

Transcript for Episode 066 Working From Home in the Age of the Novel Coronavirus and COVID-19 – ProductivityCast

Voiceover Artist 0:00

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 Sidney-Smith and Augusto Pinaud with Francis Wade and Art Gelwicks.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 0:17

And Welcome back, everybody to productivity cast, the weekly show about all things personal productivity, I'm Ray Sidney Smith.

Augusto Pinaud 0:24

I am Augusto Pinaud.

Francis Wade 0:26

I'm Francis Wade.

Art Gelwicks 0:27

And I'm Art Gelwicks.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 0:28

Welcome, gentlemen. Welcome to our listeners to this episode of productivity cast. And we are in uncertain times, to say the least, we are in the midst of a global pandemic. And what we can do as a group as a team here is to help people in the best way we know possible, which is to help you all be more productive in this environment. We are all working either as an essential, professional and out there working. And so things are maybe a little bit more stressful, but for the rest of us who are working now remotely and working from home, the situation may be different or at least exaggerated in the sense that are focused in the sense that now we are working from home maybe all the time as opposed to maybe choosing to work from home on occasion. And what I wanted to do is for us to have a discussion about the the four kind of fundamental areas of working from anywhere, but primarily here today working from home, which is really mindset skills, strategies and tools, the technology that we all use to be more productive in this environment. So let's start off with a conversation about mindset. And we can we can get into the particulars of the rest as we make our way along. I wanted to start off with just a discussion about as you approach working from home, you may have been working from home for several weeks now. You may just have been forced to Start

working from home, no matter where you are in the process, you need to consider environment as a as a fundamental component of how you will make yourself more productive. And so if your environment is not set up currently for you to be able to work well, then you will struggle so much more than if your environment was set up for working in as similar or maybe even better than your circumstance when you were in a an office environment or whatever type of environment you worked before.

Francis Wade 2:36

I think there's a number of people, a number of managers let's start there who are quaking in their boots because they know that there's certain there's certain people who work for them certain employees, who, in their minds are unable to manage themselves. And they've been, I hate to say carrying but they've been micromanaging them. For years, and the environment that they they've specially created an environment around some folks who are not productive and not self directed by giving them nudges and giving them their own cubicle and walking by every morning and walking by again at lunchtime and walking by again at five and sending them emails every or there's that subset of employees who aren't able to cope on their own and the managers know it. And they, I suspect, are quaking in their boots because as they go home, these employees, the managers realize that the carefully crafted environment they've created to have these people be minimally productive, is no going to go away. And it's going to be replaced by nothing. And ideally, if we had more time, the manager could, let's create a new word off board, they could off board the employee one step at a time. so that they could retain their productivity, it could take a year to train someone to be productive when they don't have all of these nudges around them. I, there's some managers I've met who tell me they love the open office environment because they can keep an eye on people, which implies that the off board someone like that we need to keep an eye on, that takes a while. And you gotta set up alternative ways of somehow nudging the person towards productivity. So I think this is this is going to be devastating for some managers and some employees, in terms of them being productive, they, they come to work to be productive, and they've never had played a hand in creating an environment in which they're productive. In other words, they weren't the ones who set up their own environment, somebody did it for them. And when that person and the environment both disappear, I suspect there are some people who are just going to simply flown though

Augusto Pinaud 4:59

it is You know, I, at this point after almost 15 years working from home, it is really easy to say, Well, you know, this is how my environment works. But the reality is that he took some time at the beginning of a lot of errors and failure and a lot of pressure, you know, there is going to be some pressure that are going to come with this process regarding getting things set up, understanding what needs to be set up understanding what you need, as Francis was saying, you know, you are at the office and this is what you get, and figure it out. Now that you are coming home, you may have the ability to add another component or you may have even less resources than what you had at the office. You know, we were laughing at the beginning of the pre show. As I was trying to print item print. My world is digital, and my kid is working He's, you know, he's doing homeschooling. So I needed to print some stuff. So there was some dusting that needed to be done to an old inkjet printer. Okay, well, that's going to happen to people, okay, there is not any more color lesser thing that will print those 52 pages to read. Now, you may need to read it into screen, and all those changes are coming. So it is

