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**#152: New Models of Learning/Work?**

One of my favourite audio books from last year was Bruce Daisley’s [*The Joy of Work*](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/40242204-the-joy-of-work). In it he recounts the following:

“When Yale professor Stanley Eisenstat was asked by his students how long their coursework ought to take them, he had no idea. His curiosity piqued, and keen to be in a position to offer guidance to future undergraduates, he therefore decided to investigate and find out precisely how long existing students were taking to finish the tasks he gave them. What he discovered surprised him deeply. Some students, he established, were able to complete their assignments in a tenth of the time that others devoted to them. This wasn’t necessarily because they were more able: they were simply more efficient. What’s more, he discovered, there was no ultimate correlation between time spent and marks gained.”

So a 10x difference in efficiency for students, what about our work on collective projects? Daisley goes on to say:

“Eisenstat’s findings so intrigued software developer Jeff Sutherland that he decided to apply the same investigation to the world of work. If a fast student can complete her tasks ten times quicker than a slow one, he asked himself, how much more swiftly can an efficient team deliver a project than a run-of-the-mill one? If the answer also turned out to be ten, then that would mean that the fastest teams achieve in a week what a slow team labours over for two and a half months – a worrying differential and one that, at scale, would have a material impact on the productivity of different companies. Sutherland accordingly looked at studies covering 3,800 different projects – from accounting to software development to tech jobs at firms like IBM. And he discovered that the x 10 factor was way off. Once you allowed for the complexities of teams, discussions, presentations, status chats, emails and reviews, he discovered, the time spent on a badly organised project seemed to increase exponentially. ‘It actually didn’t take the slow team ten weeks to do what the best team could do in one week,’ Sutherland concluded. ‘Rather it took them 2,000 weeks.’”

Matt Mullenweg, the founder of WordPress, the technology that powers the Open Source software used by 36% of the web websites around the world, including our [Patana public site](https://www.patana.ac.th/), discusses the future of work with Sam Harris. In the [interview](https://samharris.org/podcasts/194-new-future-work/) they discuss the benefits of working from home, the new norms of knowledge work, relevant tools and challenges. He gave a 5-stage model for how autonomy and technology can transform our jobs; I urge you to listen to it.

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