The Art and Science of:
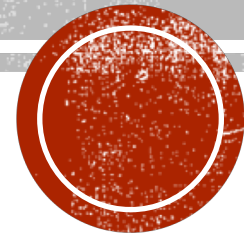
PERFECTING PERFUNCTORY

James Seddon – jseddon@ucsd.edu

perfunctory
adjective
per·func·to·ry | \ pər-ˈfəŋ(k)-t(ə-)rē \
Definition of *perfunctory*
1: characterized by routine or superficiality
2: lacking in interest or enthusiasm

Merriam-Webster

"Anything worth doing, is worth doing right." –Hunter Thompson

"Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty…" – Theodore Roosevelt

"We have to do the best we can. This is our sacred human responsibility." -Albert Einstein

"Doing the best at this moment puts you in the best place for the next moment." -Oprah Winfrey

"Always do your best" – Every Kindergarten Teacher Ever

WRONG
WRONG
WRONG
WRONG
WRONG
WRONG
WRONG

#1 EARTH IS THE PROBLEM

This is the direction the experts say the Earth rotates.

LIVE ANOTHER DAY

#2 BIOLOGY IS THE PROBLEM

#3 TIME IS THE PROBLEM

10 lbs of "To Do"

5 lbs of "Time"

THE SOLUTION:

YOU MUST CHOOSE
BUT CHOOSE WISELY

What to work on?

How to work on it?

NOW FOR A SEA STORY

PERFECTING PERFUNCTORY

- "The best is the enemy of the good."
  – Voltaire

- "A good plan violently executed now is better than a perfect plan executed next week."
  – George Patton

- "80% of results come from 20% of our efforts."
  - Pareto Principle

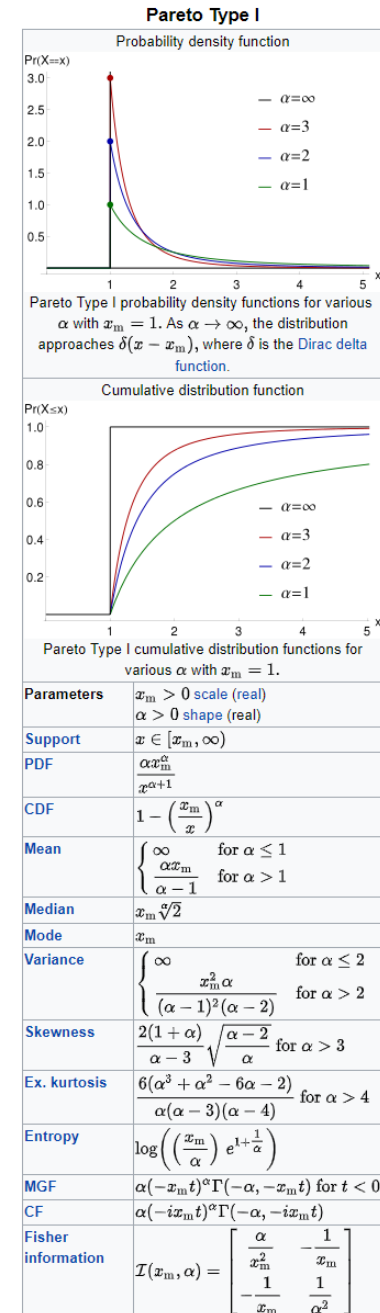# PARETO DISTRIBUTION

- From Wikipedia:

$$\overline{F}(x) = \Pr(X > x) = \begin{cases} \left(\frac{x_m}{x}\right)^\alpha & x \geq x_m, \\ 1 & x < x_m, \end{cases}$$

Definition [edit]

If X is a random variable with a Pareto (Type I) distribution,[1] then the probability that X is greater than some number x, i.e. the survival function (also called tail function), is given by

$$\overline{F}(x) = \Pr(X > x) = \begin{cases} \left(\frac{x_m}{x}\right)^\alpha & x \geq x_m, \\ 1 & x < x_m, \end{cases}$$

where x_m is the (necessarily positive) minimum possible value of X, and α is a positive parameter. The Pareto Type I distribution is characterized by a scale parameter x_m and a shape parameter α, which is known as the *tail index*. When this distribution is used to model the distribution of wealth, then the parameter α is called the Pareto index.

Pareto Type I

Probability density function

Pareto Type I probability density functions for various α with $x_m = 1$. As $\alpha \to \infty$, the distribution approaches $\delta(x - x_m)$, where δ is the Dirac delta function.

