040-getting-things-done-gtd-clarify-process-productivitycast...

📅 Sun, 10/07 02:10PM 🕐 46:37

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

clarifying, inbox, people, processing, action, gtd, item, david allen, productivity, physical, capture, process, email, book, paper, talk, task, day, important, email inbox

SPEAKERS

Art Gelwicks, Voiceover Artist, Raymond Sidney-Smith, Francis Wade, Augusto Pinaud

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Voiceover Artist 00:00

Are you ready to manage your work and personal world better to live a fulfilling productive life? Then you've come to the right place productivity cast the weekly show about all things productivity here your hosts, Ray Sidney-Smith and Augusto Pinaud with Francis Wade and Art Gelwicks

Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:19

Welcome back everybody to productivity cast the weekly show about all things personal productivity I'm recently Smith i'm joined with my co host Augusto Pinaud. How's it going? Good morning, Francis Wade and Art Gelwicks. How are you gentlemen? Great. I'm doing well, we are going to be talking about the second stage of the workflow diagram within getting things done by David Allen. And this is the stage that he calls processing and the first edition or clarifying in the second edition. And so for the rest of our discussion today, just know that we may note processing or clarifying as, as the terms sort of equally, okay, so I wanted to start off the discussion with how each of us defines the term processing or clarifying in the context of GTD, what we remember, say, from what David Allen told us, it was in in our readings of the book, and how we determine or define that in our practices today, and our productivity systems today, because they obviously change over time, I don't think that the term processor clarify is immutable, just because over time, the way in which

we do it is so fundamentally different, because if we do it, and we do it well, long enough, it changes, we become better at it. And therefore processing clarifying becomes a different process for each of us. And so I'm open to discussion on that as well. But let's start off with defining processing or clarifying,

Augusto Pinaud 01:45

you know, as I said, you know, that collecting assumption that for me was Oh, super clear, super cool. The processing part to me a lot longer to understand, okay, now, I have old days what I'm going to do, and to really slow down enough so I could really process this stuff, you know, the beginning was like, Okay, well, I get this envelope with papers of new car. Okay, then file and I, my default answer was, when in doubt, file, what produce in many cases was a ridiculous big file cabinet. And me going back to all I forgot to register the car. So good. I knew now where the papers were, that he was a big win to comparing the day before. But I did not really process some of those stuff on some of that stuff, went back to the inbox multiple times, until I understood what that process in mean, and really slow down and ask enough questions to understand what was what the action that I needed to take, so that they never did not come back to the inbox was required. So I think, I think it's a matter of time, it's not incentive collecting is a really easy to understand. Now, clarifying processing, it takes a little bit longer to understand what are the good questions that you need to ask yourself to really get that thing out of the way and to really get that thing moving forward.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 03:30

Francis, how do you define clarifying or processing in your day to day productivity world?

Francis Wade 03:36

Yeah, I see a little bit differently. But it's only really a difference in language I, I can see visua as capturing. But I can't visualize processing or terrifying in terms of it being, like you said, a physical action. In retrospect, before I even knew about GTD, the other system that I I picked up, it led me to think of it as emptying. So that's the term I use in my work is capturing and, and there's empty capturing is putting tasks or time demands into a capture point. And then at some later point, emptying of the boat, removing them. And in the process of emptying these capture points, there is clarifying, processing, prioritizing, deciding, choosing and all these other actions. But I prefer to think of it as emptying a capture point, like an email inbox, leaving it void of commitments once you're done. So that's a lot of seed read differently,

Art Gelwicks 04:41

how about you are, for me, the processing part, or the defining or refining is really a two step process. One is to identify all the stuff I didn't actually capture about something when I initially initially captured because let's be realistic, a lot of times when you start to capture things, you don't get all the details, because you're in a hurry. So the first part of that refinement is making sure you have all the information that you need to add to us to act on that second for me, is to set myself up for processing that item. So not only is it all the information I need about it, but anything that I need to know or that I know I'm going to need to effectively execute on that item, or their related connections or their related things that I need to go look up, is there a piece is there another task that's going to be triggered by this for it to be able to be successfully completed. So it's, it is a little bit of a cycle that each thing goes through. But it's literally just to make sure that it is set up to be successful when I go to do it.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 05:43