important to keep in mind, in your mind in the top of your mind that there are two things that are going to change one how you do things, and you need to pay attention what it is in two senses. Number one is what's bothering you. Okay, out of the oldest situation, what is bothering you, there are things that you're going to be able to affect and change and there are things that you are not, so focus on the ones that you can, because if you can print on that, you know, 50 pages per second laser printer, then don't be both about it, don't be frustrated about it, there's nothing you can do until you can get back to the office. Okay, the other element is now you need to start looking how you're going to show performance. And one of the things when you are in the office is people kind of walk, see that you are working, see that you're BCC that you're on the phone. And now that you're working from home, nobody will walk into where you are. So you need to find a way to show that performance. You know, I've been recommending a couple managers get a one on one. Okay, five minutes at the end of the day, beginning of the day, five minutes at the end of the day and help people to get that show that performance Hey, we plan the day that they were going to do a B and C. At the end of the day we did ABC and D and that way you Samana your help to parts help people having that if they need that notch and second Give them at the end of the day a story of success. The third part is, if you were bothered by distractions at the office, and the distractions really break your concentration at work, if you have family, husband, wife, significant other at home family, all that distractions are going to tenfold. So you need to find quickly a way to get back into this. Years ago I recommend having a notepad so you write down when you get distracted, you know, what is what you were doing, because otherwise your day is going to go and disappear after 10 distractions.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 8:44

I think you're making some really great points here, gentlemen, and I think that there's there two pieces fundamentally here. One is how you do your work and and the environment in which you do it. And I just want to put a final point on this so that we're all kind of clear here. creating an environment that supports your productivity is very different when you are working from home for all of the reasons that were just noted and many more the and it really does take some stepping back a moment and spending the time. And that could be 15 minutes, it could be a few hours of making your space optimal for being productive, because it's going to make you that much more productive when we get to the second component, which is how are you currently being paid. Those who are hourly versus those who are salaried, have a very different perspective in terms of how they're paid for their own productivity. And I have this fundamental belief that we are going to see a market change in how people address performance based work, you know, Physicians just all across the board, as Francis noted, there are people who maybe have been getting a lot of handicapping on both sides of it, people who are being micromanage. And those folks who are being crushed, you know, supported by virtue of the fact that a manager is giving them all of these prompts all the time. And from my perspective, the the real goal here is to be able to help people be the most productive they can, if you're managing people that is, but let's just stick to managing ourselves. We want to create an environment and have a mindset that allows us to be most productive wherever we are. And this whole notion of being paid by the hour is going to be remarkably Limelight it by virtue of the fact that now, managers and employers are not going to see their employees Filling up space. Because once upon a time, filling up space was the way we knew people were working. Now, we don't. So what happens when that person disappears from view, you're still paying them a salary. And nothing is actually happening that's important to you as the business owner or as the manager, you're not going to find that person to be as much value. And so how do you as an employee, as a professional,

potentially, even as an executive in your company, show your performance has value? And that's the real key here. Your mindset is to figure out how in this environment, do you show value so that we're potentially coming upon economic recession potentially worse than that, as we start to see the world kind of crumble around in certain ways. How do we shore up our own legitimacy and our own value to the organizations that we that we are working for. And I think that's going to be really, really important for everybody. So spending a little bit of time upfront, really helps you understand how to show value on the back end and potentially save a career, save a job, you know, and and stay gainfully productive in society.

