063-was-email-a-mistake-productivitycast.mp3

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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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 host Ray Sydney Smith and a goose open out with Francis Wayne and our gal wicks.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:17

And welcome back to productivity cast, the weekly show about all things personal productivity, I'm resetting Smith, to be night.

👤 00:24

I'm Francis Wade, Larry Markel works.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:26

And today we are going to be discussing email. And this is a topic that is perennial, but

more importantly, Cal Newport, Professor Newport. he's a he's a professor of mathematics Computer Science at Georgetown University. And he recently wrote an article in which he discusses his topic was email a mistake. And he brings up several different angles at which he attacks email. And I wanted for us to have a discussion around really what he's talking about, and whether or not that's real, was email truly a mistake. And to start us off, I want us to kind of just take a litmus test just go around. And what was your initial impressions about the article? And where do you stand on your usage of email? are you stopping use of your email? Are you mediating email with other modalities in order to be productive? How are you using email today? Do you believe email was a mistake?

A Augusto Pinaud 01:34

I don't think email is a mistake, we may argue that the way we are using email and how it went out of control is a mistake. But it's not the email that will be equivalent to say, well, the fax was a mistake. It wasn't it was just a matter of what happened with email. I think email came in a moment where we were trying, we were in the verge of going global. And it broke, it brought a vehicle that allows to communicate with anybody, regardless where they are on a semi effective way. And dad in combination with other technologies that came at a time as a Blackberry, and people begin saying, Oh, I can really be more quote unquote, effective if I adopt these tools. The problem was, there was not really a solid execution plan, and we just got on the horse and let it run and hopefully turn into a monster, to be honest with you.

A Art Gelwicks 02:32

Email is a natural evolution of this back and forth method of communication that we've had for years. I mean, we had pen pals, we had careers, we had pigeons, the concept is no different. It's just faster, and it spreads over a larger area. The challenge and I think a goose is right on this. It's how we use it, not so much the medium itself. So I'm a huge proponent of collaboration technologies, that's my area of expertise. And to be honest with you, a lot of times a lot of the things that collaboration technology, say they're going to replace could be done through just regular email through efficient and effective use of it. So yeah, I wouldn't blame it, I wouldn't say it's a bad thing. It's a highly effective tool, if used properly. And declaring that it is a mistake is a mistake in and of itself.

F Francis Wade 03:26

I think it's a bit of both. I've argued with HR professionals that the single they missed the single largest factor cnet's biggest culture change maker, that's happened in our lifetime, which was email that when email was introduced, it was introduced as a technology, but it

became a culture changer. So people's behaviors, ways of thinking ways of communicating ways of working together, all changed with respect to the fact that email was no possible. But it didn't happening a coordinated we, it was purely haphazard and purely, basically random. There was no planning. And as a result, on the far end of the email revolution, or the email culture change, we are living at the effect of poor implementation, up and down, I think we could all agree on that. And know that email has become embedded, there appears to be no way out. In other words, there's no easy there's no nice, easy, quick solution to the problems. Email has exacerbated.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 04:32

And I'll come down on the side of history, which is that email really came out of the 1960s. And the technology itself helped develop what is the modern day Internet, and so not to give you all a lecture on ARPANET and its history. But email itself is an open protocol, it's a protocol that allows a global community that is, we here you're on the planet and those up there on the International Space Station, beyond to be able to communicate without being connected to the same central system. Originally, email was designed in such a way that you both had to be online. So in order for me to send an email to Cousteau, Francis or art, I needed to call you on the phone and say, Hey, are you online, and then and then send that email and you would receive the the email on the other side, quickly, that became a, you know, difficult system, it was kind of like instant messaging, you had to be had to both be synchronously in sync in order to be able to get messages set back and forth. And that obviously didn't make much sense for asynchronous types of communication, which email would be the best board. So the the store and forward model became the standard, that's what we see today, where you send an email, and it sends it off to a server, that server holds that email. And then when the recipient is ready, they're able to retrieve that email from it. And because of mobile technology, and other web based, you know, email, that doesn't seem like it's an issue anymore, but the reality is, is that we have this ability to get email from many different points. You know, you can have your computer, your mobile phone, your tablet, your laptop, whatever. And all of them can receive email from your email server because of the store and forward method. So we have this open communications medium that is available to us today. And that is all based on the forward thinking of the progenitors, which was that we should have an open platform that should be given to the world, so that we're able to all communicate. And I think from that very basis, we can't say that email by itself was a mistake. The idea here, going back to what art was saying, you know, the idea here is that we need to have some way to be able to communicate asynchronously, we have to have some way in order to be able to not have an arbiter of our of our communications, just from a democratic perspective. You know, think about Facebook being the ultimate arbiter of everything that you ever say, through messenger and WhatsApp and so on so forth, which would you

