046-getting-things-done-gtd-Reflections-What-I-Wish-I-Knew-W...

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SPEAKERS

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 host re Sydney Smith and a goose open out with Francis Wayne an art gallery.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:16

Welcome back, everybody to productivity cast, the weekly show about all things personal productivity. I'm recently Smith and I'm joined here today with acoustic burnout. And Francis Wade. Good morning, gentlemen. Good morning. Good morning. Morning. We are going to be talking today about what are the things that we wish we knew when we first learned about and attempted to implement getting things done getting things methodology, this closes out our series on the Getting Things Done methodology. It's certainly not the last episode will have about it. But it's certainly in this particular series, we wanted to close that we can pass along to you about getting things done. So that if you are just going getting started, or if you've been chugging along and having some level of success, and some two steps forward, one step back with getting things done, you'll hopefully learn a thing or two along the way with our conversation about how to get moving forward, get that momentum around areas that you might be having some

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problems. This topic was proposed by Augusto So, okay, so why don't you kick it off for us? Why don't you tell us a little bit about what brought this topic to mind. And your first thought about what you wish you knew when you started becoming a GTD practitioner,

A Augusto Pinaud 01:38

it took me a while to to get into a solid system of getting things done. And there is a lot of things about the methodology that I think are extremely powerful. So so I want to start there because I don't want this to go into all this is your having this topic because this doesn't work. Because has nothing to do with that. I just wish that when people start reading the book, and when people start implementing, there were certain things that they were aware. So the process gets to be a lot less first training and a lot more productive. With that said, I would like to start with what David Allen called the Black Belt because at least to my knowledge, there is a lot of things said about what being a black belt means what you're going to experience what you are going to do and not do. But there is not that much information about the price. And the time that is going to take to be black belt, David Allen assumes that most people will read black belt and understand and will understand on it that it takes a significant amount of time in order to read there. The other thing is, there is no stages, you know, towards black belt. So you are a blowout, no belt, okay, then you read the book, now you are a white belt. And then suddenly, you need to end on a black belt. And I understand why he used that analogy. I wish that he will have spent a lot more time so people understand how they're progressing on on being how they're progressing and implementing getting things done. Because what happened is on the way it is right on the book, it is almost as well you read the book and you will be black belt. And that's not true. And,

Raymond Sidney-Smith 03:43

and I and I want to just poke in here just quickly to say that the the belt concept was something that really wasn't fleshed out in the book at all. And it was something that he he talked about in seminars and he talked about in many of his other media and and it comes comes from the fact that he had a martial arts background. He was a karate teacher. And so for people who had some experience with the martial arts this really resonated with them Case in point myself. So since I had that background, it was very in Chinese martial arts, which is where my background is my brother is a Chinese martial arts teacher and I had that background and we have sashes not belts but it was very easy to translate for what he meant by this concept of grading up by leveling up your system. But he never created a clear cut line between what was a beginner and how you made your way up through those levels. So I fully agree with you a gusto would would have been helpful to know what things allowed you to take your system to the next level where you

should start and where you should finish he gives you kind of the the acceleration lane which is the the weekend project of the mind sweep and getting everything out of your system. And then going through the workflow diagram step by step. But he doesn't he didn't give you you know, after the weekend. What do you do the day after?

A Augusto Pinaud 05:10

Well, by experienced you fell off the wagon.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 05:14

Francis, I wanted to I wanted to turn the conversation over to you. When when you first learned about GTD, what was your first experience with it. And what did you wish you knew when you came across that I picked up