Art Gelwicks 12:27

I want to bolt something on the back end of what you just brought up. working from home is great. When you are able to do it voluntarily. It's difficult when you're when you have to do it mandatorily because you're not ready for that transition. The idea of evaluation criteria and the workplace changing to a more outcome driven focus rather than time execution focus is a great idea. I'm going to throw cold water on it, it's not going to happen anytime soon until management finally decides to change their metrics. Because that's what drives all of this is as as a person with direct reports. I know the evaluation criteria is still around, are they getting X number of hours in each week, that's not going to change anytime soon, because that's tied to accounting processes. That's tied to billing processes. And until all of that, see change happens in the background. We're going to be dealing with this 19th century mindset of working in this 21st century working from home world. So as a manager, I have to push up as well as taking people and pulling them up and getting them to understand things like it's not a matter of how many hours you're putting in. It's a matter of accomplishing the tasks at hand. But that said, you still have to get your timesheet in so we can bill for the 40 hours. It's, it's not there yet. I'm not seeing the light bulb going on. I have high hopes for it. But those of us who can influence this thinking have to make it a priority. If we want this to change, we have got to push for new metrics and new ways of establishing quality of work versus quantity of work.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 14:31

I want to just give a little bit of of final accent to the notion of environment and that is making sure that you are helping to control certain types of distractions. both external and internal. Augusta mentioned the external distractions of working at home with family members spouses and children, pets and and otherwise I just recently saw a video on Twitter where an unfortunate circumstance, you know, these these professionals were meeting and I will put a, I'll embed this in the show notes so you can watch it yourself. But be the person went to the bathroom and didn't just, I guess forgot that she was on camera and put the laptop on the floor and there she is, you know, pulling her pants down and sitting on the toilet finally realizing that she could be seen by the other participants quickly tosses the laptop aside and shuts it. And so I just think that if you are if you are working from home right now, you need to pay attention to when you are by audio or video being seen or recorded. So that's number one. So just like from a privacy perspective, but also just a professionalism perspective. You know, I'm seeing lots of people's bedrooms Now, I'm seeing lots of people's homes. And you know, at least what's in the camera view, needs to be presentable and professional, because that's just a reality. This is a special circumstance. So there's some latitude there. But it's just important that you represent yourself just like you would at work professionally. So dressing professionally, and being in an environment that doesn't look like it's your children's bedroom is probably a good idea. But also, the second is that you are not putting yourself into a position where you are not letting others know that they can be seen. So if you are in a

management position, it's really important for you to tell people, hey, when you're meeting with clients, you know, maybe your children shouldn't be in view in the camera, you know, again, with latitude or whatever. I've seen a lot of people's dogs and cats you know, it's become a thing where people showing their dogs and cats, you know, while they're in the meetings, but be aware that you know, meeting with clients, these things can happen that are not things that would normally happen. You don't carry your laptop into the office bathroom, you know, and sit down in the stall. So be mindful of those things and communicate that to everyone you're working with so that they don't have those embarrassing moments. Because they will happen and a lot of it will happen and you just don't want it happening to you or the people who are who you're working with. So I just wanted to highlight that as well. Okay, moving right along. I wanted to have a conversation about the skills that people can develop for working from home in this age of the novel coronavirus and covid 19. What are things that people can do to really jumpstart their productivity in the skill space

Augusto Pinaud 17:57

working from home sounds nice. Oh, well, great. I will not need dressed up I will not need to wear pants or shoes or and it sounds awesome except that that effect when we were talking before the mindset and affect how people will look because as as you were described with case you get used to be on the camera and you could use to see the camera naturally. You don't. I said the beginning you are completely conscious of the fact that you are on a videoconference you lose that part. So as you can use to it is important to go and dressed up and and have that quote unquote professional attire that you're wearing that you you know that if you wear if you wear a tie, fine if you want to lose the tie, lose a tie, keep the shirt but but don't go you know all Sunday morning, item not going anywhere pajama day, kind of attire to work. Also you don't know when you know you Need to jump is a person who has been working from home for over 15 years I have here in my office, I shared on a tie. I don't know when the next meeting will require me to have a shirt and a tie. And sometimes it does. So you need to be able to adapt. I don't work on a shirt and a tie. But sometimes the meetings require that it be that way. So that part is important. And the other part is self care. You know, make sure you are keeping them as close as you can, that routine of self care that you were doing before. If you were a person who exercise will find a way to exercise and find a way to get these things. Find a way to create routines, make sure that you don't let the day run over you, you know working from home. It is hard for people to make the distinction between I'm at home and I'm at work, especially when you enjoy work. So make sure that you are so How making go things happen and planning around. One of the beautiful things of working at home is you can get used to the little five minutes increments. But the secret was dad is you need to plan what you're going to do, because otherwise that time will run over you. You know, yes. Many people who work at home can put a laundry, you know, well, well, they're switching from meeting to meeting, but the only way that's going to happen is when that's planned. If you wait for that five minutes to start thinking about it, it's never going to happen. So there is a lot more pre planning that is required to be at home park have those skills you need to sharpen that skill of pre planning in order to really be able to get more out of your day. Sam locking

