

Living the Remote Dream

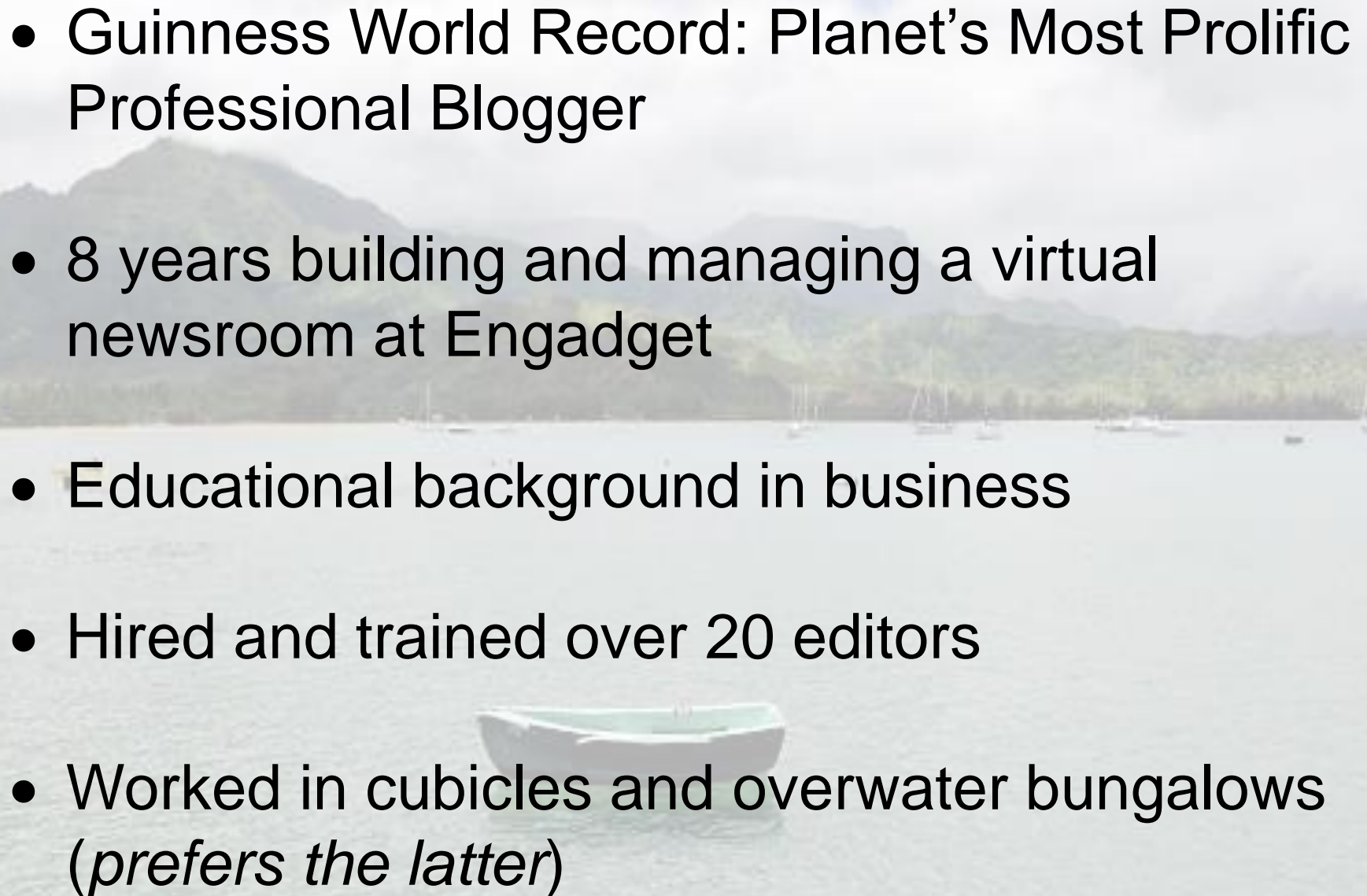
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With Darren Murph and Byron White

Living The Remote Dream



Darren Murph

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- A scenic background image of a tropical bay. In the foreground, a small, light-colored boat is on the water. In the middle ground, a bungalow is visible on the water. The background features lush green mountains under a cloudy sky.
- Guinness World Record: Planet's Most Prolific Professional Blogger
 - 8 years building and managing a virtual newsroom at Engadget
 - Educational background in business
 - Hired and trained over 20 editors
 - Worked in cubicles and overwater bungalows (*prefers the latter*)

Living The Remote Dream: What & Why?