F Francis Wade 05:26

a another system actually taught another system in the early 2000s and use it heavily. And one of the key precepts was to put everything all of your all of your tasks in your calendar and thought it worked pretty well. Stop teaching the program trigger the you know, I was already baked. And then when I moved to Jamaica, from Florida ran into all kinds of problems, because I had way more demands on my time than before. So I think that the problem we're looking for a solution and I ran into GTD downloaded the app for look and figure based on what the book was telling me that I was doing everything wrong. So I went from scheduling everything to using the multiple lists that GTD talks about I was you know, after reading the book, so by must have gotten it all wrong. And things became worse. As a result. It took me about six months to a year to try as much as I could implement GTD it so I quit after about a year, went back to putting everything back in my schedule, figured out what was wrong with the way I was doing it, and then sort of sailed on from there. So I ran into GTD a bit late in my sort of productivity game. And it wasn't until much later on that I really could explain why I did what I did, and why people make the kind of mistakes I made in implementing a fixed set of practices, which are sort of meant that when they're shared, their they're sort of written as if this will, this will last you for the rest of your career to go from that point to seeing them as just a suggested set of behaviors that are only temporary and that at some point, you have to change them for a number of reasons to get from that point to the next. I'll show you that in the next. And so but that's my introduction to GTD

Raymond Sidney-Smith 07:22

for me. I feel like I entered GTD at exactly the right moment in my life. I don't know why. But it was a felt need that I didn't yet know how to express but when I came across the book, it filled that that need at that very moment. And so you know, my The first thing that I wish I knew about getting things done was that it's akin to, again, going back to the martial arts. And Bruce Lee's system that he developed was called g condo. And one of the primary tenants the G condo was to take of systems that which worked and get rid of the rest. It was this absolute utilitarianism of martial arts. And so it said, if this if this punch worked, if this kicked worked, if this block worked, if this strategy work, let's use this, but if it doesn't work, then let's cast it aside. And that became g condo. And with that martial arts analogy, I really wish I applied that to getting things done. Because I tried to use everything that GTD offered right out the gate and in reality and applying it to every aspect of my my life when in reality, GTD is in a way classified for me in the in the area or category of organizing, helps you organize the things you're not doing. And then after that, you know what you can do based on that. So for me, it's it GTD is about getting organized. It's a it's a component of the, of your encompassing personal productivity system. But it is not your system, right? GTD is a methodology that you use for your system. And you can use it in many different areas of your life. But not particularly all of them are necessary and and what happens is we we tend to try and use GTD for everything and it becomes a real problem, then it becomes well, GTD isn't good enough. Because it doesn't handle developing my personal purpose in life. That's not GTD function. GTD was never developed by David Allen to be your your mission statement builder. Sorry, it's not. It's not that it doesn't answer. Why are you on this planet. If you if you live from GTD, the parts that work for you, and recognize what it's supposed to do, which is to help you get organized, then it's a heck of a lot easier to implement from that level. So that was that's the first thing I really wish I knew when I started getting things done.

Augusto Pinaud 09:57

The other thing I wish I knew was not only how long was going to take I when when I read the book, I don't recall. And it may be there clearly in a chapter. But I don't recall, ever read another book, this is going to take a really long time, not only is going to take a really long time, as you get better at collecting, okay, when you get better at collecting, you're going to discover how bad you are processing. But as you get better at processing, you're going to discover that you still have a lot to learn about collecting and my imprint. My what I remember about when I start was well, when you know when grass collecting. Now you're good at collecting. And I read that book I think was around 2003 or four was the first time I read it. Okay, so it's now 2018. So we're talking about 14 or 15 years ago. And I'm still okay, get an improvement in the collecting in the processing in the

organizing. So understand that, that the the parts that work about the process are going to be adjusted on you need to work on them for a really, really long time will has been something good understand that maybe like martial arts, you're going to need to work into this, you know, forever. It's not like okay, now I learned how to kick and I don't need to practice that kick ever again. It is know now that you learn to kick you need to practice 1000 times. So it's become little

Raymond Sidney-Smith 11:33

I couldn't agree more. Yeah, I think the idea that you learn a GTD skill like processing, clarifying or organizing within the workflow diagram and all of a sudden you should be a perfect practitioner. This is no this is like Maslow's hierarchy of needs. You go up and down the pyramid based on where you are today in your life. In that context, you know what I mean? You don't you don't stay at self actualization at the zenith of the pyramid, all the time be vacillate between those, those levels,