really like that to be the case? and email gives us that ability that gives us that that manifestation in an on the infrastructure level on the on the core internet level, which I think is is very, very powerful and very important. Now, we could talk about principles for using email and how that could potentially have gone awry. But, you know, the reality is, is that email was was in my opinion, certainly not a mistake. And I think the article title was to get some shocking off to get some publicity kind of focused on it. With a with a shocking title. Let's talk about the idea behind what Professor and report here at Cal Newport is talking about. He is he's talking about this idea that he kind of presents a whole bunch of a slew of different ideas in the article. And I want to just talk specifically about asynchronous communication in today's environment, and whether or not the results of EK names a bunch of studies. And he goes through talking about the impact of different types of technologies. throughout time, what do you feel was the strongest argument that he makes, I'll just, I'll quote this section here. And then that way, we're kind of on the same page. He goes, as email was taking over the modern office researchers in the theory of distributed systems, the sub sub field in which as a computer scientist, I specialize. We're also studying the trade offs between synchronous and asynchronous. As it happens, the conclusion they reached was exactly the opposite of the prevailing consensus, they became convinced that synchrony was superior, and that spreading communication out over time hindered work rather than enabling, okay, so he's basically saying that in computer science, they all determined that synchrony was better than a synchrony. And this is where we can probably have the most thoughtful discussion about how that works. And then as you make a way in the discussion, we could talk about some technologies that actually helped facilitate the overcoming some of this synchrony versus a synchrony problem. So let's start off with what what are the trade offs for synchrony versus a synchrony. And for listeners, just in case, you're unaware, synchronous communication just means that it's in real time back and forth. If there's, you know, multiple people communicating, those people are communicating in real time, as opposed to asynchronous being, we're able to communicate out side of real time that again, as I send a message in the store and forward model applies, I send a message, it is stored someplace, and you'll be able to retrieve that at some later time. asynchronous is US postal mail, right? You send a letter, it sits in your mailbox, until you pick it up, I send you an email, it sits in your inbox until you pick it up. Those are asynchronous methods of communication versus synchrony, which is akin to say a telephone call where we're talking in real time or video call or something like that.

F Francis Wade 10:20

The problem with the way he tackles that question is that he starts with what I doubt is a universal agreement in computer science. I said, I don't I don't buy that. All computer scientists are saying, Oh, look, synchrony is better than a synchrony, I suspect is way more

nuanced than that. And I suspect is closer to what we see with email for email is not just a technology, email is a behavior. Like I said before, it's a culture it has. It has human elements to it, which are critical. So if you look at email, in terms of the benefits of synchrony versus a synchrony, synchrony is, you know, a meetings, mostly meetings, either phone or, or in person. And those are replete with the, I don't have to list them here. Everyone knows the problems with meetings, including, I'm sure Cal Newport who, if you probably probably heard that academic meetings are like the worst in the absolute world, they say they're the absolute worst. And getting people together in person is hard, because, or humanity and our egos and the culture of the company, and all these things come into play. And they make it difficult. So synchronous meetings have huge, huge problems, synchronous communication, even even on the phone in in conference calls, huge issues, the benefit you have is that you can if they're managed well, you can achieve great results in a very short space of time, if they're managed well. And with respect to asynchronous The benefit is that you can, as you said, store messages and retrieve them at will. So you don't have to have everybody doing the same thing. at the same point in time, there's less of a chance of wasting time by having people involved in the synchronous act in a in a synchronous activity, because everyone can be off doing the thing, that's the best thing for them to do, and then schedule the time and to work on the activity or to pick up the communication when the time comes as a huge benefit, because it allows everyone to schedule their time, their energy, their focus, whether they're remote or local, it allows the human to have way more freedom to engage in a conversation and they otherwise would have if you're locked up in a conference room in a meeting, having said that, the same thing applies. poorly managed, asynchronous communication is also its own hell, it's a different hell, but it's also a hell. And I think that, that the fact that I the mode of communication can be come a pit of destruction is is is that he's trying to avoid seeing that point somehow. But the inner real world over here where most of us live, both of them can be mismanaged, and waste a lot of time and energy. This is a matter. This is a question of management of both. And it's not fair, I think the way he did in the article to highlight the benefits of the one, and then downplay the shortcomings of the other, I don't think that's a fair comparison, I think they have to be managed,