Francis Wade 20:50

in general is a technique that is most necessary when anyone experiences a spike in the demands on their time. And most people go into work each day. The average person goes into work each day having enough discretionary time, so unblocked time in their calendar, that they could kind of just, you know, do I do I sit in a meeting? If I sit in a meeting, I do nothing. If I sit at my desk, I could work on one of three things. So they have like four choices that

maybe I could go to lunch. That's more like time off, but I have a choice of one or four things to do. All of a sudden, working from home, there's a choice on 100 do I play with the kids? Do I check my social network? Do I read the newspaper? Do I take 10 minutes off? Do I go exercise? Do I go shopping for food that we need? Do I call my friends to see if they're okay, do I check in on my mom and so on and so forth. So all of a sudden there's 100 and the skills required To manage 100 demands anytime are very different than four. And the environment, there's no boss around the environment doesn't lend itself to telling you what's important, you know, each in some companies, each activity is driven by the latest emergency. And if this emergency is communicated by the boss walking around and saying, Hey, what are you working on, either drop that work on this instead. And that's where you get your directions from. So all of a sudden, the boss isn't there. There, there are no remote or they're trying to do it by email, or they're just checked out all together. So a choice of what to work on next. And then next, and then next, or rather, the choice of what to spend the next time slot on and how long that time slot should be, and how higher priority it should be, and how it should be balanced with downtime, because you can't just work all the way through all of a sudden It's a complex choice. And I suspect that without time blocking, most people will flow under the other words, they'll just lurch from one impulse to the next or one emergency to the next or one activity to the next that's inspiring or fun or easy or, or emergent, or whatever criteria they use. But they'll find themselves just zigging and zagging from one thing to the next. Time blocking is meant for this kind of purpose when all of a sudden there's an increase in the demands on your time and you have very little desk discretionary time. And the basic idea is that you you spend time each day or each each time period, blocking out time for specific activities. So you pre plan exactly how the day is going to go, even if it doesn't actually end up going that day. The planning is all important because at least it it codifies your interest And it puts in front of you your ideal outcome. So at least you're in the zone of knowing what you want. Even if you may not ever have it perfectly any given day, you at least know what you want. And so it's a perfect solution for those who all of a sudden are thrown into this situation. And you know what? It may be temporary. There's there is during the the reset time blocking summit, one of the points that was made is that it's not a permanent solution. It's not meant to be a permanent solution, necessarily. It could be a temporary seasonal tactic that you use. I think this is a season if you're going to spend three months at home all of a sudden, and it's brand new time that time blocking is a great solution for the next three months and then when you get back to the office, go right back to having the boss tell you what to do or the situation determine what you're working on next. But in this situation is probably The best technique to use survive just running in circles.

Art Gelwicks 25:05

Well, I, I have to totally agree with the idea of the time blocking piece, but for a different reason. I mean, we need to allocate time to work. But we also need to remember that there are points we have to stop. This is a unique type of situation where typically when you work from home, you know that you're you have something else going on. There's some other activity, you're going to have to go to their soccer practice. There's who knows what some other thing that's going to take you away from the work. And that's what honestly, that's what a lot of managers are worried about is your going to go to that other thing rather than doing your work? Well, in many cases right now, there is no other thing. There's no other place to go. There's no store to go to no restaurant, new movie theater. That's just not an option. So it can happen easily and it can be insidious where that time that you spend working continues to expand to fill the available time. And you start to increase the stress on yourself because you unconsciously have now gone from an eight hour day to a 10 hour day to a 12 hour day,

