memo'd

Discover and share life-changing ideas

GET THE MEMO?

CROWDSOURCED WISDOM AND THE SHAREABLE NOTES REVOLUTION
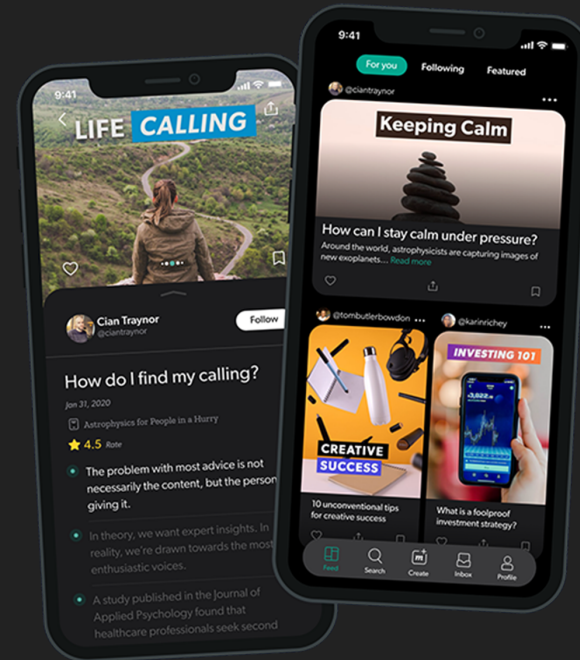
Overview

- **New age**. The emergence of the World Wide Web in the 1990s brought a revolution in knowledge sharing. Platforms such as Google and Wikipedia made information free and abundant.

- **Life online**. The smartphone in the mid-2000s took the trend further. In an explosion of access to content and information, our lives moved online. We went from an age of restricted information, to an age of information overload.

- **At the limit**. We're at the limits of what our minds can organize and absorb. Yet we need to separate the valuable from the noise and elevate human insight.

- **Share success**. There's a permanent demand for clues, discoveries, methods, and insights that can help us succeed in life and work, but much of the world's wisdom is siloed into individual minds. By sharing what we know, learning becomes a powerful, communal experience.

- **Short form**. Content that is tailor made for mobile devices is how people want to interact with information today. We live in a hyper-connected age, and this trend will only intensify in the years to come.

Shift to short form

- **Too much content**. A 2009 study found that the average American is exposed to or reads 100,000 words a day - whether through text messages, emails, social media, advertisements, subtitles, work documents or books. The figure was growing at 6 percent a year.

- **Not remembered.** In 2020, we are more overwhelmed by information than ever, but remember very little of this text deluge. We binge-read for information, but unless that information sticks, it has no chance of becoming knowledge.

- **Books the answer?** In place of questionably sourced and often incorrect information found on social media, we can read books. But for most people, blocking out time and space to read a long-form book over many hours and days is unrealistic. Books no longer work for many people.

- **Reading time drops**. The Department of Labor's American Time Use Survey from 2003 to 2018 showed declines in the average time Americans spend reading. Among people with advanced degrees it fell from 39 minutes to 28 minutes per day. For the less educated it fell from 18 minutes per day to 8 minutes.

- **Audio the answer?** Some of the reading time has been replaced by the rise of audiobooks, podcasts, and online talks. Audiobooks often run for 10 to 15 hours. Podcasts are shorter, but you may only get one or two pieces of valuable information from an hour or two's listening time. It's not easy to quickly search through an audiobook, a podcast or a TED talk.

- **Book summaries**. The book summary industry has arisen as a way of delivering more knowledge to people with less time and effort. Summaries do take account of the 'TLDR' (Too Long, Didn't Read) problem, but are only a partial solution. They still take a lot of time to read and absorb.

- **Shift to bite-sized**. The science of mnemonics shows us that the brain loves bite-size. Everything can be learned when divided into chunks. If we can break a book or talk down to a few points and share those points, we're more likely to retain, absorb, and make use of the knowledge.

- **Bottom line**: Increased social media use, plus reduced time reading, points to the need for a product or service that helps people **obtain and retain knowledge in a quicker, more convenient way, without being dumbed down.**

- **When knowledge is made succinct, it becomes shareable.** We already put a lot of time and effort into learning. Shouldn't we be able to leverage what we know by easily publishing it for the benefit of all?

Social learning

- **Capture and retain**. Studies show that note-taking helps us retain what we know, as opposed to just consuming content. If something is worth your time, it's worth taking the time to capture it. As the Romans said, *Memorandum est*: "It must be remembered".