Raymond Sidney-Smith 13:27

I would fully agree any mismanaged form of communication, no matter the medium is going to lead to reduced productivity and increased costs for an organization. And I see this very starkly in the sense that when I talk to clients, frequently, they don't understand the cost of holding meetings, and its impact on productivity. So you say that the organization's going to get more done, except that the study is flawed in the sense that it doesn't actually look at the cost of inaction, at least in the modern day, how much organizations need to move quickly and nimbly in, in making decisions. And to remove

email from that component is to restructure the paradigm of what and how a meeting would ever exist, you know, think about how you're going to schedule that meeting, to begin with. Have you ever tried to, you know, call everybody one by one to schedule a meeting, and those kinds of things that can be done, but think of the impact on the outline pieces. And what I frequently do is, is tell my clients to look at the cost of each individual per hour, and then calculate all of the costs involved in preparation, attending, and then post administration of a meeting. And that's the ultimate cost of bringing those people together. And once most of my clients do that, they recognize that means things are usually not worthwhile. in in the in the larger extent, for low value, meeting topics, meeting themes, and then they are worth it for high value meeting topics and meeting themes. And I think that's appropriate, I think we should have a higher standard for bringing people together, then we should we should for email. And that means that yes, we're going to get more email. But if we have the right principles applied to the organization, that is everybody knows the right rules to use email, then we reduce the amount of fluff, the amount of chatter that goes around an email, so that we don't we don't have those kinds of problems. For example, I don't have those problems with email inside my organization, I just don't we have rules with regard to how we send email to one another. And we also have rules about what type of medium we use, what type of communication medium we use, at appropriate times. So if this context applies, then we use the phone, if this context applies, then we can use say instant messaging at this context applies, then we can use phone, this context applies, then we have a meeting. And because of that contextual ization of understanding how we all work, and really how we best work, I think I've mentioned this in the past podcast episode where you want me to get 15 things done, I would rather you split that up into 15 different email messages, as opposed to sending in one big blob, because then I can respond to each of those in out of synchrony. And that is helpful to me, it will be more productive. Because if I see all 15 things in there, and I can't respond to all of them right now, guess what it does, it gets it gets starts to sink in my inbox, in terms of priority, because I'm going to have to set it aside because it's a big blob of things. And and that's just the way my my world works. If you sent me 15 emails that I can respond to the ones I can respond to immediately, quickly get rid of those, and then move the others to a project status, get those things done, move the items that are action items to an action status, and maybe get those done over the course of the next several days. And then you get all the answers to your questions, as opposed to, you know all your answers at once. Because that's just not going to happen, or never getting answered at all, because I've set the email aside and it just goes into my someday maybe list and eventually gets deleted. Because that's just the way my brain works. And once you know that about me, it's much easier to manifest, you know, response and to engage easily.

A Augusto Pinaud 17:44

Yeah, but you hit there something really, really important training, how did work in this organization. And I think most of the organizations that I have, interact, they don't have that internally or externally, you know, I, I remember, I have the rule that after, you know, between certain hours of the day, I don't pick up the phone, I don't talk to you, unless it's really an emergency because as soon as family gets home, or we get home and then that, you know dining, go to bed time, I'm sorry, I don't need to be an emergency for me to interact with my professional world. Okay, that's family time for me. And, and it's something that I have fight for many, many years to be that. And it is a struggle, every time some new organization come into my world or some new group of people come into my world, it is the first thing, as you said, comes into the training, hey, between 530 and 8am out, okay, I phone call me, we can talk again at 10pm. But we are not going to talk before during that period, unless it's an emergency. But the problem is that the train in the dedication we give is exactly the opposite. We on the training of everything is an emergency that what produces a result is nothing, you know, when I go and work with with individuals and the coaches, okay, out of all these, what is the priority? What is the important thing? Okay, I know, you know, some of them even been relatively high, you know, in the food chain, they everything is everything is a priority? Well, if everything is a priority, nothing is and, and a simple rule. Like that is something that is not common and bring the problem with email. You know, when you look and Microsoft, you know, has been trying to do this with Outlook. Okay, this our focus, I think they call it focus emails. Okay, I'm trying to differentiate between the noise and what are the important emails that you should look first that you should take priority, trying to create some distinction between this is important. And this is less important. But if one of the big problems with email is, it was exciting, Hey, you got mail. Okay, AOL made famous was that sentence and people got excited, because they got an email. And suddenly that went to 1020. Hundred. Okay, I know people getting into the three to 500 emails a day and more. So now the problem is, yes, there is no way to put that thing inside of the package. Okay, there is no way to go back. But how can we start making that differentiation between what he's important and what he's not? Because what I see mostly, is a ridiculous amount of unread emails. And the problem is not the unread emails. The problem is, no one knows what he's in there, what he's taken, what will explode. And the reason that is happening is because we are trying to figure it out what is important, what is not, but there is not a really clear criteria, not from the organization, and in many cases, not even from the individual. What is what define that important or not important email.

