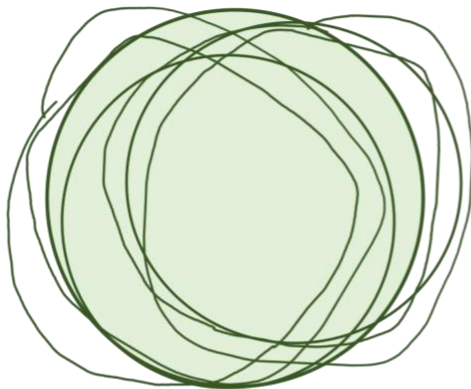


Breaking the cycle of work and rework

People in publicly funded organisations tend to work iteratively, through many rounds of drafting and rework. A lot of effort is consumed for a lot of people to produce and then refine quick, dirty, or otherwise dodgy early drafts into usable products. Getting it wrong a few times is accepted and expected as part of the process. Everyone feels so rushed that they never have time to get things right the first time, but somehow always find time to do it twice.

Most people learn research and drafting skills in education systems that emphasise individual effort. Students write their own papers and receive feedback and marks from teachers. Marks are the key variable, and students learn to maximise them by applying feedback and taking more time to revise early drafts.

Most people carry this approach into their professional lives, and most publicly funded organisations reinforce it. Individuals produce and polish complete drafts, then submit those drafts to the next person up the chain. If the work is not urgent, the next person gives feedback to inform another round of drafting by the author. If it is urgent, they have to revise the document themselves to meet their standards and submit it to the next person in the chain, who often does the same thing.



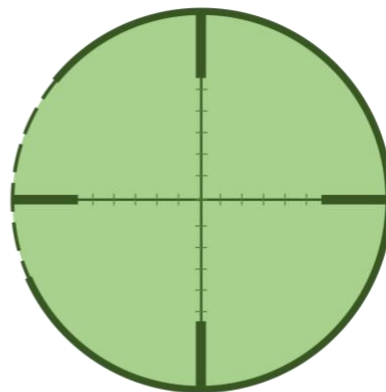
without a clear plan, 'drafting' means a series of incomplete, inaccurate, and frustrating iterations through multiple cycles of rework

Investing a small amount of time up front to make and agree a plan with key contributors and approvers can reduce the individual and collective time, energy, and frustration involved in producing usable outputs. Identifying critical information and contributions first, and agreeing how and when an author will access them, empowers authors to produce drafts that need little, if any, rework. A shared plan helps contributors work together to test ideas and fill information gaps progressively, rather than sequentially.

The better the draft submitted by an author, the less time others need to invest in reworking subsequent drafts. Outputs are finalised faster, and everyone can move on to more valuable work.

People drafting alone seldom have access to all the information they need, which may be held by other people or teams. Information gaps can lead to drafts being written off for poor quality, rather than poor collaboration on the purpose, context, and content. Producing documents by having everyone take a turn at rewriting them tends to take longer than it would to agree a plan up front and gather the relevant information so the author can produce a good draft.

Relying on extensive and inefficient rework to get things right wastes time and effort that could be used for more valuable work. Getting stuck in loops of rework time after time, or having drafts dismissed as poor and heavily revised by others, is discouraging and frustrating for workers, managers, and executives.



with a clear plan, 'drafting' means a single pass of gathering, analysing, and setting out the right information in the right way

Agreeing up front the purpose, context, and content of an important output reduces, or even eliminates errors and information gaps before the author submits their first draft. Being clear about the key information required, and who holds it, means that authors are not judged unfairly for omitting information they never had. It also reduces the need for many rewrites from many different people just to get the content right.

Getting the facts right the first time reduces effort, time pressure and frustration for everyone. Executives no longer need to rush urgent rewrites, and authors no longer need to redraft many times from feedback that comes only after a draft is complete. We can break the cycle of work and rework by taking a little time to do it right, instead of taking even more time to do it twice.