When I think about clarifying and processing, I do appreciate the the new term clarifying over processing. And there there is a minor error in the new version of the of the print edition, which has the workflow diagram. And it shows it says process at the bottom of it. And instead of clarifying, but he he does otherwise talk about it as clarifying throughout the second edition. But and actually that that's a change of perspective. Because before I really liked the term processing, I felt like it was a a, a very physical act. But then I recognize something about the workflow diagram, and GTD which is that you kind of toggle between thought based actions and physical actions. As you go, you as you basically vacillate between these different stages of the workflow, these different skills that you have to do. And so capturing is a physical action. And clarifying is actually all mental action. And so organizing, when we get to next week's discussion, where we talk about organizing, I really start to think about processing is that organizing function is actually the physical placement of of things that you finally identified the next action and the projects for those things. So fo me clarifying is that is really founded on and right within the structure of what David Allen says, which is the the next action principle, and we'll talk about the next action decision decision concept in a little bit. But the idea is, is that as something comes in, you decide what it is. And, and so it's sitting in your inbox, you know, one of the many in boxes that we talked about last week, right? your voicemail, your email inbox, your physical entry on your desk, your mailbox, at home, or at the office, and you now need to decide what it is, you have to, like, really determine, you know, is this a, is this a, an invitation to to a wedding? Is this a mortgage, you know, financing document that tells you that you've been pre approved for X amount of dollars to buy a home, what is it and once you determine what it is, then you can start to make some actions upon it in terms of Okay, well, is this thing

actionable? Well, what is the action, right? If it's Yes, then what is the action, if it's no, then it needs to go into some state of incubation, trash or reference, right. So we know that he needs to go into one of those places. And David Allen, rightfully so puts things into trash, first, incubation, second, and reference, you know, third, and I think that's also very helpful for people kind of take into account. So that's really clarifying. So I want to talk about some of the fundamentals of how we position ourselves for, for good processing, David Allen gives three guidelines. And I'd like to hear from you all about your tips and tricks for being able to do this. But it gets three kind of best practices, I think of them as ideal practices, because because the world is not ideal. So process the top item, first process one item at a time, and never put anything back into n. So basically, he says, whether it's a life over five foot process last in, first out or first in first out process, you'd go from the top item from first you process one at a time. So don't try to corral things into groups or anything else like that, because it becomes more inefficient.

Art Gelwicks 09:08

So there's a greater inefficiency in doing that kind of CO leading in the first place, when if you just process them one by one, you gain greater momentum and never put anything back it did basically touch it once as the old the old adage says he wants you to deal with that thing. That thing, once Do you all have thoughts about those three guidelines and other guidelines that you feel like are helpful to the process of clarifying This is where I start to diverge a little bit with the process outlined in the book, I struggle a little bit with this idea of top item first. And the reason being is because if you think about it from a volumetric standpoint, you can often wind up with things on the bottom that never get gotten to. So what I typically will do, if I had to use the mental equivalent of something I will do first in firs out. So if it's, if it's in, if it were an inbox, a physical inbox, I would grab ahold of everything in the inbox and flip the thing upside down, and then start from there down. Because an inbox is not for prioritization it is for handling incoming traffic. And if something has been sitting in there that long that it's still at the bottom and stays at the bottom, either you're ignoring something very important, and you don't realize that fact, or it's not important at all, and you might as well get rid of it. So that's where I first immediately diverged from that the one thing at a time. Yes, I do definitely agree with that. Because you get into the situation of if you try track tackle everything at once, or multiple things, everything starts to go off the rails never putting anything back into in. Well, that kind of goes without saying a little bit. Because if you take it out, and you haven't done anything with it, and you put it right back in, you really haven't done anything besides waste a bit of time. There's one thing that I add to this list, though, and that's don't actually do anything. There's, there's part of this mindset says that if it's under a two minute item, go ahead and execute it know, there's a time and a place for that stuff. And it's not during the step of clarifying we talk all the time about focus, don't derail yourself by just going off and knocking something off of your list and saying,

