and presenter who is often called upon to advise brands on web strategies and audience interaction.

Andreas likes escaping into the world of typography where he crafts new typefaces and explores the impact of type on our society. He has amassed one of the world's largest collections of Tidyman pictograms, recorded four albums with industrial-EBM band Scapa Flow and dreams of coding fluently.

He is married to Malin and all three of their children have music-related names: Franke, Isola and Nivek.

#### ANDREAS ON JAAN

**Good at:** Minimizing, truncating, distilling and keeping things razor sharp. Staying on track from idea to delivery.

The most striking thing about Jaan is that whatever topic or technology we come across in our work, if you ask him, he can tell you all about it. He knows its history, how it fits in to the bigger picture, what its business and web cultural significance is, who has worked on it in the past and if there are any sensitive issues surrounding it that we need to be aware of. This gives him a huge advantage both in his private and professional life; he is always well informed and on point.

**Sucks at:** Taking care of his BBQ grill. Being excessive or going over-the-top (which is only a good thing).

#### JAAN ON ANDREAS

**Good at:** Understanding what clients need. Inspiring people with his skills and passion. Moving projects forward. Challenging conventions and coming up with better ways of doing things. Brand interpretation. Design.

**Sucks at:** Baseball games on the PS2. Administration.



[illegible]



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