just because that times they're so time blocking helps you keep the information or the time organized. But it also allows you to put guard rails around it to keep it from spanning and filling everything up. One of the things that I think everybody needs to also make a mental note and this is a significant mental health issue when it comes to working from home. There's a period of D socialization that happens as soon as you transition from a regular office work environment, to a home work environment or an isolated environment. You're used to things like go back to the old old school phrase the watercooler talk, being able to lean back in your chair and chat with your co worker for 30 seconds a minute, that mental break that kind of step away and step back in is important for mental health. Well guess what that's gone. There's a point where the cat is tired of listening to you. Here's a point where the dog is going to walk off, your kids really don't care about that TPS report. So you've got to maintain that level of connection with the co workers that you normally interact with. And it's going to be harder now because you need to do it through virtual technologies. But it's important that you do that. If you can't, I'm a big advocate for journaling. I think everybody who works from home or works in an isolated environment, should have a journal on their desk with them at all times. Not to take meeting notes not to set up to do lists. But to be able to this is going to sound funny, talk to themselves or talk to the journal things that they capture that little moment of venting that you need to have after you read the the ad email on the same topic and nobody seems to come to a consensus. You can't just lean back in your chair and say, you know, do you believe this nonsense? You have to put it somewhere, get it out of your head and free up that headspace? Well, the journaling aspect of this can be hugely beneficial for that. You don't need to keep it, you just need to get it out of your head. And finally, don't hide behind email. We've got this old school technology that everybody lives on, they send an email, they send it to mass distribution now, which seems to be even more common when people are working remotely, because we're afraid somebody might get left out. Look at the technologies that you have. Microsoft Teams has gone to 44 million daily average users with this shift because of the virus. Taking advantage of the tools to be able to put your thoughts out into a common area, like a post section, in a channel in a team, instead of pummeling, everyone. With emails and the responding emails and back and forth,

it is more equivalent to the natural way we interact with people than the mechanical way. We're used to doing it through things like email. Look at what you have available from a technology standpoint, look at your tools and figure out the best way to use them. Don't spend your time sitting and griping and saying, but I don't have the fancy whiteboard I had at work, but I don't have the meeting conference rooms that I had at work. No you don't. Welcome to the world of working from home you have exactly what you've paid for, or been supplied. And you're going to have to use that limited set of Legos to do all the different projects that you're now being giving. This is your opportunity to be creative. Yes, it can be stress inducing. If you're used to being the person who turns a widget or turns a gear rather you're going to go to your workbench, your tools are going to be supplied for you. You're going to Do your things and then you're going to go home? Well, that's tough. If you're not in control of that, or you're used to someone else being in control of that, now you are responsible for it. So you have to look at that. And you have to take ownership of that. And again, this is where I'll go back to the journaling part. That can be one of the most frustrating stressful things about this whole environment is, who do I talk to? Who do I reach out to the say, I have no idea where to start to get this stuff organized, so I can get it done. Nobody ever told me how to do this. Nobody ever taught me how to do this. No, you're right. Nobody has this is your your chance. And the necessity of the environment is going to compel you to learn how to do this. So and like race or like Francis said earlier, connect to your social network social networking and the

workspace is, is just a terrible term. They they look at it as a waste of time. This is probably the most valuable asset you have available, because these are the brains that you can't just lean back in your chair to anymore. So using social networking tools inside your organization tools like Yammer, leveraging your community in LinkedIn, build a community for once have these professionals have other colleagues that you can reach out to and talk to use your tools like teams, it reestablish those connections, not only is that going to save your bacon, working from home, but when you actually go back into the work environment. Well, that network is going to follow you along.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 31:34