Okay, now I'm going to come back and continue to clarify, again, we all know that reset time is longer than what it took to actually do the thing if you have a bunch of things that you can knock off easily. There's different ways to handle that. But don't do things while you're actually trying to clarify what your process or what you're moving through the system. At least that's the way I handle it.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 11:38

I will note that David Allen does talk about the life over five full concept of basically reversing, flipping your in-tray upside down and working from the oldest to the newest, he does clarify his perspective on that. But he he says that if you are going to process your inbox to zero, you know, if you're going to clean it out, it really doesn't matter whether you start from the beginning or from the end. But to your point art, you know, it's really important to recognize that there can be some conflating of prioritization. If you start to either cherry pick items out of out of it, because then you you naturally start to push things to the bottom if you start to prioritize things out. So you have to be very cautious about what you do as it relates to the, to the order in which you process your your inbox. So I appreciate that.

Augusto Pinaud 12:23

I want to make a distinction when when our it says, Well, you don't want things coming back to inbox on and I understand that principle. And I partially agree, you don't want to come back to inbox for the same thing. But as I said earlier, at the beginning, a lot of this stuff I process I filed them and they went back to him books because I could only foreseen the next action. Okay, I could not, I didn't, I was not trained to look at Okay, how I'm never going to see these piece of paper again. Okay, it was more Okay, what needs to be done next? Well, a lot of them came back to inbox I don't think that's a problem that they come back I think it's a problem when they come back for exactly the same thing and that is an important an important distinction and especially on people who is beginning on on this processor is or isn't, hey, has loves has, has fell out of the wagon, and he's coming back and now has everything out of control, hey, paper that he's filed, even when you need to come back, it's much better than a paper laying down on your on your desk. And I think that is important to to see that dissension

Raymond Sidney-Smith 13:40

and that it doesn't get lost the efficacy of your system is such that better to capture it twice, or to put it back into your inbox again, then for it to be lost by taking it out. presuming that

you've taken care of it, because you moved it someplace or what have you. And now that thing is lost, and you dropped the ball on something. So I do appreciate that concept of, of having a little bit of wiggle room. And I and I think we can all agree that a little bit of wiggle room goes a long way. But it can't be too much wiggle room, you know, you you know, you have to you have to kind of Mind the Gap there and and be be cautious of your of your footsteps.

Augusto Pinaud   14:18

I agree on that. The other thing I want to to add in here is on the paper in books, if I'm processing these paper collection, I tend to start last in first out because if I assuming I will have the time to process everything that he seen that in books, if I think now you know what I only have five minutes, I probably will look and do something similar to what art has described, flip it over and start when it goes to digital in books. So aka email, I always go last in first out. And the reason is, may be traveling most of the day, therefore I get on a half more emails that I want to recognize. And it starting from the first one that came in. So first in first out what happened is a lot of that stuff has new information through today has to stuff that may have been resolved. And then I may not need to do anything other than reply a quick good so us for paper, I see the benefit of flip it over. When you don't have the time to cover all the inbox on the digital version, I recommend go exactly the opposite always start from the last out. Because if there were more people, if you weren't the only one copy, they're fine. They're both still in your court. But if there was more people there, it may be solved on you may be processing and stuff that has been already so five emails down the line. So it may be more efficient for the processing time you have.

Francis Wade   16:05

I think that the the biggest challenge isn't in the what you do while you're processing or clarifying. I don't think it's the activity itself. As long as you're committed to getting to empty as long as the destination is the same. I don't think it really matters. Especially in today's world. I don't have an inbox, a paper inbox. But I have multiple capture points, you know, in my life, because I have tasks coming in or or potential tasks coming in. But they're all digital, you know, I don't I don't maintain a physical inbox. I think the book was written at a time when the physical inbox was a reality. And the popular popular tool. But I think folks are moving away from having a physical, you know, paper based inbox, and they're moving to having multiples. So the notion of top down or bottom up those rarely make doesn't really apply because you're forced to have multiple digital in boxes anyway. And you're not going to put them all together and then prioritize them, you're going to go through them one by one, and until they're all empty, ideally. So I think it's, it's become less important. I think

what's more important is what we're about to talk about, which is the challenges that they're facing.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 17:24