A Art Gelwicks 21:12
I want to get on my soapbox here, because every time I go back and look at this article, it's making me more annoyed. I hope his clickbait title got him a lot of ad revenue, because he missed like 90% of the facts of this thing. Let's start with some basics.

synchronous communication does not work. If you're part of a global community, Australia goes to bed, I'm awake, we're not going to all sit up and have a meeting. That's it. We're dealing with a platform and a technology that happens to be the only one that works across disparate systems, slack teams, SM not even text messaging works across disparate systems like email does, it happens to be the only ubiquitous one that pretty much anyone can connect into and share information. So let's take this as Nick example, we, I'm going to have an asynchronous communication with you, I'm going to make you sit down in a room, you cannot do anything until I finished formulating my thought and communicate it to you, then you have to process it, formulate your response and communicate back that to me. That is freaking asynchronous communication. It just happens to be that the other eight people sitting in the room can't do anything while that's going on. So if we look at efficiency, and we look at productivity, what do you think is more efficient, the ability to send that communication, and then do something else while the responses coming. He also talks about Scrum. And he has an entire paragraph in this article talking about Scrum and one he's misconstruing it, but he's talking about the fact that a scrum session takes 15 minutes, and then the person or the developers are set for their work for the day. You know, that's great. But let's take a look at what happens for the other side, seven hours and 45 minutes of the day. And the asynchronous communications that occur to try and keep that work moving on. If for example, we had to have a scrum every time we needed to communicate something, guess what nothing's getting developed. So this concept of saying that emails a mistake. Yeah, it's very click Beatty, because what it comes down to, is, if you think that having face to face communications is the best way to communicate all the time, you need to get out of a classroom, and you need to get into a real world. I'll get off my soapbox now.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 23:33

Now I like it. It gets you on your soapbox more often.

Art Gelwicks 23:38

It just it boggles my mind. And I hear this all the time in collaboration spaces. People like oh, yeah, email, such a terrible thing, email such a terrible thing. No, emails, fine, you just suck at it. That's really what it comes down to. You have this inability, you being general, this inability to understand that when you send an email, you have no reasonable expectation that a responsible come in short order, they will respond when they get it. That's why I go bonkers over this idea of read receipts, I'm going to send it Read Receipt. And that way, I'm going to know when they read it. And I should be able to know, all that is is a confirmation that they opened it, it's still an unreasonable expectation that they are going to respond as soon as they read it. If you want that immediate response, guess

what, we've got a technology for it, it's called chat, that's all chat is, is email without the addresses, you're sending a message, you're getting it back, you're sending a message, you're getting it back, it's happening close to real time, pseudo synchronous, if you want to go that way. But it's no different. You can stop in the middle of a chat, and process and think about it a little bit and then type back. One of the most popular features in chat are those little dots that show up that show you that somebody on the other end is typing. Why? Because we're impatient. As people, we do not want to give people the time and opportunity to communicate effectively. And coherently. We want immediate gratification. And that's what it boils down to.