Yeah, there's a couple of comments I have relating to what Art's talking about here. I think that self care is so important in this environment. And just kind of two points that come to mind. One is segmenting the non work related conversations from the work conversations and in these types of social networking software that are out there like Yammer and otherwise, you could potentially create a completely independent one or Connect with colleagues on traditional consumer based social networking platforms like Facebook and Twitter and, and so on and so forth Instagram and, and and the others. And that way your conversation that is not directly related to work is not caught up in the company and the enterprise, you know, it data, you know, we don't want those to mix necessarily. And I know I don't. So you know, for those who are fairly privacy minded as I am segmenting, those can be really good. And it gives you an opportunity to have a digital watercooler environment, which is to know the context of what you're talking to a colleague about is appropriate in that environment. So if I'm communicating this is one of the big reasons why I don't really connect with business or professional folks via Facebook because I know that when I'm on Facebook, while I don't use it that often it is not for anything other than personal interaction with family. Friends when I'm there, I can interact with family and friends in the way that I know, I interact with my family and friends. I'm not, I don't have to worry about the other contexts when I'm in that space. So I like the idea of being able to have that water cooler environment, and, and making that a dedicated space for folks. If it doesn't exist, create it. I think that it's one of those things where we are in, I keep hearing this wartime analogy. We're in this battle against this invisible opponent. And it's imperative upon each of us to take up the mantle of leadership where we can, and this is an opportunity for us to be able to help everyone in our organization, have a space where we can be social and build camaraderie where we may not have had it before. And so this could actually be really wonderful for the organization on the flip side of this, which is that when things do go back to a normative working order, We are able to go back to the office now we have a space where we can be, you know, social and otherwise, and it's more productive because it's facilitated both by in person and, you know, digital means. So I think that with all things, social networking, they should improve, they should, they should affect our offline lives. Anything that is completely digital, ultimately, for humans, at least, is not productive. It's, it's unproductive, if it's not actually helping, what we call IRL in real life. If it doesn't have an IRL impact, then it's not useful. So what we need to really do is think about social networking as facilitating this future IRL impact. And that can be really powerful on the other side of this crisis. The second item I want to talk about is the ability to create pure accountability and in this environment where you can you Can, in essence partner up with someone else at the at the company that you're working for, or a colleague that doesn't work for your company. And you can create this level of peer accountability, you can then get more done in an a social environment that is digital. And so that might mean just touching base with that person on a regular basis throughout the workday, and just creating a way in which you let them know what you're working on. Not the particulars, but like, Okay, I have a meeting at one

o'clock, I've got a I've got a project do at five o'clock, these are the things I'm going to do to get that done. And that level of accountability really helps you step up your own game. It helps them step up their game, and it creates this this social pact that helps you be more productive while you're not feeling isolated from the rest of the work team. So I really believe in pure accountability to be a very strong component here for those who do feel like they're not taking capable of getting the work that they need done because they're working in a vacuum

Augusto Pinaud 36:05

I maybe it's important that you understand that you may not be alone in this. So, you may have an idea how to do this self cares on this basics but your other half you better have proven your kids may not it is important you know, I one of the challenges that I have been looking you know, on social media and friends, is the kids are driving me nuts, okay and that that message change and it is and we need to remember that. For the kids staying at home usually is a snow day or a vacation or something like that. And we are now asking them that they do the work that they do at school or the work that they send them or they do the homeschooling. So we need to also stop for a moment and plan that for them. They may may not depending on the age of your kids have that and they may find it for a while. So, that is important. Same thing with your, with your partner or their spouse, okay? They may be better or worst at that self care. So you need to figure it out what you are going to do. One of the things we are doing right now and I recommend this to everybody is we are sharing what are the open space on the calendar. So we try to get together even if it's, you know, for that family water cooler, but make that happen. This is stuff not only on you, this is tough on everybody, unless everybody has worked from home including the kids. Okay, this is tough for everybody. Everybody's missing their routine, missing their salad at lunch missing, you know, the ability to walk around downtown. So, understand this is not only challenging for you, it's challenging for everybody. So you need to find a way to Disconnect a little bit from from the old concerns you have and see an ask because you may not be able to have the answer. He's here to see a tiny thing on the eye of another person that I still run on your own eyes. So use that to your advantage, sit with that person and ask what can I do? I'm stressed out what can I do? What do you what what do I normally do to help me to disconnect and to recharge helped me is with this and same thing was was in other parts so that way, you can move forward much faster. You know, again, make a list of every resource that you think you may or not have and the resources that you don't have and sit with that other person's hit connect with your friends. By the time this gets released. I we're moving on we move to the new home so there is now a new set of challenges. Okay, I used to have a quiet Place to record. Now I have an office but every little sound on the house reflects on the office until that gets fixed. So, work with people, people need to know, hey, I'm gonna need to be quiet between this time I am going to be open, you know, to have a kitchen meeting if you can have that kitchen space for meetings, or we need to sit. When we sit on this table, we need to work done. This is a time where assumptions need to be minimized to the maximum people don't understand that you are on a conference call unless you let them know most people is not trained to work at home, so on or you can have your own environment like ours where we're mixed. I've been working from home for many years, but my wife and the kids have not. So that part is important that you help them to with the tools help share the information that is needed. Don't make assumptions that because you know The other person, no, give them the tools share the tools.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 40:04