And so Francis, I'm curious, I'm going to push back a little bit here, which is to say that many people still do have lots of paper in their world. And maybe this is just a product that you don't, but what do you feel like should be the process for clarifying no pun intended, actually, pun intended? What what is the what is the what is the process there? For people who who are dealing with paper? You know, that's that's coming into their into their space? Do you do you see say that that that the promulgated process or method of GTD is is appropriate? Or should they find some other mechanism like digitizing everything that is paper that's coming in? Or what do you what do you suggest to people,

18:15

I think

Francis Wade 18:17

if it's not, if it's not practical, then they've got to, they've got a neighbor that obviously it's just that the paper inbox for most people is becoming a fraction of the incoming time demands as we're more email. And there is paper, for example, I think back when the book was written, there was probably more of a something of a balance. But no, we're dealing with we're less paper and we're more digital digital notifications and digital triggers of time demands, I think, ultimately, yes, everything will be digitized. And I try to when I'm really being really disciplined, I tried to use my smartphone to take a picture of everything coming in. And if I don't need it, that's right away. And if I need it, I put it away in a folder. And then dealing with the digital copy of it in my sort of day to day dealing, and I only go back to the original, if it's something I have to sign or something I have to maintain. Because it's, there's only one copy of it. But that's just my way of digitizing my world as much as I can, when I travel, I felt like I have to do have to do some version of this, because I can't carry the people with me.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 19:26

And I would agree with you, at least on the digitizing component for purposes of having access to the information even if you need the physical document. In order to finalize a project, I do something very similar, which is I capture almost everything that comes into

even if I you receive, you know, like I recently received a gift card as part of a rebate or something like that. And, you know, I took a picture of the whole thing, right card everything back side of the card. So that I had an image of the little Visa card and the documentation associated with it. Because while I was on the road, I was able to call up, activate the gift card and load it into into my online Amazon account so that I could use the money that was on the card, the physical card, sure I needed if I'm going to make a physical purchase in the real world. But now I have the I have at least half the battle one because I have access to that information. So if I wanted to buy something online, whatever, I can use that that information wherever I am. And I know where that physical thing is. Because I have made sure in the capture process going back to capture, I've made sure that that that thing has a notation inside the note because it's an Evernote that notation that says this is where that thing is. And that's really important that as you're capturing, it's important to think about what what's going to happen in the processing phase, which is okay, what is this and where does it need to live? Well, you also have to identify in that processing stage where you currently have it right. If it's if it's something physically bigger than confit in your in-tray, you need to plant a flag in the sand so you know where to find it. And, and part of that is if you're toggling the digital paper world if you put something someplace basically knowing where you put it, because it's really helpful to have a picture of something. But if you don't know where the physical thing is that you need in the future, it's really inefficient to then have to go looking for those things. I wanted to mention a couple more things before we move along to some of the challenges that people experience in clarifying. And that is the number of in boxes that you have. I really think that as you start clarifying, you start recognizing some of the inefficiencies of the numbers of in boxes that you might have. As I said, at the top, you know, you have your voicemail, and you have your text, message inbox, Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger, you know, you have email, you have your physical mail boxes, and you have your entry on your desk, you have all of these various in boxes. And at some point, you need to decide what is an inbox for you. So, for example, I have said to my clients that they cannot message me on Facebook, there's a very good reason for that I get tons of spam sent to my Facebook account. Because I'm known by people, I just get a lot of catalog garbage just being sent to me in in that in that space. And so therefore, client messages get lost, because I just have I've just turned off from that, quote unquote, other inbox. Has anybody ever seen this, this other inbox, basically Facebook tries to determine what is spam and what's not. And many times my clients are not my Facebook friends. Because the reality is that clients are not Facebook friends, you know, they're not my friends in real life. So why should they be friends on Facebook. And so they're messaging me from outside of outside of being a connection on Facebook. And so they put the people into other inbox and just big spam message. Anyway, my point to all of this is that I've decided that those messages are not an inbox to me, I'm not processing them once, every once in a while, I'm going to select all and delete. And I'm not going to even think about it. And that way, it's a clear delineation between what's an inbox and what's not. And so it allows me to minimize

