Day 0.8 — The Fuel for the Machine

At 3:33 a.m., eight months into Hedegreen Research, Dennis asks what it would take to earn a living from the abilities he has developed through the work.

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Eight months of Hedegreen Research, and the cost of keeping the person behind it going.

It is 3:33 in the morning, and I am still working on an article about looking after the person doing the work.

Apparently, the operator has not read the maintenance manual.

On 20 March, I started Hedegreen Research because I needed somewhere for my questions to go. I did not have a business plan or a salary waiting at the other end. I wanted to investigate things, build things and put the results somewhere people could find them. I thought I would see what happened.

What happened is that I found work I genuinely enjoy. Now I have to find out whether the abilities I have been developing through it could ever earn me a living.

A system for almost everything

Over these eight months, I have built ways to collect ideas, organise research, track unfinished work, review claims and publish results. Some parts are automated. Others are still held together by my attention. Version 3 is not out yet, and I am not ready to point people towards individual tools as proof of what I can do. There is still work to finish and test.

I have learned that making a system is not the same as making it reliable. A backlog can remember a question, but it cannot decide whether the question deserves another week. A review process can expose an error, but somebody still has to accept the correction. Automation can reduce repetitive work, but it does not remove responsibility.

And there is one dependency I have not designed away: me. I can put almost anything into a system. I cannot guarantee that I will wake up with the same energy every morning, or that the sensible thing will be the thing I actually do. Some days I work for hours without noticing the time. Other days I know what needs doing and still cannot get started.

That is not a particularly impressive feature of the machine. It is, however, an honest description of its operator.

The part I did not want to stop

I have never had a conventional job. Much of my adult life has involved trying to work out where my abilities fit into a world that usually asks for qualifications, experience and a recognisable job title before it asks what somebody can actually do.

For eight months, I did something different. I stopped waiting for a task to be assigned and gave myself work instead. I followed questions because they interested me. I took apart arguments, built small instruments, made mistakes, revised them and opened new questions along the way.

I have enjoyed it. Not every hour, and certainly not every piece of administration, but enough that I keep coming back. That matters more to me than the publication count.

It also creates an uncomfortable distinction. Enjoying the work does not make it economically valuable. Producing a lot of material does not prove that any particular piece is good. An archive is not a payslip.

I do not want to confuse those things. I want to find out what the work actually demonstrates, and whether anyone needs the person capable of doing it.

What the machine runs on

Hedegreen Research uses electricity, servers, software and the occasional paid service. But those are not its most important running costs. The person behind it needs somewhere to live, food to eat, rest, and enough stability to think beyond the next bill.

Sometimes it feels as though half the month goes into finding the fuel for the other half. That is not a measured statistic. It is what the month feels like when earning enough to get by repeatedly interrupts the work I would rather be doing.

And the cost is not just the hours spent earning money. It is the attention that goes with them: planning around shortages, calculating what can wait, and knowing that a quiet afternoon is not always a free afternoon.

There is an irony in spending so much time researching how technology might give people hours back while struggling to protect my own. I can write about saved hours. I cannot pay the rent with them.

More financial stability would not necessarily mean twice as many papers or twice as many tools. It might mean better decisions. More finished work. More sleep. Or simply being able to take a day off without feeling that I have borrowed it from next week.

The machine does not need a perfect operator. It needs an operator whose life can sustain the work.

Another kind of examination

I have an exam coming up. After the exam, I may apply to study computer science. That is a sensible path towards skills and financial stability. It could also mean that Hedegreen Research becomes something I do half-time, when full-time is what I would choose.

I am not against studying. There are things I need to learn, and a qualification may open doors that my work alone has not opened. But it is strange to have spent eight months finding something I want to spend my days doing, only to face the prospect of having less time to do it.

I have sent job applications too. So far, none has led to an interview. That is the result, but it is not yet an explanation. Perhaps I have applied for the wrong roles. Perhaps I have not communicated my abilities well enough. Perhaps I lack something employers need. I do not know, and silence does not tell me which answer is correct.

I am not asking somebody to buy Hedegreen Research. The research can remain public, and the project does not have to turn into a product catalogue to matter.

What I want to know is whether a research group, a software team, an organisation or another employer could use my abilities. Can I take a messy question and turn it into something testable? Can I build systems, identify weak points and keep improving them? Are those abilities worth paying for somewhere outside my own project?

I have tried to demonstrate them in public. When V3 is ready, there will be more to examine. For now, I would rather finish that work than pretend the unfinished parts are already a portfolio.

The answer will have to come from more than my own confidence in what I have made. It will require other people to look at the work, challenge it and decide whether it is useful to them.

Eight months, not an answer

I owe myself a serious attempt to find out whether the abilities behind that work have a place in the world. I have spent years trying to show what I can do. For the past eight months, I have finally had something tangible to point to, even if it is still unfinished.

I am skeptical that it will turn into an income. I can also see possibilities that I could not see in March. Those statements do not cancel each other out.

Maybe I will study and keep Hedegreen Research alive in the hours left over. Maybe someone will give me a chance to use these abilities professionally. Maybe I will discover that I need to change how I present my work, or learn something I have been avoiding. I cannot settle those questions in an anniversary article.

I know something simpler: I want to continue. And I would like to spend less of my life finding the fuel, so I can spend more of it doing the work — and occasionally not working at all.

Eight months in, I still do not know how that happens. For tonight, though, there is one maintenance task I can actually finish.

Go to sleep.

RELATION MEMORY

CONTINUES Day 007 — Licensed to Influence · October asked who chooses the mission. The November checkpoint asks what it takes for the person doing the work to keep going.

RETURNS TO Day 0 — Starting Without a Filter · The founding entry of 20 March 2026 anchors the eight-month reflection.

RETURNS TO Where Did the Saved Hours Go? · The author returns to saved hours through the time it takes to support his own work.

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