- **Share it now**. We should be able to share our notes and insights in real time - whether it's a summary of a book, podcast or talk, a personal manifesto, or the story of a career path or relationship. Yet there is no commonly accepted standard in notes, or easy way to share standardized notes.

- **New tools**. For centuries, memoranda have been a form of public notes that allow people to speak the truth in a succinct way. But memos always had a limited audience. Today, software and constant online connection means memos can be reinvented for the mobile age and shared widely.

- **Platform problem**. Evernote and similar applications are good for writing and storing notes and memos, but not good for sharing. They lack the social or community element.

- **Crowdsourced knowledge**. Learning becomes more powerful and fun when it happens with other people - when we feel we're part of a community whose members wish each other to grow.

- **Dead threads**. Twitter allows people to publish their notes as "threads", but Twitter wasn't designed for content longer than a tweet. Threads can be hard to find, save, organize. And they're usually drowned out by political and other "trending" off-topic noise.

Can notes be reinvented?

- **Power of notes.** Since the dawn of writing, we've always taken notes. Centuries on, it's still the best way of retaining knowledge. A note requires us to absorb, interpret, and mentally order what we've just learned.

- **Advent of printing**. Until the advent of printing 500 years ago, the small number of books in circulation meant that no-one could be overwhelmed by content or knowledge.

- **Knowledge maps**. After the invention of printing, the literate person had to make sense of many more books and publications, and to form their own mental knowledge maps. Keeping notes helped restore order and clarity in curious minds.

- **Commonplace book**. The "commonplace book" or "wisdom book" served this purpose. These personal scrapbooks were a way to compile and own your knowledge. They included quotes, letters, poems, proverbs, prayers, formulas, and everyday things like recipes.

- **Content explosion**. The last 20 years have been analogous to the decades following Gutenberg's invention of the printing press: that is, an explosion in the amount of content that has to be absorbed by the average person.

- **Solution**. At Memo'd, we started to imagine a commonplace book for the 21st century, with instant, searchable access to your ideas and learnings. Your accumulated knowledge becomes accessible, portable, and all in one place.

- **Shareable notes**. Current note-taking utilities (Evernote, Notes, Google Keep, etc.) work well, but the *sharing* of notes has still not taken off. Why? They were not designed with community and sharing in mind, and none of these applications produce notes of a standardized length or structure. The result is that notes are often too long, complex, disorganized, off topic and have little communicative power.

- **Make notes public**. Most of the world's notes are private, for personal use. We don't bother to make our notes decipherable by others. But technology now allows our jottings to be created in such a way that they can instantly be read, understood, and enjoyed by others.

- **Lifetime notes**. Data storage and software now enable our important notes and thoughts to be safe and collected in one place forever.

- **Notes reinvented**. The online future is about taking things humans have *always* done and removing any pain points or barriers. When it comes to notes, technology is making them much easier to make, store and share - widely and quickly.

What is the future of writing?

- **The first writing**. In ancient Greece, text could go from left to right or right to left, and was laid down in long blocks without interruption. There was just a short line or symbol to denote a change in speaker or passage (e.g. in a play).

- **Hard to read**. Roman texts were not much easier to read, and the bunched-up, dense nature of text (as seen in illuminated manuscripts) continued into the Middle Ages.

- **Paragraphs invented**. It was only with the invention of typesetting (i.e. the printing press in the Middle Ages) that paragraphs – a block of text marked by an indent, and indicating a new idea or change of pace – became common.

- **The typewriter**. Another evolution came with the typewriter. A quick double tap on the return key gave you a line break. This extra white space between paragraphs was loved by editors and readers alike. With the rise of the internet, clear line breaks and no indenting became the online default.

- **Paragraph problem**. The paragraph enables a sense of flow and story. That's good for fiction, but less ideal for factual writing. Several ideas can be jumbled up together in a single paragraph, or you can get a confusing mixture of statement, commentary, and example.

- **No quick scan**. Another problem with paragraphs: they do not allow you to scan, skip or absorb them quickly.

- **Information blocks**. Robert E. Horn, a Stanford University political scientist, looked at the dysfunctionality of paragraph-based text and wondered: what if there was a rule that said a paragraph or a sentence could only contain *one* meaning? They would start to become "information blocks".