the number of inbox as I need to process by helping people outside of your productivity system to help you streamline. So you can say to your spouse, or significant other, your children, your parents, and my case, my mom and dad, you know, you have to communicate with me this way, if you want something from me. And then of course, you have to be willing to do it well, on the opposite end, right? You have to communicate with them in the way in which they're willing, they there, they want to be communicated. You know, some people like phone call some people like a text message, some people like an email, whatever. And, you know, I'm just particular about that. But what it does is it creates really a downstream efficiency for me, so that it really helps. You know, one of the things I've done is I've tried to sway people from away from using all of the various chat messaging apps down to the one that I use. And that's not always the case, right, you know, everybody uses the app of their choice. But where people can I ask them to use telegram because telegram is a very competent tool, it's opens free open source software, it's a strong system, and it's easy to connect to. And so why not use the same platform if you're able to. And that way you can, you can minimize and consolidate the number of boxes that you're having to process. Just a thought there. Also, you have to be clarifying usually multiple times per day. And a lot of people don't really think about this. But you kind of go into this thing where it's like, okay, at the end of my business day, I'm going to process my inbox to empty and then you get to your inbox, and you've got 65 items in your inbox. Because you've been forwarding things in there, you've been capturing items, people have been sending you things all day. And now you your email inbox, and your task and boxes is overflowing. So do not at all think that you could just process your inbox once a day, unless you truly only get a couple of items a day in your inbox. And think that you're going to be able to keep a clean system, you need to maintain your system at the level in which the influx is coming in, right. So if you are getting four and five messages an hour, that means that every couple of hours or every three hours, you're going to probably need to be clarifying your inbox to empty every three to four hours, right every two to three hours. That is, so you need to stay up to speed in clarifying as much as the influx of content. And then my only final item is keep mindful of the amount of time you spend clarifying each item, there's a rate of diminishing return at some sort of at some point along the timeline for the outcome of any particular item that you process. So if you start spending too much time doting over the paper of the card you just received well, that's not particularly useful for the fact that the card is some kind of notice that you have an event that you've been invited to deal with the the practical components of it and move on, you can always come back to the paper in a more appropriate time. But processing time should be done to be a swift, minimal use of your time for maximal output. maximal impact. So really think about how much time you are and start track tracking it I think always tracking time is is a good thing. Anyway, those are some of my thoughts in terms of guidelines. Now, I'd like to move on to kind of the, the opposite side of this, which is the challenges people face in determining in processing. Generally, I want to start off with the next action decision, because I think a lot of people have some troubles there,

Augusto Pinaud 26:54

they want to set something before you jump there that you said that is really, really important that he's understand how often that processing need to happen. There was there are times in your life where you are right, one page first thing in the morning, and you are good. And there are other times that you need to be able to see that the craziness of your day to call it in a way require that you do it more often. And the interesting thing is, I have found the opposite. You know, us your life gets more complex as your life gets busier, people tend to then review instead of once a day now once every two days, every three days. Saturday, okay. And they wonder why processing is so difficult? Well, there's two things to to understand. One is, the busier you are and the more craziness you have on your life, the most critical is the next step you are taking. So the more critical is to know that the next step you're taking is the correct one. And the only way to know that are one of the ways to know that is that clarifying step so when your life goes closer to the craziness June need to increase the frequency on when you are processing under mistake people have is thinking because they are now doing it once a week is all I have. I don't have three hours in my day. That's true. But the reality is when you move that process into every hour, okay, you don't need that three hours do you need 10 minutes, you need five minutes, but you need to make sure us craziness increase that your next step is the right step. Because when you have now gracing us on your life, make wrong steps on doing necessary none relevant, low independent, he taught him important things, what happened is you are going to waste a significant amount of time