Part-autobiography detailing a career
working remotely

Part 'How-To Guide' on pivoting to a
remote career

Personal mission to free the workforce
from the daily commute

Adapting the home office

- Create house rules
- Establish hours
- Physical boundaries
- Consider a co-working space

Peace & quiet

- Long, uninterrupted periods of time
- Take advantage of small windows, too
- Cut the chit-chat
- Pressure-cooker mentality

Focus & productivity

- Pick topics you're **passionate** about
- Be willing to **learn** new passions
- Daily improvement goals
- Minimize your schedule

Streamlining

The background of the slide is a photograph of a street scene. On the right, there is a wall covered in vibrant, multi-colored graffiti. In the center, a metal shutter door is also covered in graffiti. To the left, a sidewalk runs alongside a street with parked cars and buildings in the distance. The overall scene is slightly faded, serving as a backdrop for the text.

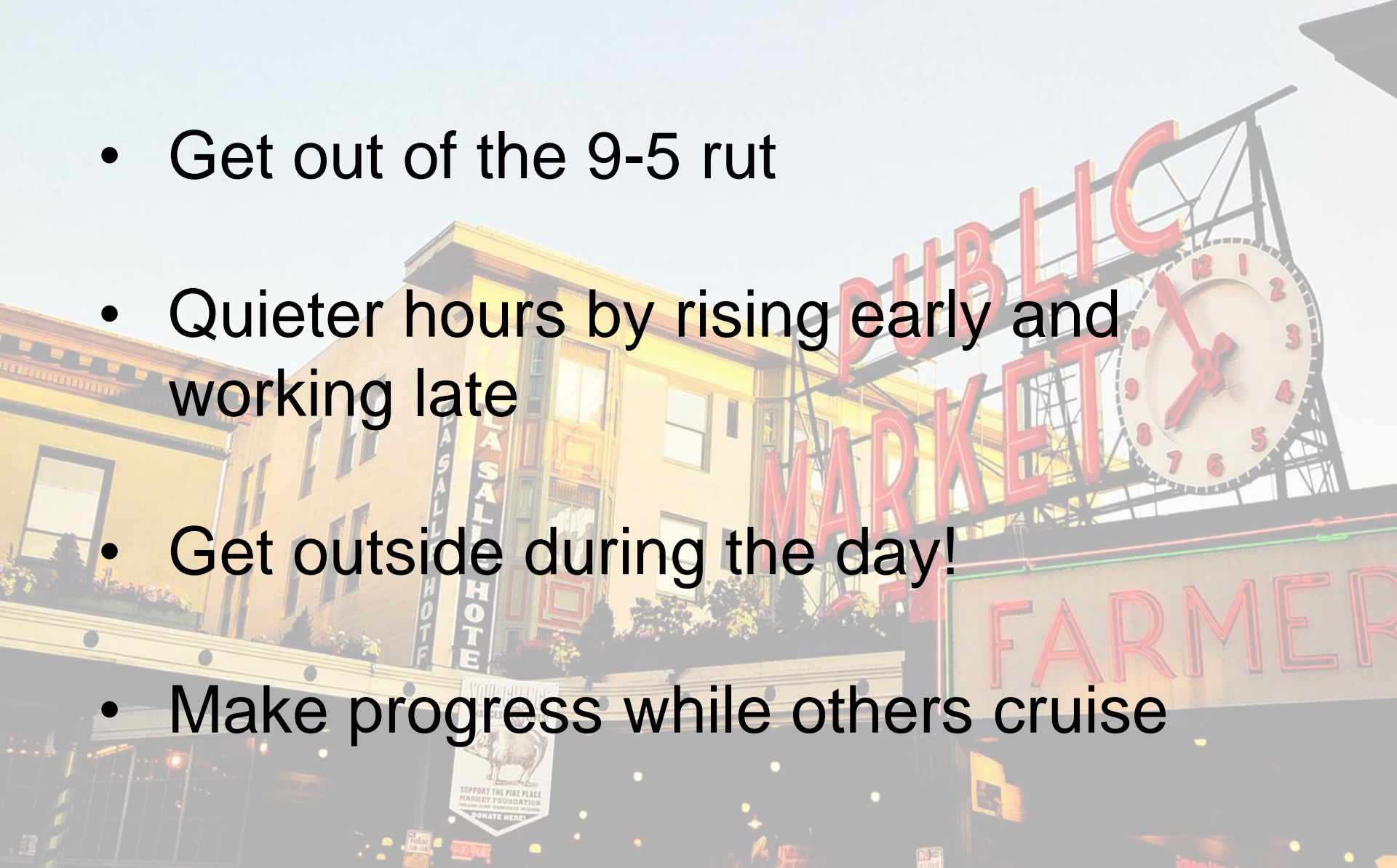
- Zero out your to-do list daily
- Commit only to what you can achieve
- Banish time-wasting activities
- If you aren't playing, you're working

The little things

- Minor time savings create major progress
- Commit to keyboard shortcuts
- Leverage apps and software
- **Read** other great writing

Nonlinear Workday

- Get out of the 9-5 rut
- Quieter hours by rising early and working late
- Get outside during the day!
- Make progress while others cruise



Tools of the trade

- Invest in great, **fast** hardware
- Maintain a mobile data connection
- Put your office in a 'Go Bag'
- Organize, label, and categorize everything in real-time

Marketing yourself

- LinkedIn is the new resume
- Nail down a fantastic headshot
- Connect often, check for jobs daily
- Interact with trusted recruiters
- Start with **WHY**, not what or how

Nothing without **SOUL**

- Creativity is best found in the wild
- Work less to work harder
- Find your beach: a hike, meditation, etc.
- Invest in your health (cooking, fitness, etc.)