Francis Wade 12:05

I wish I were a better how to put this I could figure out the principles behind the practices that David and he was suggesting. If I knew that in the beginning, I think it would have resolved the problem that a same problem I had that that it was to just said, which is he suggests a certain number of fixed practices or behaviors. And he suggests that you don't deviate from them. And he suggests that you adopt them in full what woody what really works in practice is that people cherry pick one practice here, one practice there, they put together systems that work for them, which he says is fine, of course, but you never let you in on the full principle behind the suggestion that he's making. So as a result, people have turned the book into a bit of a religion where these practices must be followed no matter what, and any deviation from them is like heresy. And I don't believe that is intended at all. And I've followed up on some of his more recent comments where he says, in one actually said, this on the GTD, forums, GTD is whatever works. So he's extremely flexible in terms of finding whatever works on how that be the right thing. However, he doesn't really help the reader to figure out the principle and then apply it to their situation. Depending on their needs. He sort of leaves you with, you know, ideas that he came up with, when paper was very popular back in 2003, before or 2001 before they mobile internet before AI before cloud computing, his ideas were developed for for way back then. So you have to sort of make this mental switch and say, Okay, what principle is he using, and how can I use that same principle in today's world with today's tools with three capabilities. So it fits man needs based on the practices I already have. And that's why I like the idea of the of the belts, and I use that idea, my book, as you know, that you go from white, yellow, orange green all the way from a novice level to a more advanced level, because he really

doesn't see that you first should figure out where you are now, and then look to make incremental improvements in the areas that really make the biggest difference. He doesn't quite say it. But those are people who have been around GTD for a while know that you don't just start to try to implement everything all at once. You sort of need to start with some reflection and say, Where am I know, in each of the disciplines that he suggests? And then where do I want to get to and that practice alone, I wish I had learned it would have saved me would have saved me a year of floundering. I think

A   Augusto Pinaud   14:53

that that you said exactly is where the problem comes, understands that as you said, most of the people who has done exactly what you describe is it people who invest that year I'm by the way I want to clarify that year was not a waste of time, because you tend to learn a lot about a lot of things but it will have been really, really nice, okay to instead of invest that year learning a guy did it all the wrong way, half a more clear path to use that year, you know, in a better way, because as you are productivity person who will spend a year and he's willing to go back and retry it again. Also, there is a significant amount of people who went through that same experience who went through that year, quote, unquote, wasted, okay. And then what happened is they don't go again, to look anything about getting things done. So they throw you know, their program we have water was a baby, and there is no way that you're going to make them go back. And I think if you understand that, if you understand that he's going to change that is going to evolve that is more a constant practice than a little thing. Then what happened is you can go pick and choose what worked for you. I'd the current situation that otherwise, you know, you missed a lot of it

Raymond Sidney-Smith   16:26

is something that I have to constantly say, in defense of GTD and I'm not a GTD apologists. I mean I know where I know where its failings are. And I'm comfortable with that. I don't think it impedes my productivity. But David Allen's words, because of what Francis said earlier that the the first edition was sparse, it was kind of just a almost like a NASA scripted space shuttle takeoff manual, right? It was kind of like, this is the system this is why it will benefit you. Here it goes 123 in terms of what to do, then that was it. There was no greater real explanation around some of the big points. I think the march 2015 edition does a fantastic job of giving lots of context. And so that speaks to one particular type of person. And the original edition speaks to another type of person. So if they just want to know the meat and potatoes of the system, the original edition really works. And for those people who want all of the parts, then the march 2015 edition, you