Cumulative distribution function

Pareto Type I cumulative distribution functions for various α with $x_m = 1$.

Parameters	$x_m > 0$ scale (real) $\alpha > 0$ shape (real)
Support	$x \in [x_m, \infty)$
PDF	$\dfrac{\alpha x_m^\alpha}{x^{\alpha+1}}$
CDF	$1 - \left(\dfrac{x_m}{x}\right)^\alpha$
Mean	$\begin{cases} \infty & \text{for } \alpha \leq 1 \\ \dfrac{\alpha x_m}{\alpha - 1} & \text{for } \alpha > 1 \end{cases}$
Median	$x_m \sqrt[\alpha]{2}$
Mode	x_m
Variance	$\begin{cases} \infty & \text{for } \alpha \leq 2 \\ \dfrac{x_m^2 \alpha}{(\alpha-1)^2(\alpha-2)} & \text{for } \alpha > 2 \end{cases}$
Skewness	$\dfrac{2(1+\alpha)}{\alpha-3}\sqrt{\dfrac{\alpha-2}{\alpha}}$ for $\alpha > 3$
Ex. kurtosis	$\dfrac{6(\alpha^3 + \alpha^2 - 6\alpha - 2)}{\alpha(\alpha-3)(\alpha-4)}$ for $\alpha > 4$
Entropy	$\log\left(\left(\dfrac{x_m}{\alpha}\right) e^{1+\frac{1}{\alpha}}\right)$
MGF	$\alpha(-x_m t)^\alpha \Gamma(-\alpha, -x_m t)$ for $t < 0$
CF	$\alpha(-i x_m t)^\alpha \Gamma(-\alpha, -i x_m t)$
Fisher information	$\mathcal{I}(x_m, \alpha) = \begin{bmatrix} \dfrac{\alpha}{x_m^2} & -\dfrac{1}{x_m} \\ -\dfrac{1}{x_m} & \dfrac{1}{\alpha^2} \end{bmatrix}$