And I would say that about the rest of your organization as well share this podcast episode, let people know about the fact that there are skills, strategies, tools mindset out there that

they can use to be able to be more productive. And don't assume that other people just know this stuff. You know, there there is a there's a, a huge dearth of knowledge in this space for people because most people from the vast majority of their careers have gotten up and gone to work and come home. And there was a natural order of things in that sense and that that is being upset here. And, and and can be very disruptive for folks. And I would say that to reach out to people who you know, may be struggling in that capacity, especially in this type then these times because they may be feeling isolated themselves and this is just a good time. to, you know, to reach out a hand to someone in need, who may need your help, and that will help them not just be more productive, but also be a better colleague have better social relations with the people who you spend most of your life with, you know, if he's if you are a working adult, you're going to spend most of your working adulthood with these people. And and it just makes sense to have a good relationship with those, and why not use this opportunity as a time to strengthen those relationships. Okay, so I want to quickly have a conversation about the tools and technology that we use to be productive in this working from home environment. You know, there are the basics, which is having a broadband internet connection, and a computer and phone and so on and so forth. But I wanted to just wait, there's a lot of discussion in the media today about video meeting technology. And I wanted to make the point, just so that we're all clear that video meeting technology like zoom Microsoft Teams, Google me And otherwise, are not the only remote working technologies in the world. You have synchronous and asynchronous communications in a company. And it's really imperative that we have good technology to satisfy both of those. picking up the phone. And having a phone conversation can be the best synchronous communication technology when it suits you. So don't think that everything has to be a video meeting. One because it's probably going to overtax The, the internet broadband system we have in this country at some point anyway, and people are going to have suboptimal experiences when internet connections are intermittent. So be mindful of that. So when you don't have to be having a video meeting, don't and so so I'm just like, I hear a lot of people saying, Oh, well, video meeting technology is just going to solve all of the problems of remote working and working from home. And I just don't believe that that that's true. The other side to this is that beyond the basics of video meeting technology, and the snack foods that we talked about earlier of, you know, being on camera when you don't realize it, what are some of the things people can do to? What are some of the tools that you use and that people can use to be more productive in this working from home environment,

Art Gelwicks 43:21

when it comes to unique tools ways to actually accomplish things? I think you're right, you've got to split it into two groups, those synchronous tools, where you're actually having to interact with somebody directly. And the asynchronous ones, and I think the asynchronous ones are actually where people fall flat more than they would like to admit. The asynchronous tool that everybody falls back on is email. I'm going to send an email, I'm going to send an email, and I'm looking at a thread right now that's about 12 emails deep and that entire thing could be done in one threaded discussion in a tool designed for threaded discussions. So I don't even know it's a matter of a specific technology recommendation because unless it's web based, if it requires physical assets, those physical assets may be difficult to acquire right now. If it's going to be something like a recording based system, you may have a hard time getting a good microphone and headset to be able to do that right now. Because you know, it takes a month to get anything from Amazon right now, unless it's toilet paper or something like that. But if we look at taking the tools that we have, and rethinking around things like asynchronous communication, and the fact that not everybody is at their desk simultaneously,