- **What's the point?** Horn's initial method in creating information blocks was to cut apart books. He would take a textbook and cut out individual sentences. He'd then ask: "What function is this sentence performing?"

- **No fluff**. By taking out transition phrases like "Therefore", "For example", and "This is important because", Horn created raw information that he could put into categories.

- **Label your points**. By labeling or giving a heading to every block of information, you can scan text much quicker. The reader takes in only what really matters to them.

- **Writing in the 21st century.** The paragraph still has a future in things like novels and some essays. For most writing, the information block or text cell is a much better way of recording, presenting and retaining information. This is how writing will look in the 21st century.

- **Bye bye paragraph**: The traditional paragraph is not well suited to the way people read and consume information in the online age. We need to both scan things more quickly and retain more information.

- **Hello info blocks**. Text and writing are changing. Expect to see the amorphous paragraph slowly replaced by labeled, succinct, single-idea "information blocks".

memo'd
Discover and share life-changing ideas

The Memo'd solution

- **New space**. We've only scratched the surface in terms of people's unique insights. They need a better space to express themselves.

- **Knowledge goes social**. We've built Memo'd, a "social knowledge" platform, for this purpose. Users offer each other their best ideas to advance in life and work. It's crowdsourced wisdom for the online age.

- **"Memos"** are the basic unit of communication on Memo'd. They fill a gap in content length and depth, sitting between ultra short form (e.g. Twitter) and long form (e.g. articles, podcasts, books).

- **Writing revolutionized**. On Memo'd, Robert E. Horn's "information blocks" become the individual points or cells of a 10-point Memo. Users are encouraged to label each point with a subheading, or bold the idea being presented in each point. A strict character limit per point means needless words and transition phases are minimized.

- **Organized ideas = creativity**. The more ideas we capture, the more intelligence we have at our disposal. The more we organize those ideas, the more creative we become. Information does not become knowledge unless it is organized for future retrieval and use.

- **Retention is everything**. Most of us don't put any effort into retaining information. We just hope that the important stuff will naturally stick in our memory. This is a mistake that puts us at a competitive disadvantage in our career and life.

- **Notes revolution**. At Memo'd, we wanted to take an ancient activity - note taking - and dramatically increase its power and impact for the needs of people in the 21st century.

- **Say it in 10**. To do this, we created a unique 10-point structure for notes posted on the Memo'd platform. By putting strict limits on each set of notes, we aimed to increase their power, clarity and shareability.

memo'd

Discover and share life-changing ideas

- **Noting with aim of sharing**. The notes protocol on Memo'd means that users take notes with the thought of how they will present once published - in the same way that you take photos with the thought of putting them on Instagram.

- **How it works**. Users post 10-point, 20-point or 30-point Memos on a subject of their choosing. They can upload accompanying images.

- Followers can like or share Memos, and interact with creators. Thousands of creator-follower interactions, and interactions among followers, create a **social knowledge community**.

- The highly **standardized 10-bullet point format** for creating and publishing Memos includes a strict character limit. This allows content volume to grow quicker and travel faster. Standardization is the key ingredient for high distribution velocity.

- Memo'd is designed to **solve the problem of information retention**. The best way to retain what you know is to record and share it.

- On Memo'd you can share, store or publish your knowledge or ideas, and learn from others. The end result is a **searchable depositary of distilled knowledge**, providing a powerful external memory or second self.

- The Memo'd platform covers 1) **Derived content** - summarization and analysis mined from original sources such as books and talks; and 2) **Original Memos -** based on the unique insights of users, practitioners and experts.

- **Instagram for notes**. In terms of the structure of Memos, the closest existing format is the Twitter thread. But Twitter is problematic for many people (see below). Memo'd takes the idea of threads and expands it. It can be seen as a "Pinterest for notes" or an "Instagram for notes and ideas".

- **Casual learning**. Memo'd takes advantage of the rise of e-learning to provide non-formal or casual learning for users on specific topics, based on its library of Memos on book and other content.

- **Knowledge for our time**. By transforming this knowledge into usable small pieces, Memo'd follows the scientific research: more people can have much greater knowledge if they have better tools, and if learning is integrated into their daily online habits.

- In the App Store categories, Memo'd is a **combination of productivity and education tools**.

- Memo'd is **ad-free, and there are no subscriptions**. Creators earn money via tips and recurring donations from users. Memo'd takes a commission on each tip/donation.