Raymond Sidney-Smith   25:07

I couldn't agree more. And so the goal for us is what I'm what I'm I'm hoping for us to do right now. And the time that we have left together is to talk about some of the principles and maybe some of the technologies that we use to be able to help improve email usage and, and work style for people who are perhaps in an organization where they may not be able to effect cultural change, culture is to an organization is habit is to an individual. And so habits don't change easily. Culture doesn't change easily. And it requires time for those things to take hold. So what I would, what I would like for us to do is to discuss some of the ways in which we have been able to make change happen. And I'll start off with an article that I picked up three years ago. And it talked about how the military has defined using email. And I'll put a link to this in the show notes. And and so what what they do is they have a, they have two basic protocols that I that I thought were really interesting, and that I've adopted many, many years ago, not in the same way the military has. But in essence, this is very helpful. So in essence, they use the subject line of the email to state the purpose of the email message. And so they have identified various verbs or keywords that tell you what the context is of that particular email. So in the subject line, in all caps at the beginning of the subject, it will say, action, meaning that there is a compulsory for the recipient to take some kind of action sign, meaning that something requires a signature of the recipient. info, that is an informational reference based email, decision, something requires the recipient to decide on that, at that item, the substance of the of the email request, someone's looking for approval or permission from the recipient, and then cord for coordination. That is someone needs to coordinate with the recipient. And those six, it seems like are fairly unique, you know, to certain environments, but you know, for the most part, you can adapt that for your organization. And I feel like if you start to model that people will start to do that themselves. And, and then the second thing this particular author talks about is using the bluff protocol. And bluff stands for bottom line up front. And so the first sentence of every email, says bluff colon, and then does a succinct summary of the five W's that is who, what, when, where, why, and how. And so

that you get this email, and in immediate in that immediate moment that you see the subject line and the first sentence of the email, you know, all of the context of what you need to and your emails become shorter, your emails become more actionable. And they are they're just more doable, right? They're just, they're just more practical in that sense. Do You Do any of you gentlemen use a system akin to this? Do you use different ways in which you identify the context of the email beyond the email itself. And I'll just add one other note that I, internally, I always send an RN emails means that no response necessary and I will put that into the subject of the message so that whoever I'm sending the email to knows that I don't want a thanks. Got it. Okay, responses I I'm personally peeved by by those silly, one sentence or two, you know, one word or two word responses that are just basically fluff, I sent the email, I have a presumption that you've received it because dissimilar to the way in which art was was was talking about read receive email, my system tells me when someone has looked at an email, but it's just told me that it's been delivered. And I actually like that, and it's not an some systems like send another email message to you telling you that you received it. And in the particular Chrome extension that I'm using, it just shows a little eyeball icon, meaning that the email has been opened. And at that point, I know it's been at least delivered, that person may not have looked at it, but I don't have to worry about whether or not it's been read and acted upon or anything else like that, I don't care. The best part about email is that as art said, you send it and the recipient can deal with it on their own time. So I don't need the acknowledgement, I don't need a signature on the dotted line, if it really does come down to me needing some kind of verification that the person did the thing they were going to do, then I should look for the outcome of it, not for them to say, Yeah, I got it done. So that's just poor management of both email and of people. So I give people the the understanding that if I sent something, I have an expectation that it will be done. So I do not need you to send me an email back saying, thanks, got it, done. All of those messages, they're just more email that I don't need. And if you are feeling like you need that type of confirmation, then think about your management expectations of those people and the responsibility and the respect you have for their autonomy in their position and roles. If they don't take responsibility, personal responsibility for the work they're doing, then you have a bigger problem than email.

A   Augusto Pinaud   31:04

And I think that's part of the problem. It goes into thinking, Okay, well, we are going to identify email, we are going to kill cold email, the bad guy, and that is going to solve the problem. And now the problem is way deeper than email, you can take email right now away, and we will find different vehicle maybe slightly, maybe some text messaging, maybe something else that will cause the same issue, because the problem goes exactly to what you said, there is no rules, there is no clear definition on marketplaces of how to

use it appropriately. So therefore, we just should, and hope that is going to stick. And if not, hey, I have a proof that it was sent, and it's on the server and it will cover my pack

A Art Gelwicks 31:51

that I use something similar, I'll end a subject line with an EOM and a message with the intention that they don't even have to open it, everything they need to know is in the subject line of that email. And that's it, I'm not worried about the tracing or anything else, it acts kind of like an old school chat function type of thing. And I've gotten gotten to do that as a habit because of mobile devices. I mean, you pull up your you open your email your you see a message in the notification that comes across on a mobile device, and it says, Hey, you got an email from such and such, here's the subject. Or if the subject ends with EOM, you don't even have to go open it, you've already gotten all the information I needed you to get, then you can open it later on if you want. But all it's going to have is my automatically generated subject line, which we're all stuck with.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 32:38

