Checking metrics doesn't change anything

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Much of the metric-checking that I have the impulse to do this morning—and previously would have just gone and done—doesn't really make any difference. So instead of doing it, I've been sitting around, thinking about it.

Checking my finances; why do that? They'll be there just the same, and everything is even on autopay, so I could (and probably should) go months without looking. Checking my investments; why do that? Similarly, I'll gain or lose money just the same, because my habit is to leave them alone. Checking my Twitter; why do that? I know that two more quotes have been posted since I last checked (the bot I set up yesterday is well-tested), that there are enough left in the queue for at least two or three days, and that they've probably gotten some likes. Checking my website analytics; why do that? All I would get is dopamine, because all the statistics are accessible later; people are seeing or not seeing my writing just the same, regardless of my awareness of their actions.

This habit of mine—to *check metrics* over and over—is just wasteful. **It uses up my time and my limited mental energy, giving me only hits of dopamine, and affecting no outcomes whatsoever.** The proper approach is to produce and blindly publish, checking back only when I actually want to get meaningful feedback, so that I can adapt my behavior. Meanwhile, I should use my hours and brain cycles meaningfully: thinking about and understanding the world, touching it with high amounts of leverage in premeditated ways, enjoying life, and working on more things (writing or otherwise) that push the boundaries of my capabilities.

I think of Jordan Mechner's experience publishing video games in the 1980s, as

accounted in "The Making of Prince of Persia." In a pre-Internet age, he made one game at a time—then only tracked its performance by occasionally seeing charts in newspapers, and by the royalty check he received every month! How great a contrast to today: if I were to make a game with my current habits, I'd be checking its metrics every three hours. But refreshing wouldn't make it succeed more.

I also think of "The Goal," which argues against automation for its own sake. If the mechanization of a process does not reduce the amount of resources spent on it, why should it be done? If I check my finances every day, why even bother having them on autopay? The benefit of autopay is that it allows me to *never check* my finances, instead only analyzing them every few months. This frees up my mind; I never have to *think* about money and how it's flowing. But automating it all only to impulsively refresh Wealthfront... well, that doesn't really have a point, does it?

A corollary: **automation is useful to exactly the extent that it eliminates problems, making you think less about something.** If a program doesn't free up time, money, or headspace on net—only sucking up resources—it should be abandoned. (Goodbye, "smart"homes!) And the elegance of its implementation is irrelevant: the only things that matter are

1. how quick it is to get working,
2. how effectively it will continue working into the future, and crucially
3. how effectively it solves a meaningful problem.