- **Bottom line**: Memo'd allows users to share thousands of new tips and ideas each day. It's a community of people who want to advance in work and life, and to express their best ideas and learnings in a dedicated knowledge space that's different to traditional social media.

Beyond Twitter

- **Constant connection**. In 2020, 3.91 billion people use social media, or close to 50% of the world's population. Sixty percent of these users say they are constantly connected.

- **Platform winners**. The average daily time by platform is: Facebook (58 mins), Instagram (53 mins), YouTube (40 mins), TikTok (52 mins), Snapchat (35 mins), and Twitter (10 mins).

- **Impact**. Twitter's impact on the media is larger than the size of its actual user base. Among the major social media platforms, Twitter is dwarfed by Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, and beaten even by Reddit and Pinterest in terms of active users.

- **User reach**. Only 3% of the world's population uses Twitter, and only 20% of Americans (compared with 73% on YouTube and 69% on Facebook).

memo'd

Discover and share life-changing ideas

Reasons people are turned off by Twitter:

- Too political or noisy
- Too much personal attack and trolling
- Hard to get traction or followers (top accounts create 90% of tweets)
- Low network effect (my friends don't use Twitter)
- Clunky - can be difficult to navigate and create threads
- Too minute-by-minute and ephemeral
- "Influencers" dominate: vertical rather than horizontal learning

Memo'd addresses these pain points to provide a very different offering:

- Focus on **positive, long shelf-life content** that helps people succeed in life and work e.g. money, business, relationships, psychology, health
- **"Rules of civility"** - discussion of ideas is welcomed, personal attacks can lead to account suspension
- **"Social knowledge" platform** as opposed to purely social. Users work for the mutual advance of other users, building a knowledge ecosystem over time.
- **Cutting edge features** for seamless content creation, browsing, and communication. Messaging feature is easier to use and more prominent than on Twitter.
- The nature of Twitter is ephemerality. In contrast, Memo'd doesn't prioritize content by its timeliness, but rather by its relevance to the user. **Timeless wisdom** based on user interest is prioritized over fleeting daily news.
- We make it **easy to save content so users can accrue a lifetime depository of wisdom** in one place.

memo'd
Discover and share life-changing ideas

Summary

- Humans are novelty seeking creatures, in a perennial quest to find **secrets and shortcuts** to be absolutely and relatively better off.

- **Unlock the wisdom**. There's a vast pool of talented people with special insights into various topics and unique know-how.

- A second wave of online platforms will empower these individuals to break down their knowledge for the benefit of all - to **share their secrets and shortcuts for life and work**.

- **Memo'd leverages the wisdom of the crowds** so that more people benefit from a collective pool of wisdom. Memo'd borrows some of the elements of social media to create a **"social knowledge"** environment.

- **Magnify impact**. Sharing what we know compounds the impact of our knowledge and motivates us to produce more and better learnings to benefit others.

- **Clear structure**. For this to happen, chunks of knowledge must be *standardized*. If the expression of knowledge was restricted to, say, a simple 10-point structure, it would be clarified and concentrated - and therefore become much more shareable.

- The noting down of important information for distribution and retention has been a core part of civilization for centuries. Memo'd reinvents **how notes are created, discovered and distributed** for the online age.

- In an age of time pressures and content consumption via small devices, there is a **shift to shorter form content**. The nature of writing itself is changing. We are seeing a shift from the paragraph to the information block or text cell.

Discover and share life-changing ideas

- Humanity has cycled through the oral tradition, drama, books, and more recently films and podcasts to convey unique insights. The 10-point Memo is a **new means for people to express themselves**.

- With its mobile-first, short-form expositions of books, talks, documents, events and podcasts, plus revelatory insights into how people have succeeded in life and work, Memo'd seeks to **change the way people get inspiration and knowledge**.

- **Scannable, shareable knowledge**. Memos help distil the essence of a topic, issue or experience. When put into easily scannable units, they can be widely shared.

- As a **platform for instant note publication**, Memo'd allows users to create a personal depository of knowledge and wisdom. One's best notes, quotes, and insights are in one place, and in one click that knowledge can be conveyed to others.

- Twitter is too newsy and noisy, and Pinterest and Instagram are focused on the visual. Memo'd carries many of the attractions and psychological power of social media platforms, yet its **emphasis is on personal growth and the spread of knowledge**.

- **Human again**. Memo'd articulates shifts in writing and note-taking in a single platform, letting human insight once again reign over a stream of mere data. Knowledge is more powerful when it's made social.