

What to do with a stream?

§ At the end of the day you'll have a record of your activities in your stream, because you've been adding documents to the stream (one click each) all day long. (Which documents? See below.)

§ Recall that, onscreen, your stream looks like a book as you flip pages, or you can tunnel through it, or see it as a film-strip.

§ Using a pad (eg), you review the day by sliding a finger over the stream, glancing at each document as it passes, stopping if you need to (to answer mail or look at a video clip, say).

§ It's important that you be able to review the past on-stream easily (no clicks) using any device. Even more important, you can review the past by checking one app (or one place): no need to dip into separate software worlds (mailer, browser, file system and so on) and piece together the story-line yourself.

§ On the weekend, when you travel etc you can review past weeks: glide right through them.

§ To prepare for a meeting with Schwartz, focus your stream on Schwartz (i.e. search on "Schwartz"), and flip through the resulting Schwartz-stream: every document of any kind that mentions Schwartz. In short,

§ *Use your private lifestream to review the past (finishing what's incomplete), and prepare the future.* (What about public elements on your stream? See below.)

Which documents?

§ What goes into the stream? Say you have meetings or phonecalls much of the day. In the morning you add to the stream (one click) every email that's important (that you might want to look at again), every email you want to answer but don't have time to; every attachment that's interesting; every web page, photo or video that arrives in email and looks interesting or important. Cost per document is one click, so you knock documents into your stream quickly, barely thinking.

§ An important email with three attachments enters the stream as four elements: each attachment is a separate stream element. Thus you can search and browse attachments same as other documents.

§ To prepare for a meeting, focus your stream on the attendees or the topic. During the meeting dash off notes straight into the stream. After the meeting, maybe dictate a summary straight into the stream.

§ If you're writing a report, grab the most recent draft from the stream. (Click the doc's "download" or "work on it" button.) Dump your new draft into the stream. The history of anything you write is in the stream.

§ As you sit back or read in bed at end of day, you can review and complete the day by sliding through the stream. Your stream for this day holds a combination of emails, notes you've written or spoken, documents people have sent or you've created, web pages, videos and other "look-at-this" material.

§ To review the day, you don't need to go to your mailer (and open attachments or follow links), don't need your file system or desktop to check documents, don't need your note-pad or what-have-you to check notes and memos to yourself. It's all in the stream. Slide right through it.

§ Answer emails you didn't have time for, check the web pages and videos, return phone calls or (if it's too late) put a stream-note into tomorrow morning so you'll remember. (Add a note to the stream's future at "9AM tomorrow" or just "tomorrow morning.")

§ To review your online material for a meeting, likewise: you don't need to pull documents from all over, so you won't forget any. Using the stream, you get a documentary history of "Schwartz" or "The Manhattan Project" or anything you like.

§ So far I've only referred to private elements of your stream. But sometimes you mark a document "public," and other people do too.

What about public elements on your stream?

§ The stream isn't only a documentary history of your life; it's also a publishing medium. (One-click publishing.) The history of your life often intersects the

sequence of items you want to publish. News or comments from your friends show up in the record of your own life, in realtime.

§ If you work with five other people in your office, group, etc, each one has a stream, and marks certain stream-elements “public.” If you blend these six streams together (yours included), you get a new stream. You can name it (“work group stream”) and add this new stream to your own stream.

§ When you have a document, web page video etc you want everyone to see, mark it “public”; it shows up on the other group member’s lifestreams the same time you put it on yours.

§ When you have a note for the group (“let’s meet at 10,” “where’s Schwartz?”, written or spoken), put it on your stream.

§ Now your stream isn’t just an archive or memory; it’s a realtime communication channel. Keep up with your group by watching the stream.

§ A family can do the same thing to share photos, videos and so on, and realtime messages.

§ Now you see posts from your work group or family as they happen. You can turn a stream off—not see family posts during the day—using search: just search for everything that’s not the family-stream; and the family posts go away.

§ But they’re still in your stream; you can turn family on, and go back to see what you missed, whenever you like.

§ You can also make quick, ad hoc blends. Ten people sit around a table for a meeting. They blend their streams (i.e. the public elements in their streams); they all tune in this new stream or meeting channel.

§ Participants put their digital business cards on the stream, or presentations, reports, memos--anything that’s part of the meeting. When the meeting is over you can dissolve the stream.

§ But the meeting remains on your lifestream. You can always go back and flip through it.

§ Or you can keep the meeting-stream around and turn it on again the next time the group convenes. The stream becomes a record of this project, committee, working group.

§ Someone who joins the project later can include the meeting-stream in his own, rewind to the start and slide through the group's stream up to the present, to find out what he's missed.

Public Streams

§ Sometimes a whole stream is public (not just selected elements).

§ If you publish a newspaper, the obvious form for the digital version is a stream. Newspapers should be organized by time (in stream-form), not space. When you look at a standard web page, you have no way to tell what's new, even if it's updated frequently. When you look at a stream, you know immediately what's new or recent (or coming up in the future).

§ You can follow a story back in time as far as you like. Here's what happened to Schwartzco today, but what about last week, last year, 1998? 1898? Focus the stream on Schwartzco and rewind *ad lib*.

§ Follow the news in realtime by following the news-stream.

§ You don't need to look at the newspaper's website; blend the news-stream into your own stream.

§ Or blend lots of newspapers together and follow them all simultaneously.

§ Before you blend in some newspaper, you can focus it on topics that interest you and leave the rest out. (Same way you focus any stream: using search.)

§ People can follow you by following your lifestream: blending your lifestream into theirs. (Of course they only see the public part of your stream.)

§ In other words the stream is your website or blog as well as your news-feed (re the outside world and the groups you care about), as well as your personal diary or archive. By watching the stream, you watch everything.

§ Notice that a pad or laptop tuned to your stream is a perfect all-in-one bedside-table device for keeping an eye on things (especially if all your email is copied into your stream automatically, and you've dumped all your MP3s into your stream so you can listen to music—and so on.)

§ Anyone can start a commercial stream and offer it to the public. All streams work the same way, are browsed the same way and focused the same way. All streams can be blended; all can be followed using any device.

§ Important: I'm describing a full-featured stream. We only do a piece of it during year one; but it can be useful to the public long before it's full-fledged.