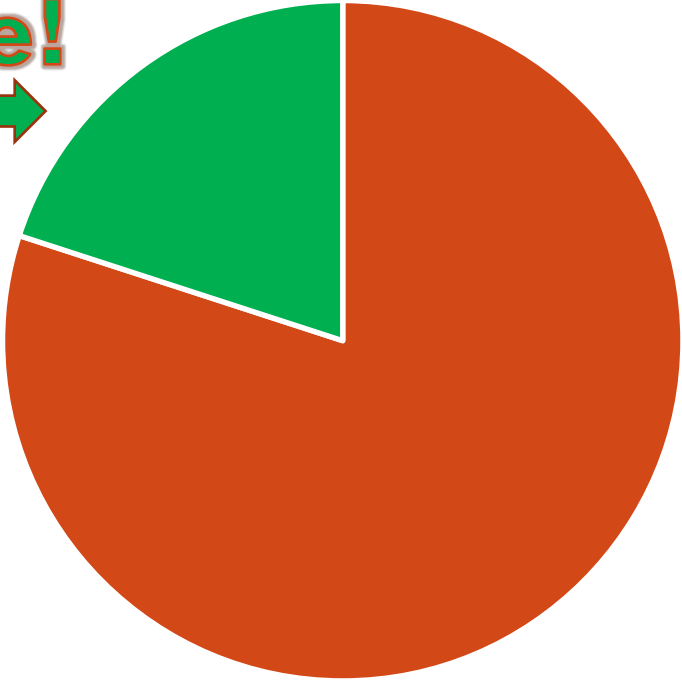# 80% RESULTS FROM 20% EFFORT

Total Results

Total Time Spent Working
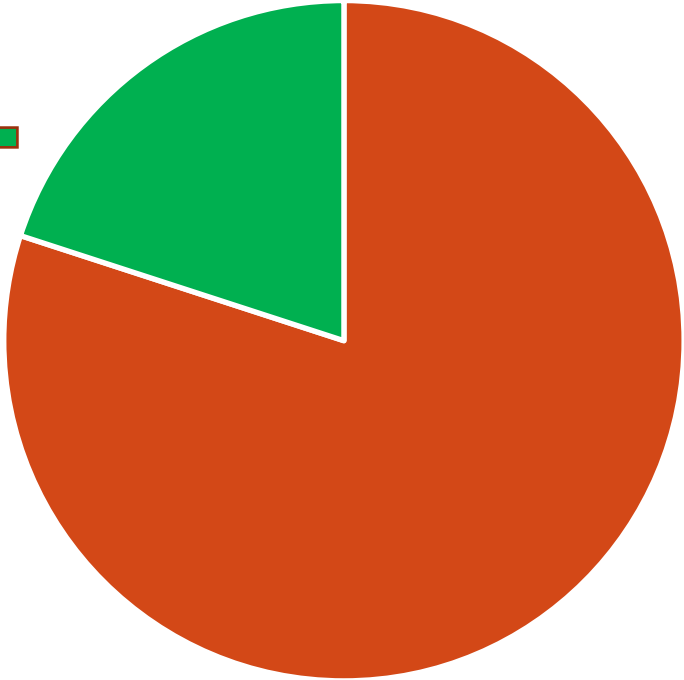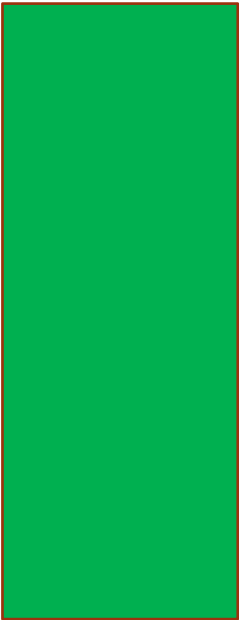
80% RESULTS FROM 20% EFFORT

Total Time Spent Working

Super Productive!

Not so much

WHEELHOUSE ACTIVITIES

- "Time for Leadership" by Pierre Khawand

- "Wheelhouse" = Activities that are:

  - Closely connected to results
  - High-Traction/High-Mileage
  - High gear ratio
  - Giant levers

  - Tends to be things that:
    - That you're best at.
    - Only you can do.

"Weak Links"

- Not closely tied to desired results
- Low-traction/wheel spinning
- Pushing boulders up a muddy slope

WHAT IF I TOLD YOU…

- You could shift time:

Weak
Links → Wheelhouse

TIME SHIFTER

Total Results
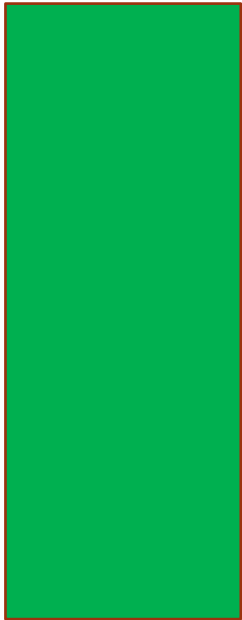
Total Time Spent Working
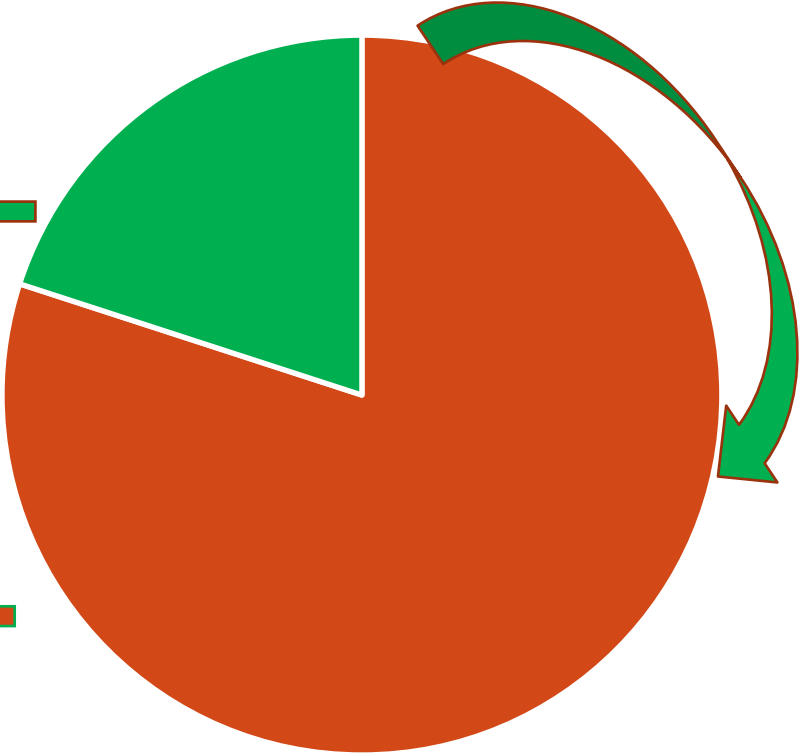
TIME MGMT COOKBOOK

- Before engaging in ANY task:

  - Wheelhouse? (This is "The Art")
    - Do your best work.
    - Take the time needed.
    - Ace it.