And the exception to my rule about not sending one word responses is that I actually do the same thing. My mind is an RN instead of VOM. But the the idea here is that if somebody asks me for a, a request for something, so say they wanted some personal leave, or paid time off, or anything like that, the request goes to through the system, and it generates an email, I respond to the person with a simple if it's just Yes, which very infrequently Have I ever said no to someone's paid leave request, you know, I work with professionals, who should be able to make a determination as to those types of things. So I don't particularly need to worry too much about that. So the responses, then, yes, and RN, yours would be EOM, right in the subject line, they get that message. And that is the end of it. Right? There's no other, there's no other work that needs to be done. Because the the lead request has now been approved, and so on so forth. That's changed a little bit now because the system itself now goes in and I check a little thing in the system, and it auto approves and all kinds of other things. But I like to send that personal message to those folks. So they get a faster message, as opposed to the automated system, which takes a little bit of time. Those are the types of things where you can really create greater wealth efficiencies in helping people especially you know, you're planning vacation and you put in paid time request, you want to you want a quick response. And knowing that you don't even have to open the email, I think that's the value of what you're talking about here is like you don't have to open the email, you could just look at it, go great, you know, text message your spouse, you know, we're friends, if you're going on vacation, say I'm good for those dates, let's go forward with moving forward with those plans. And that's less time that my team has now spent not working, right, they're doing something

personal, which I'm I'm completely comfortable with because I'm performance evaluation focused, I care about the results, I don't care about what they do with their time. And, and in that way, they are now able to get back to work are able to go do what they're supposed to be doing, you know, not having to deal with the administrative minutia.

A Art Gelwicks 34:51

Yeah. And I think that's one of the things that we see that chat and tools like slack and teams, you know, they keep pounding that these are the the death of email? Well, it's just because email has been used inefficiently. And it's eliminating some of the core inefficiencies of how its implemented. A lot of the email clients introduce a lot of those inefficiencies as well. But the types of things that we're talking about, it's proving the value of asynchronous communications, it's proving the value of time slicing, and being able to address things in a timely manner that works along with your productivity schedule. So to go back and say something that is such a linchpin part of the evolution of this process, as email was a mistake, we might as well have said that, you know, having careers running, you know, from marathon to notify, to tell us that the battle had been one was also a mistake, because we had to wait for that we should have gone to marathon and seen the battle will historical reference for everyone.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 35:58

I wanted to turn to Francis you had shared with us during the early part of our discussion, a, an another article that did another study and kind of disputed the findings that Cal Newport is finding in the article. Could you explain that a little bit for listeners in terms of how distributed systems actually help not hinder productivity?

F Francis Wade 36:26

Well, I wouldn't say it disputed, it just made the point that When, when, when working remotely, they don't studies that show that when you work intensely, that was really the deciding factor as opposed to working at a sort of allegedly pace. And they compared, they compared teams that they randomly chose some teams and give them an assignment. And then sorted the way they worked versus their results at the end. And those that took sort of the leisure Lee slow pace, I guess, sharing the work over a period of several months. And you do a little bit each day. And you're you're kind of not trying to be too intense, necessarily. But you're just trying to get it done. But get it done slowly, that they were less effective than those who didn't do anything for a while, came together for a few days, focused all their attention on it on the task, and the ones that put all of their

energy into intense efforts came off better. No, in a way, you might say that, that that supports what Kyle is saying, because if you're engaging an intense effort, it essentially means that you're engaging somewhat more synchronously than you would if you are taking the other approach. However, I think the article is saying that it doesn't matter where the people are, they don't need to be face to face, they don't need to be on the phone. They just said they're saying that what the essential ingredient is the level of group wide intensity, as opposed to the channel that they're using. So in a way it does, it does argue that email is a red herring. And I think that's kind of what the conclusion that we're drawing is that the channel that you're using this is to focus on the channel and say that the channel is a mistake is a bit of a red herring. The point is, how are the human beings implementing that channel? And this article says that if you use the channels in an intense way, regardless of what they are, you'll get better results than if you use them in a more measured way.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 38:41