Raymond Sidney-Smith 29:11

I thoroughly agree. And so moving. Moving along, I'd like to talk about the challenges of clarifying or processing as it relates to GTD and other productivity systems. And within the confines of GTD though, we talked about the next action decision how we come to the point of deciding on what the very next thing is that we should do. And David Allen talks about this from the perspective that if I, if you had a specter looking over your shoulder, they should be able to physically see you doing that thing. So we need to decide on what that thing is. And David, in at least the march 2015 edition of the book, is a fairly good explication of the next action decision and how to get to that point in there. In chapter 12, I wanted to talk about some of these issues, that of how each of us really define the next action in our own worlds. So I will start with you, Francis, how do you how do you define the next action in your world,

Francis Wade 30:13

though, to tell you the truth, this is sort of always puzzled me about GTD, I've never really

understood the big deal. To be honest, I mature away from us, because I'm industrial engineer by training. But the next action if I'm looking for something to put on my calendar, which is where I organize my tasks from then it's, it's sort of always been obvious. So I've never quite understood the conundrum of what to do next, I think it again, it comes from, from the problem of having a task list. And if you put something big on a task list, you're not trying to schedule an item in your calendar, you don't have to go through the extra rigor of asking yourself, what am I trying to do? How long is it going to take? When am I going to do it? I think the biggest challenge that we have today, most people have is not what do I do next in isolation with respect to something I've written down, it's what's it goes to the gusto said, What do I do next in in the Gestalt of all the things I'm committed to? So I have I have, you know, 50 time demands that that are, are fairly urgent, how do I choose between them, so that I can decide what to do next from all of them. So not the next action in a project, I think that's more straightforward. It's what's the correct sequence and the best sequence, especially when he said, You know, you're in a condition of overwhelming stress. And if you choose the wrong thing, you can waste a lot of time, you could choose to work on a two hour task. And at the end of the tool, a task, you you finally enter your email, and you discover that your boss sent that update and said, oh, by the way, don't work on that. That's your working. So you just blew two hours because you didn't you didn't clarify or empty your email inbox at just the right time. I think those are the kind of challenges people have is how do I manage all of my commitments? How do I choose what to execute first? And at the same time, how do I manage the inflow of new demands on my time, in a reasonable way? And the answer I often give is that if someone is going to be communicating urgent time demands to you that you do not use email, because it forces you to become therefore a slave to your inbox. Instead, train them to use the phone so that they can interrupt what you're doing in a sort of a forceful way, so that you don't waste your time doing things that shouldn't be done. So I would, I would add that into the mix. because ideally, you don't want to spend all of your time in your inbox, you want to spend your time doing doing productive work, but you've got to set up your total environment in a way that allows you to do that kind of work and be interrupted in an appropriate way so that you can choose the next action from all the actions that is that making sense?

Raymond Sidney-Smith 33:17

Yeah, I think that we have differing opinions all around in terms of how we manage that process. And I think that's actually good, because I think other people will see and lean toward one thing or the other, you know, whereas you like to calendar and manage from a timeline perspective and agenda perspective, I just can't do that. My inner workings of my brain don't do that. And it's, I think it's just fundamentally where I'm more comfortable, right. I like knowing that my calendars for certain things and my tasks, this is for certain things. And that's just my own personal desires to keep those things independent. But I can see the

value in doing that. One of the things that I think a lot of people do is they undershoot the amount of time it takes to complete something, right? Right, by having it in the calendar you are, you're bound by the hard landscape is, as David Allen calls it, to see how much time you're spending on things. So whether you track your time using a, you know, toggle or another app, or you use a calendar in order to actually fundamentally block out the time you're starting to have a better view of how much time it takes to get things done.

