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Karen Mardahl describes a working day with KEMAR in Denmark

The alarm on my iPhone starts my workday. I eat my breakfast in front of my iMac, while checking mails and Twitter streams.

I resist the cat's attempt to distract me as I walk out the door to make all the right connections for my commute: a light-rail, two trains, and a bus. Audiobooks are my travel companion for the one-hour trip and I review them on Goodreads.com.

The first thing I do at work is 'punch' the time clock. Yes, I work in a factory, although it doesn't look like it. I sit in the Sales and Marketing department. My colleagues in Production (about half of the employees) assemble our products, primarily acoustical measuring microphones. My favourite product is the manikin called KEMAR, which is used for testing hearing protection devices, hearing aids, microphones in cell phones, and much, much more. I had to take my photo with KEMAR!

I don't think I have had a typical day since I started at G.R.A.S in January. My colleague, Ole, was hired on a part-time basis in late 2010 to dash off a few urgent manuals; he was the first technical author in the company for a while. I was hired on a full-time basis to write documentation, but also to bring order to chaos!

I need to review my work for our new website. We are preparing all the content in advance. With all the projects tempting me with so many details, I should dig out the notes from my project management course last

year to help me make a better schedule for my time.

There is no online help in my world; we only have manuals that are printed for shipment, as well as some that are stored online as PDFs. The work on our website upgrade is opening doors in many new directions. This is where content strategy fits in so nicely — and I emphasise the word **strategy**.

Our graphic designer is reviewing my work on an InDesign template for manuals, but I'm already using it for my current project. I converted Ole's project to the new template, and now he is revealing some oversights as he adds new material to the document. Oops!

We have the privilege of working with the company's founder, a pioneer in the field of acoustics. At 85, he still comes to work everyday. He loves it when we interview him for information. Our first interview attempt was a bit of a failure, however. Our note-taking skills couldn't cope with a sharp mind containing more than 60 years of accumulated acoustics wisdom, so Ole bought a recorder for our next session! We need the help of technology to grasp wisdom that has been honed over the decades to beautifully crafted and concise gems of wisdom.

Whenever I encounter an issue with terminology or styles, I record it in our style guide or in a private log in the "I'm not sure where this should go yet" category. My trusty paper notebook contains notes from meetings and to-do lists, but I've also turned it into a journal of what I am doing. I stopped doing it for about a month, until I discovered how helpful it really was for helping me remember what I'm doing and what I want to do, as well as recalling all the ideas and inspiration I get.

Lunch is an obvious constant in my workday, but so is gymnastics. Following the tradition of many factories in Denmark, quite a few of us gather for a 15-minute exercise session each day at 11. I can highly recommend you trying to implement that at your workplace. It's perfect for someone working on the computer all day long!

Some days, I squeeze in time to read some articles. I still subscribe to blogs and websites via their RSS feeds so I can read them at my leisure in Google Reader. The people I follow on Twitter share great article recommendations, too, so my Twitter stream or searching

on Twitter is an equally reliable source of inspiration. I look for general articles on planning or strategy, as well as tool-specific articles that can help me out of a bind. If I don't read them at work, I'll read them at home.

Previously, I had only one meeting a week and that was with the entire department. Recently, I started a new routine: meeting with my technical author colleague and the marketing manager. The way we work, it is natural for the three of us to meet to discuss our projects. We sit next to each other in an open office, but setting aside time to meet in a meeting room is truly productive. So far, our sessions have been brainstorming sessions extending far beyond the half-hour I allocated. They have all proved to be constructive and valuable, and very philosophical.

Now that the warm weather has come to Denmark, I walk to the train station at the end of my workday. It's a lovely 25-minute walk and the perfect activity after a day at my desk. A few minutes into my walk, I pass five large stones in a circle. Those stones excite my imagination; they mark the spot where the elders of the surrounding farms met for centuries in a form of local government, sitting in a circle on very similar stones.

If I have no lecture, workshop, or movie in my calendar, I head for home after work. After dinner, it's computer time: checking e-mails and tweets or possibly writing a blog post. With my current schedule, I'll soon start planning for two presentations I'm giving in August and September.

Often, I just want to go to sleep when I come home after all the still-new impressions from work! As for writing, I have been in my job for four months. Despite my years of experience, I naively thought I would have matters under control by now. There are so many areas to tackle that some days feel like my first day on the job again. I find this exciting and a great stimulation to my mind and my skills. I am grateful to have colleagues, a boss, and a workplace that likes that attitude. **C**

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