And I would I would even make the arguments further on that point, which is that what what they were actually talking about was a distributed workforce and not distributed systems. And so there's a little bit of conflation in the article that a distributed workforce is the same as a distributed system in the computer science context. And so I recognize that that Newport is actually talking about distributed in the computer science sense, that can be conflated into a belief that what we're really talking about is distributed workforce productivity, that is impacted by distributed systems in a negative way. And I and I actually don't think that's the case. If, if the organization that is using the distributed systems, that is the technology part is and has the appropriate mechanisms in place. And I've talked about some of those, I think there are many others that we can offer. In that sense. I will note that in on the personal side, I've been playing around with a piece of software called spike and spike, I'll put a link to this in the show notes. And what spike does is it turns your email into a conversation thread that looks akin to messaging to kind of a text messaging, and or a messaging app, and have to admit, it is very slick. I really like it, it hasn't a corporate enterprise option to at a business level product, where you can upgrade the system to be able to handle business email, I have not gone to that effect. I'm not I'm not interested in that part. But I suppose it could be done in my own personal email, I've been testing it to see how it works and sending email back and forth in this text message, instant message, not instant message. But just messaging app style is actually very fluid for me in the way in which I normally communicate with family and friends. And so that's actually been been really, really nice. I will also offer another app that's in beta right now. It's called stoop. And what Stewart does is it takes your email newsletters and converts them into an app interface. And instead of receiving a whole bunch of newsletters, now, it's like receiving articles in feed Lee or another application where you're

reading articles. So I have been slowly converting all of my work based email newsletters into the stoop application. There's a web interface also, that's, that's in beta. And the idea here is that they give you a specialized email address, and email newsletters, then get forwarded to that location as opposed to your email inbox. It gives you more control over the email, the newsletter itself, and I think it's brilliant. And I want to see more of that kind of, of getting the the content that doesn't belong an email out of email before it even gets there. And something like stoop does that. And so you in your, in your enterprise environment, in your business environment organizational level, I see at some point saying to folks, you know what, if you want to sign up for a newsletter, you need to use your newsletter, app email address, that then goes ahead and subscribes inside that app that keeps it out of the email inbox. And then the only things coming into your inbox are actually the things you need to pay attention to that are in an asynchronous work, collaboration, experiential perspective. And once you do that, then you get you get a whole host of other opportunities there because that's what we know. But nobody get we get newsletters, we get promotional items. And those tend to fill up our inbox is faster than the one to one communications are many too many communications within a subset of people, which is a grouping of family, friends, work colleagues, zones, so forth. How do we how do we parse those things apart and put those things into the right places? And I feel like we can do that with something like stoop, and spike and a combination of other things that use the email protocol, but using it a little bit better of a way. Final thoughts before we close out, gentlemen, well, that closes out this conversation about email and whether or not it was a mistake, I think we've all come to the decision that email was not a mistake. And and as art said earlier, a little bit click Beatty on the New Yorker side. Many times the people who write articles for these news magazines and and and news articles, news outlets, don't actually choose the headlines. So they write the articles and then somebody else writes the headlines, just a couple of announcements, and then we will close out the episode itself. So if you have a comment about email, and you'd like to join in the discussion or have a question about what we discussed in terms of the article, you can go ahead and engage with us by heading over to the podcast website to the episode page at productivity cast.net just find the episode there at the bottom of the page, feel free to leave a comment or question and we'll be glad to correspond with you. They're there on productivity cast.net. While you're there, you'll also find on the episode page show notes, which has links to anything we discussed. It will also have a two transcript of our discussion and, and links to all of the things that we talked about. As I said, you'll also find a way to subscribe to the podcast there on the page itself. Also, there's a page called subscribe, click on subscribe and you'll find all the ways in which you can follow us on the various podcast apps. If you have another question about personal productivity not related to email being a mistake, you can go ahead and visit productivity cast.net forward slash contact and you can either leave us a voice based or type written message and we will receive it and hopefully we'll be able to respond to you or put it in a future episode.

Thanks to Cousteau Francis and art for joining me here on this cast. If you could please leave a rating or review and Apple podcast or Stitcher we just enjoy hearing from you and learning and growing the podcast listening community and we can do that by making ourselves better and hearing about your experiences and sharing that with the broader community. So thank you. That brings us to the end of this episode of productivity cast the weekly show about all things productivity, here's your productive life.

V Voiceover Artist 45:06
And that's it for this productivity cast. The weekly show about all things productivity with your hosts re Sydney Smith and a goose open out with Francis Wade and art gallery