Art Gelwicks 34:27

I have to agree with Francis on this on the standpoint of the next action thing doesn't quite fit with the way I approach things because I look at next action as not, what's the next thing I need to do. But what's the next action it's going to take to move a particular item that I've captured forward? And the reason why I say it that way, is because if you look realistically, at most of your inbox items, they're probably not single things that your problem Probably not, you know, throw out that piece of paper or move that thing, they're usually multiple steps on whatever that capture item is that you've just brought into the mix, like maybe complete an invoice. Okay, great. So to me, the next action is what you're attaching to that item, when you're clarifying it to say, what's the next thing you need to do on that item to move it forward, not necessarily all the items you need to do to complete it successfully. But what's the next thing and the purpose of that is, is very simple when I go to grab that item to work on it. When I'm finished something and I go to I shouldn't have to think about, okay, what do I need to do? I've already done that thinking in the clarifying step. I've gone through and said, Okay, this, I need to new buy new tires for my car. Therefore, the next action is shop for tires is very clear. And if you look at GTS idea of context, the context will tell you, you're going to do that wherever you are, whatever it is, that complicates it, I think, at the most basic, you're just clarifying enough to say, What do I have to do to get this thing off on the right foot and keep it moving. And once you've done that item, let's say you've done that part of that particular task, then you're going to, as its last step, define the next action to move that thing forward. And it again, for me goes back to being interrupt driven, you don't always get an entire time window to start and finish a task from beginning to end, a lot of times, you have to start do part of it, and then put it off to the side and come back to it because of something else. But when you come back to it, that next action is that flag as to where you're supposed to pick it up from that's the way I see them. I don't know necessarily that that's exactly what's translated when you look at the book itself, because to my understanding, the book is saying, What's the next action for me to do right now. And for me, that's a different conversation entirely. In the time we have left, I'd like to talk about the collaborative challenges and you're kind of talking about this a little bit, I think that's what you're talking about here. and clarify me, you know, you can clarify if I was if I was off here. But

Raymond Sidney-Smith 37:06

my my thoughts here are that when we approach the next action principle with ourselves, we have to equally approach that with everyone in our lives. Otherwise, it becomes pretty difficult, but imposing if you're not in the hierarchy of your organization, whether that be a Church Committee that you sit on, you know, volunteer organization, your role within your company, or organization, or your role in your own family, if you if you're not in a position to be able to enforce the the next action decision in every conversation, it becomes a little bit difficult to always have to do the work of identifying the next action and keeping people accountable to it. How do you all deal with that things come into your system, as things are coming into, in into other people's periphery, you have to then keep track of, of their next action decisions and, and helping them through that process. So that potentially you can identify what yours are, right? So if, if you're sitting with friends, and they say, Oh, well, you know, we should go see a movie, well, all of a sudden a panoply of options present themselves. And what you want to do is to know the thing you need to do, right? What What is it that you need to capture and clarify and then organize to be able to deal with it. But if the if the captured item is let's all go to the movies, you know, that email chain goes around, or that Facebook message, you know, in a group message goes around, and people are kind of ruminating over various movie options. There's a point in which someone, and typically it's the listeners of our show, who are who are Taipei folks who are going to be the ones who want a decision made and know that there's an extraction that is going to have to be taken in multiple next actions. How do we all deal with that function of navigating the next action decision, when there are multiple decisions and multiple people with those actions

Augusto Pinaud 39:12

there is to first things that get into my funnel. One is, do I care about the outcome? Okay? And if they answer is no, that's worried. I don't care if we go do or whatever needed to happen with that. That's the first question I had to the second question is do I'm going to be can also mean I care for that outcome? Is there anything I can do to affect the outcome? And there's moments that the answer is no? And if the answer is no, well, then the outcome is going to be the outcome, and there's nothing I can do about it. And then the third one is, can I manage the outcome? And that means basically taking over and there are moments that the tree answers are no, no, no. And then will I just understand that he's going to be where is going to be, and there's nothing I can do. And there are other moments when they answer change, and obviously, different kinds of variables. And if there is something that then I'm going to be affected and I care or I care for, then that goes directly into my system. And depending on who the person is, I basically go from casually follow up to really annoying, we need to get this done. And I'm not a at the beginning of getting things done. I used to feel bad about those things. And I used to feel bad about while you're kind of a