know, with 10 years of experience under David Allen's belt of seeing people absorb GTD from the book, he was able to rewrite the book to fill in many more of those gaps. So I always say to people, if you have have written read the first edition, and it doesn't appeal to you read the second edition, and then see if that doesn't fill in some of the pieces of the puzzle because I really do think that it was a market improvement for that type of person, right? I'm still a huge fan of the first edition, right? Because it just goes through the very basics of what needs to happen. And the second edition fills in the, you know, the sinews of the system of the methodology that is, so that you can go ahead and really understand the underpinnings of some of these other pieces. I didn't want to I did want to note though, that David Allen explicitly says in the first and second additions several times that you do not need to take everything All told, this is not an end mass methodology where you need to do that. And so for those people who, as Francis said, kind of created this GTD cult and the cult of personality of David out David Allen that there's no real problem with that my perspective but the reality is, is that they glaze over things that are stated in the book then then they enforce this kind of GTD heretical principles, right? Which is that if you if you deviate from the system, as Francis said, then then all of a sudden you're you're somehow not practice GTD and we've had that had that conversation on the GTD virtual study group, actually, several times about people saying, Oh, well, that's not GTD. It's like, know what what David Allen said was, if it works, then it is getting things done, right. Because then at the end of the day, literally, you're getting things done. So that's the standard. I think there's, there's, there's also room

F Francis Wade 19:21

to realize, which I do know, when I read the book, The first time that he the different steps that he lays out are not meant to be implemented from scratch in the sense that when someone when somebody reads the book, and learns about capturing and processing and so forth, he doesn't quite say this. But the fact is, and what research my research shows is that people will pick up these practices in their teens or an adolescence. So no one comes to the book an empty slate. It's not like you're learning trigonometry for the first time, and you're starting from scratch. These are behaviors that everyone has engaged in, even mentally, all the way through their whole lives. When they pick up the book. It's not as if these are concepts that they have not been practicing in any shape or form. They wouldn't even if that were the case, they wouldn't be reading and writing and they wouldn't have the time to read the book. But he doesn't quite make that point. So people, people who come to the book even advanced stage the way I did a lot of what they're doing already works and what they're looking to do is just what you said or gooseberries, just cherry pick. But he doesn't allow for that possibility. And give any guidance to the average person who is already engaged in these practices and is looking for an improvement. He sort of, again, again, this kind of NASA approach, I'm just going to

assume that you're not doing any of this stuff. And let me just write it as if you aren't, which is useful if you know that that's what he's doing. But if you don't know it, you'll come and think that I'm not doing anything, right. And I need to start all over again. But the truth is, you're not no one is starting all over again, you're really making modifications to what you're already doing. And I think that that I wish I knew that when I read the book The first time.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 21:18

And this brings this kind of brings us to a point that I think you want it to make the Cousteau about the audience for GTD and and before I turn it over to you. I wanted to let people know what the time of this recording there is an upcoming version of getting things done. And it's going to be a GTD for teenagers. And that's due out I believe, in June or July. So by the time this recording is out, it should be it should be on bookshelves or an Amazon or wherever fine books are sold. So you know, this, this idea of audience it's going to be really interesting, I'm certainly going to read this new book that's coming out focused on teenagers, because I'll be interested to see how David Allen and the the David Allen company team really addresses fundamentals for a younger crowd where these skills may not have been developed, they may not have been presented to them. And, and so the audience is very different for and the way in which you position something like getting things done for a younger audience is very different. So Cousteau what were your thoughts about audience and

Augusto Pinaud 22:29

gtd.com again, to to where, you know, unit to understand where this book was redone. Thinking on on on this is not again, this is not a criticism of, of the methodology. But the methodology as the way David Allen and vision it wasn't vision for a corporate 500 mid level, high level manager, that's, that's where this original both books actually were reason for that we're not reading for, for a guy who was self employed, you know, I have a joke for years that one of the problems when you read, getting things done, and you're self employed, you have your own business is you delegate to yourself and put the waiting for, for your own self. Again, when you do that, this is seems kind of silly. And it is. But the reality is, you need to understand that from where that system is, if you don't have data structure that support you know, then you need to look at it and see how you are going to adjust. You know, when when you think home business, even if you have to delegate on hold, waiting for a business, it's a lot simpler than now, when you go to the personal life, okay, on who you're going to delegate, you know, and you need to get that on, adjust the principles to dive into what is your reality, you know, over the years, I have had roles and we're that methodology fits, you know, like a glove incredibly well, okay. And others were