Work to **LIVE**

- Motivation is free time to come
- Put in the time now, get the freedom later
- Balance family demands
- Never forgo sleep, rest, or recharging

The bucket list

A photograph of a tunnel with a hanging light fixture. The light fixture is a small, square, white box hanging from a chain. The tunnel is dimly lit, and the light from the fixture creates a series of concentric, glowing arcs that recede into the distance, creating a strong sense of perspective. The walls of the tunnel are a light, textured color.

- Create one! No, seriously!
- Only you can get closer to your dreams
- Creatively mix work and travel

You choose what **matters**

- Squash the inefficiencies
- A positive attitude changes everything
- Do more than what's required
- **Reliable.** Rarer than you'd think!

Remote transition

- Even an office job can go remote
- Plan for ‘the conversation’
- Readily accept **more** responsibility
- **Prove that you’re capable**

Enjoy a free chapter
from Darren Murph's
Living The Remote Dream

Get the full book here:

www.darrenmurph.com/living-the-remote-dream/

3. NONLINEAR WORKDAY

Routines are important – vital, even. They keep you sane, they keep you grounded, and they provide some level of normalcy that makes it a lot easier to churn through work. Routines are safe, familiar, and beneficial, but only when you're the one dictating the particulars. For those who have to clock in and clock out at the same time each day, the routine is dictated for you. You're forced to either rise earlier than necessary or to sit in seemingly unending traffic. You're forced to either stay past dinner or, again, sit in seemingly unending traffic. And for what?

When you're manufacturing items and attempting to meet a certain goal in a certain window of time, specific shifts make sense. In many cases, they're simply unavoidable. But in other areas of the working world, work continues to be accomplished between 9AM and 5PM simply because we're too lazy to do anything about it. Arriving at 2:51PM for a flight that departs at 2:50PM causes severe disruption. But responding to an email asking for your input on a new strategy shouldn't possess the same level of time sensitivity.

Beyond all of that, what's most galling about the typical "9 to 5" mentality is just how many hours this leaves on the table. There aren't many economies left in the world that aren't global on some level. Schedules that were determined scores ago didn't take time zones into account. They didn't take the Internet into account. They didn't take voicemail and inboxes and notifications and mobility into account. It's time we started accounting for all of that.

My brain aches just considering how many man hours are lost – let alone how many wills are broken – by the unwritten rule of 9 to 5. By shoving that many people onto subways, highways, and airplanes just to work during a set of hours that were drawn up eons ago, we're losing efficiency on a gargantuan scale. The people that are sitting in traffic on both sides of their workday are not able to be productive. Their souls are being brutalized by unnecessarily long hauls to and from their families. And no one is stopping to point out that the work they accomplished from 9 to 5 could've been done from 3 to 11 or 12 to 8 or any combination of the above.

Granted, this wouldn't *always* work, but that's not the point. The point is that 9 to 5 doesn't *always* work, either. In my own life, embracing a nonlinear workday with a handful of predetermined routines has enabled me to accomplish more, waste less time, enjoy the perks of traveling during nonpeak periods, and be more available for things that truly matter.

Allow me to describe an honest-to-goodness example of how a nonlinear workday transpires. The clock strikes midnight on Monday, and I hit the hay in a rental cabin in Columbia Falls, Montana. I sleep for eight solid hours, waking up at 8AM – correction, I *attempt* to wake at 8AM, but actually rise around 8:15AM, with nary a worry in the world over those 15 minutes. I put on a pot of coffee, flip on one of my favorite radio programs, and open my computer. For the next 1.5 hours I plow through emails, finish up a project from the evening prior, and return a phone call that I missed. Now that my blood is sufficiently pumping, I throw on a different set of clothing and push through a one-hour workout. I walk one room over and shower, walk two rooms over and cook myself brunch, and then sit down for another half-hour of work.

It's around 11:45AM. I've enjoyed a quiet cup of coffee, I'm caught up with work, my daily exercise routine is in the books, and I've prepared my own meal using ingredients that I selected. Let's look at what I *haven't* done: spent a half-hour putting on a wardrobe that society says I have to wear when heading to an office; grabbed some breakfast bar filled with heaven knows what; spent even one single minute in traffic; parted ways with even a penny in fuel; cursed out some other overburdened idiot who ought to have his license revoked. So far, so good!