  - Weak link? (This is "The Science")
    - Finish it faster.
    - Reduce scope.
    - Reduce quality. Goal="Minimum Acceptable."
    - Delegate if appropriate.
    - Eliminate it altogether.

CULT OF DONE MANIFESTO

- Bre Pettis and Kio Stark
- Written in 20 minutes in 2009.
- 13 points

  - #2 – Accept that everything is a draft. It helps to get it done.

  - #6 – The point of being done is to get other things done.

  - #7 – Laugh at perfection. It's boring and keeps you from being done.

  - #10 – Failure counts as done.

  - #13 – Done is the engine of more.

TIME MGMT PRE-REQS

- You and your boss must have common understanding of:

  - Definition of *"results."*

  - "Minimally acceptable results" for weak links.

- You must understand:

  - What's in your wheelhouse? What activities bring you the most results as defined above?

NOW FOR A SEA STORY

"~~Anything~~ Any Wheelhouse worth doing, is worth doing right." – James Seddon

"Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty…Unless it's a weak link, then get that crap done quickly."
–James Seddon

"We have to do the best we can on Wheelhouses. Plowing quickly through weak links is our sacred human responsibility."
-James Seddon

"Doing the best at this ~~moment~~ Wheelhouse puts you in the best place for the next moment. Doing the best at this weak link is a huge waste of time."
-James Seddon

"**Always do your best on Wheelhouse activities and none other.**"
– Some enlightened teacher somewhere

THE BORG BLUNDER AND VADERBURGERS

- Recognize the Vaderburger when you get it!

- NEVER spend significant % of time to it takes to complete a task resisting its existence.

- Rather
  - Rapidly recognize it as weak link that you can't eliminate.
  - Rapidly apply the other techniques.

ACTUAL WARTIME MOTIVATIONAL POSTER

Focus Tools

- Work in cycles with a timer
  - Focused (on either Wheelhouse or Weaklink)
  - Collaborative
  - Breaks

- Pomodoro Technique
  - 25 minute "Pomodoro" intervals with regular breaks (short and long)

MORE TIME MGMT TOOLS

- Microplanning

  - Microplan for "Submit budget"

    - Read Alison's email carefully
    - Send call for inputs to subordinate staff
    - Review last year's input
    - Open Finance's templates and understand them
    - Make scratch copy to work on
    - Begin inputs
    - Review with boss
    - Make final edits in Finance's copy

EVEN MORE TIME MGMT TOOLS

- During focus time, DESTROY DISTRACTIONS

  - Turn off email

  - Headphones

  - Do not disturb signs

  - Park "oh yeah" thoughts in a log

CALENDAR

- Limit 50% scheduled meetings with others

- Schedule your needed focus time
  - Work on project A
  - Write report X

EMAIL

- Destroy the "Inbox as Todo List."

- "Email" is now an activity/pomodoro that is:
  - Timed.
  - Focused.

  - You are focused and engaged on only ONE of the following activities:

    - Reviewing "new" emails?
    - Or working "previously prioritized" emails.

THE "REVIEW NEW EMAILS" CYCLE

- "Review new emails" Pomodoro:

  - Scanned quickly for decision
    - Wheelhouse or Weak Link?
    - Complete in 2 minutes? Then do it.
    - If not, file/categorize/color/organize it by priority (not date).

THE WORK PRIORITIZED EMAILS CYCLE

- "Work prioritized email" pomodoro:

  - Listed and addressed in order of priority, not date
  - Read carefully once.
  - Respond to it in that pomodoro if possible.
  - Microplan / transfer to your separate do list / schedule time to focus on it.

TIME MGMT CHEAT SHEET

- Wheelhouse?
  - Do your best work.
  - Take the time needed.
  - Ace it.

- Weak link?
  - Finish it faster.
  - Reduce scope.
  - Reduce quality. Goal="Minimum Acceptable."
  - Delegate if appropriate.
  - Eliminate it altogether.

- Cult of Done Manifesto.

- The Borg Blunder and Vaderburgers
  - Recognize quickly when resistance is futile.

- Pomodoro Timed Cycles.

- Microplanning.

- Destroy distractions during focus
  - Park important distractions in log.

- 50% rule on calendaring.

- Email
  - Treat as two types of pomodoro:
    - Review new
    - Act on previously prioritized
  - Scan once: Act or file.
  - Sort/act by priority, not date.