the methodology by the book, okay, it simply doesn't work is completely broken. Because the role I'm having is a lot less della, there is a lot less delegation, there is a lot less of other things and therefore doesn't match. So so you need to look at from that perspective. And I and I agree on something that Francis said, I understand this book will have never sell well. Okay. But I will love to have seen the principles of getting things done by David Allen is a book Okay, forget about all the stories and all the things let's talk about the principles behind every little thing. So that way, I can go pick and choose which principles apply better, okay, instead of me trying to read from a from the pages on the examples and try to figure it out what is the right principle that he's trying to pull from, I understand that book may have an upsell a copy, maybe two or three. But that's it, I get that but it but you need to understand that I don't, I agree, it will be really interesting. Regardless, if you are not a teenager, if you feel that are getting things done book, either one, the original version, the 2015 version, or the making it all work doesn't completely fit. You go now, and I haven't had the chance to read that one, either. Okay, that new teenager book, but go and read it. Why? Because what they are going to be forced to do is to simplify the principles to the level they apply to a teenager. Okay, and I'm not saying you need simple principles, but he's going to put more on the surface the actual principle than the execution. That is where I see more people struggle with Dan and things when you explain the principle behind certain things are completely or more Oh, that makes sense. But the problem is they what they read on the book is execution. And some people have a hard time connecting data execution with the principle behind it.

F Francis Wade 26:18

I wish I love the idea of a book on the principles behind getting things done. And also I would, I would, I would imagine that such a book would include the research because in the book doesn't doesn't address any academic research, and it does exist. However, when it's not mentioned in the book, you can't go back to sit to ask the question, Where does this idea come from? And where's the proof for this, you you sort of have to accept just, you know, the author's word for it. And whereas that was okay. Back in 2001, I think we mentioned in a in a one of our podcasts that that that approved, so it doesn't cut it anymore. If you look at the way Malcolm Gladwell rights, or you know, any any authors today, if you can't go back and figure out Oh, that came from Anders Ericsson his ideas on on deliberate learning, or what does he say, oh, why is it different from what Malcolm Gladwell is saying is, you can't go back and figure out where it came from, that you do you do your readers a disservice, because then they have to do their own hunting to see is this really based on fact? Or is this anecdotal? Or is this just what David Allen himself users and does, and is it a sample of one or your left guessing and wondering so it sort of makes it harder to customize the principles. So social book, we would go back all the way and make it easy for us to apply the principles and use them in a powerful way.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 27:49

And I will say that in the most current edition, the march 2015 edition, David Allen actually gives a whole chapter to the science that has been been proving GTD as a working methodology going forward. But that is that's as a construct, not each of the individual parts of getting things done. They understand that very argument. And I would, I would say that what I read in the book was that David Allen has had said, these are just things that I observed and, and used because they worked. So again, going back to this kind of G condo concept, he he pulled from what he saw working for these, you know, fortune 500 mid level, you know, executives, as as a Cousteau said, and just pulled them together, because he saw them as things that were working for these for this community of people. And so I kind of understand where he's coming from. I will also say that making it all work really does fill in a lot of those principal gaps. So for those who are interested, I would give making it all work and opportunity, I would, I would sit down with the book and try and dive into because that was written in 2011, he had a decade of, of time with, again, the book out in circulation, and people giving him feedback. And he wanted to fill in some of those gaps. I think that the 2015 edition with, you know, 1415 years under under his belt, he was then able to publish a book that gave a more full bodied approach to explaining, getting things done in words. And there's Honestly, I think that GTD was always meant to be a methodology taught in a, in a, in a workshop environment, in a seminar environment. And with coaching, right, getting things done was a book that was sold to be able to bring coaching clients to bring people to his seminars and workshops and it did right here that that's that's the primary focus of the David Allen company. With that mission in mind, he succeeded like rocket out the park, remember that he doesn't give up everything in the book, there are missing elements because many of those elements are bespoke to the individual. The more you try to kind of explain some of the the tactical approaches that you need to do to implement getting things done the more narrowly defined that book becomes for people because how you work is not the way that I work