Next, I toss a few heavy layers on, crank up the car, and drive 30 minutes to a giant mountain with tons of snow and empty ski lifts. I proceed to enjoy four solid hours of skiing at Whitefish Mountain Resort, where my body is able to do something other than sit idly in a desk chair and my mind is able to wander. At some point during the day, a few creative solutions come to mind for issues that have been bugging me. Solutions, mind you, that would never have surfaced had I not made a conscious choice to get outside, enjoy the fresh air, and break away from the grind.

At 4PM, I head back, suffering through the kind of free-flowing traffic that rush hour drivers have only dreamt about. By 4:45PM, I'm hard at work, catching up on what I've missed and pressing ahead on a few longer projects. Two hours later, I break for a dinner that I'm able to prepare myself – yet another mental stimulation that's remarkably rewarding. By 8PM, I'm settling down to watch a couple of NBA games on the 'tube while accomplishing massive strides at work. I'm one of the only folks online at this hour, enabling me to execute on more in the next four hours than most would with eight hours in a busy office.

This is just one day, just one small example of how a nonlinear workday happens. If you were to ask me about this particular day in a year, all I'd remember was the amazing weather at Whitefish and just how few people were crowding the slopes on a Tuesday. But, as it turns out, I worked a full shift on that particular day. I made huge gains at work. I made myself proud, aided my colleagues, and moved my company forward. I also treated my soul, my mind, and my stomach. It was a full day. Full of work, and full of enjoyment.

As you can probably imagine, having a nonlinear workday is even more impressive when you factor partial vacation days in. This type of working scenario allows highly dedicated employees to make their PTO days stretch for much longer. Some will want to truly *get away*, which is entirely understandable. Even on days where you need to put in a full day's worth of work, constructing them in a nonlinear way enables you to make so much more of each 24 hours that you're blessed with.

Let's take the above example and see what would've happened had I not pushed for a remote role, and if I had to work the usual 9 to 5 shift. For starters, I would've been wading through a large city, not picturesque Montana, so the rest of my explanation is essentially null and void. Nevertheless, I'll proceed. The aforementioned ski resort closes

each day at 4PM, which means that it would be impossible to ever enjoy the mountain on any day where I was working. Thirdly, I would've been forced to deal with rush hour commutes on both ends of my workday, stealing an extra hour or so from me that I wouldn't get to spend on exercise, cooking, personal projects, reading, or whatever else. You get the point.

Even I'll confess that not every nonlinear workday works out as swimmingly as the ski day mentioned above. Sometimes, you have an unavoidable conference call in the middle of the day. Occasionally, you have to be online at a specific moment in time to ensure that a launch goes smoothly. In general, however, you'll give yourself many, many more chances to truly enjoy life if you're willing to work at atypical hours. Yes, it requires a lot more focus (something I'll devote an entire chapter to in the pages to come), and it works best when operating on a team that relies less on rigidly scheduled meetings and more on ongoing conversations carried out over email, IM, or any number of collaborative tools ([Slack](#), I'm looking at you).

I've had hundreds of workdays that are more exciting, more joyous, and more adventurous than the vacation days of those cramped in offices. I don't say that to brag; in fact, being able to admit that is tremendously disheartening. I've been fortunate to work in roles where nonlinear workdays are accepted, and I wish that more people would embrace it. In so many cases, it matters not (or exceedingly little) when a reply happens within a 24 hour window. So long as you're keeping a daily check on your work duties, and you're being diligent about making progress, your colleagues aren't apt to care whether you work from 6 to 8 or 10 to 12 or during any other two-hour chunk of time.

I've seen 98 percent of what there is to see in Kuala Lumpur in just 36 manic hours. I've flown on 9-hour redeye flights just so I wouldn't have to take vacation time to get from Point A to Point B. I've volunteered to work 60+ hours in a week covering a trade show so I'd have a justifiable reason to be somewhere awesome. What's possible with nonlinear workdays is limited only by your imagination, your tolerance for uneven sleep schedules, and your willingness to accept volatility.

Even in roles where you can develop these atypical routines, it's simply not possible for everything to always pan out. I've had vacation days wholly consumed by Skype calls during a work crisis. I've had to miss an event that I had a nontransferable ticket to because an important meeting (as in, not just *any* meeting) was rescheduled. These realities of the volatile work world ensure that kinks will be thrown into even the most thoughtfully planned day, but it makes those days where everything works out that much sweeter. I'd much rather carve a little fun into the occasional workday than to live in a world where weekends and a few PTO blocks were all I had to look forward to. If the ride gets a little bumpy, so be it.