micromanager and people with this. And later I understood that. No, I'm not micromanaging. There. I'm trying to control how this is going to affect me. So when I begin with getting things done, and the things I create a list for my boss at the time, and I've been having one since and I remember know, at some point one day, my boss called me to call him and say, can you come? I say, yeah, I'm on my way. And then he said, Please do not bring your list. And I've told him, then I'm not going, Okay. Then what I learned that day is, you know what, this is been effective. I had a list and every time I sit with him, I covered the whole list. And he hate it. But the reality is, a lot of those things on that list affect what I was doing and affect my day to day. And I knew that if I did not manage them that way, eventually, they were going to explode on his plate. And he was going to come to me and say, Well, what happened was this while I'm waiting for you to decide, well, you never remind me. So eventually, you know, the thing was going to be in my lap anyway. So for me, the decision goes there, how that is going to affect me if I do nothing? And if the answer is, you know, for example, you said, Hey, we're going to go to the movies. Well, do I care week watching the movies? If I care, I will reply, hey, why we don't go and see so and so movie, Oh we don't want to see that. Okay, then I probably I don't care anything else, then let you guys decide what we're going to watch. And we'll make no difference. I will go with a smile. If I care, then I take an active role into those decision making. That choice of

Francis Wade 42:23

platform and the frequency of communication are really important in today's world. Because just just as we've been talking about, if you like to use telegram, and I like to use email, someone else like to use voice we may never ever get to the movies would never communicate in a way that is, is compatible and timely. So I think I know there's lots of software that's come out in the last two years to try and get teams to collaborate a tough one, you know it, each person has their own style, each person thinks about their tasks different, each person wants to communicate with a frequency that works for them. I don't think I have an answer to that. I just think that the there is sort of a step that has to be taken by a manager who's working with a team that has to depend on on had some interdependency to sort these all out and come up with one one sort of agreement as though as though what the best course is to follow

Raymond Sidney-Smith 43:25

it's funny because slack and and with HipChat and many of these other tools even Google has now come out with Jay sweets, Hangouts chat, as these Microsoft Teams hat tip to art. And, you know, the reality is, is that with all of these new tools, there is still a not this grand uptick in productivity, it's not that we have greater output because of these tools, it really

fundamentally comes down to the principles to which we hold to in order to create greater productivity, right, have a good example of that, that there's a

Francis Wade 44:00

company that thought they were going to get all these productivity improvements by replacing email or, or supplementing email with I think they use Skype for Business or, but some kind of instant message solution. And I visited someone who showed me her screen and she had like an ongoing instant message conversations that were assembled tediously kind of on hold. And each person was sort of pinging her asking, how come I haven't heard from you yet? How come you haven't answered me yet? How come you haven't 10 of them 10 different pop ups? So I think it's really easy to believe that software is the answer when the truth is there are timeless principles that have always existed and it's the principles that need to be used rather than the sort of the latest software. So right about that

Raymond Sidney-Smith 44:51

I wanted to close out our episode with a quotation from David Allen from the book that I think really encapsulates what we've been talking about today. ne ne ne says, quote, without a next action, there remains a potentially infinite gap between current reality and what you need to do and quote and I think it's a very, very interesting thought there to leave us all with. And so I will do you have a question or comment about this episode, something we discussed in the cast or otherwise about personal productivity you can go ahead and comment at the bottom of our show by going to productivity cast.net forward slash 0404, Episode 40 and you'll find a comp box there Feel free to leave us a comment or question will be happy to do that. If you want to ask us about something else, please visit productivity cast.net forward slash contact and you'll be taken to a contact form where you can leave a voice message which if we decide to answer your question here on the show, you'll hear yourself and or in writing, you can go ahead and leave us a typewritten message and so that along to us, we are always excited to hear from you all you can find this episode show notes as well and how to subscribe at productivity cast.net forward slash 040 and if you could please add a rating a review in iTunes to help us grow our personal productivity community of listeners. So thank you thanks to Augusto Francis and Art for joining me here on this cast. That brings us to the close out of this episode of productivity cast that we could show about all things productivity take care

Voiceover Artist 46:26

and that's it for this productivitycast the weekly show about all things productivity with your

hosts Ray Sidney-Smith and Augusto Pinaud with Francis Wade and Art Gelwicks