Augusto Pinaud 30:21

and I agree with what you said the book was written for that and I have over the years to us to be had I think was much better on all Nightingale Conan audio I'm sure you can find it on eBay or something. But it was called Getting things on fast that it was basically a recording of a live seminar okay that when I read the book or the first time that again it was 15 years ago I get it Okay, dot out you was what really allowed to kind of pulled my implementation of getting things done, because it gave me a lot of those filling in the blank, at least on a different way. And I know David on indeed on another version that was sold on there, David Allen, company name is escaping me right now. But we can put in the show notes where you can now go and get things really moving forward. And then

understand some of those missing elements that that were there,

Raymond Sidney-Smith 31:28

one of the things that I find to be really important for people to to understand with regard to one of the big problems I hear over and over again, is context and context of course, is not the problem in my mind, I think that understanding your workflows is the problem, we create context and contexts from the way you work best. And so one of the this, this comes down to the, to the to one of the fundamental issues with JTC, it can't sit there with you and help you understand how you work best. What's the best time of day for you to work? Are you are you a compulsive paper list maker? Or are you someone who loves post it notes? Are you someone who works only digitally Do you have a hybrid system, none of those things can be understood in writing with you in real time, you know, there's just too many too many variables. So because of that, we look at something like the fourfold model, and we get really flustered. And so it's like, we don't I can do I can do anything anywhere, right? I can I have my laptop on my phone on me almost all the time. And so then, all of a sudden, GTD quote unquote, doesn't work. Because contexts have fallen apart for you. When in reality, you need to step back and use to understand your own workflow style, understand how you work best, and then develop the context from that. And once you kind of figure that out the The road is, it's a, it's a smoother path. And so I just, you know, I want people to understand that, that I wish I knew that out the gate because I was too busy using the prescriptive, you know, at home at calls at whatever. And in reality, that's not how I've, that's not how I flow that just didn't work for me. So I modified my system and I went,

Francis Wade 33:24

you have people rejecting GTD because the context don't work for them, for example, you know, in extreme cases, because they don't, they don't, they don't get the power of of adding attributes. And why it it's it helps you filter, it helps you focus that you select helps you sort that they don't get the principal, all they get is all at home is the same as that computer so I'm not going to use it. So at that level, people sort of really could learn why why context are so powerful.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 33:57

So we have so much more to discuss in this episode. And what we're going to do is we're going to pause here and we're going to come back next week and continue this conversation about what we wish we knew when we first learned and and started

implementing, getting things done. Thank you to gusto. And Francis for joining me here on this episode. Do you have a question or comment about this cast or something we discussed if you're listening from anywhere other than the podcast website, we invite you to come over to productivity cast.net forward slash 046 which is the episode number so productivity cast.net forward slash 046 there the bottom of the page, you can leave a comment or question you can also go to productivity cast.net forward slash contact and ask us a question about personal productivity. In general, I will be happy to read and respond to it if possible. Here on productivity cast.net forward slash 046, you'll find the show notes. So anything we talked about here will have the links to them and descriptions of those things as well. We also have a raw text transcript so you can jump to particular portions of the audio by searching for what we talked about in those parts. And if you could, please go ahead and leave a rating or review in iTunes or Stitcher or Google Play Music podcasts, the kudos or just good fuzzy feelings for us. It makes us happy to be able to help you but it also helps us grow our personal productivity listening community. So thank you. That brings us to the close of this episode of productivity. Cast, the weekly show about all things personal productivity, here's your productive life. Take care everybody. And that's

V   Voiceover Artist   35:31

it for this productivity. Cast. The weekly show about all things productivity, with your hosts racing the Smith and a goose open out with Francis Wade and art gallery