can we change our approach to leverage those kinds of tools. So for example, I'm looking at the email thread right now and redesigning this email thread, as it would be best served in one of these asynchronous tools. In this case, it's not. But there isn't. I don't know that there's a specific winner in the tech space. Zoom certainly seems to be getting a lot of traction right now. It has a free initial offering, which is very nice. A lot of the schools have switched over to using it. They're using it for classwork. Again. Great thing. I hope it scales. I hope they're highly successful. But I don't want to hang my hat on any specific technology. I think we need to shift our mentality around whatever technology we've got. Can we use it better? The answer is almost always Yes. The real question is how

Augusto Pinaud 45:36

it is also important. Depending where you are, you may be locked down and technology but also, you have now different ways to use the device and a lot of these conversations are going to be synchronous. Remember as you are having your own cows at home, dealing with people getting your kids to homeschooling, helping your signature And other also the other people are too. So remember, you know that what may have been a quick two minute answer in the past may now be a 10 minute answer because a person people need to you know get back read it think about it before they can even answer you. So that is also important to take into consideration in these days. So, some of those communications are going to slow down it was really easy to work to Lucy's down the hole to get that done. And Lucy may have done it with you I never told you that she's not the person who do that because she knows how to do it. And now you need to go to the proper channel. Okay, so think Ronaldo things and as remember also that a lot of the infrastructure is not designed for everybody working at home. Okay, offices has much, much larger bandwidth. Okay, much better. Tools then what a lot of people have at home. And so you need to have also that patience with the technology with what is happening with how things are happening so that way, the things end up the best possible.

Francis Wade 47:16

I think the number one tool that people will need to manage is quiet, not not quite a physical tool, but they'll discover that when they can work out an uninterrupted way that they can be way more productive than if they are subject to distractions, the way they could be in the regular office with just an open office plan. I think this is about part of the success of working at home is about preservation of your focus. And quiet is a big contributor to that it's a big tool to preserve your focus. So in other words, what could take two hours in the office could take an hour, an hour and a half. You're working working in a focused way at home. But the thing to learn, I guess, is as you make this transition is that you need to be very mindful and very careful, you need to let people know you need to close the door, either have a door, you need to be able to cut off, cut off all distractions turn off phones. So you can work in this monk like very focused mode, because time is no of the essence. And whereas, you know, you could fool around for two, three hours in the office and no one it doesn't really cost you anything to take that extra hour and a half. at home. Time is way more precious. And you may only have let's say between, you get up early at five o'clock between five and 630 could be your most productive time just because no one else is up and it's really quiet and the phones are ringing and there's no one demanding or asking anything of you having that be your most productive time to work could be a tactic to tick. But once again, you'd be you've got to be very mindful about managing the quiet the removal of the distractions, the the managing the interruptions. So it's a different way of thinking. And I think for many people as they make the transition, it's gonna be tough because they've not had to construct. They're not had to think about when I'm

at my most productive, how do I make sure I have all the tools and resources available to me? How do I manage my own mind basically, without any kind of training and without warning, they've been thrown into an environment where they, I imagine it's going to be sink or swim. And before the call, we talked about the fact that we suspect that once you know three months time people go back into the office, that there are some people who are There are companies I think are going to look at them and say, well, for three months, we cannot do without you. We didn't we didn't really do anything while you were away. And we suspect that you're not, you're no longer really needed. I suspect that that conversation is gonna happen. And it's going to not not not be pretty in some cases. But I think it's a, the reality will really come to roost because this is so disruptive. And it forces managers and executives to look at really what's core, what's required and what's essential for the first time in probably years.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 50:41

I couldn't agree more. And I think that there's a couple of things that I just wanted to point out in terms of technologies that I think are useful to people just in the immediate term. One is, if you're thinking about focus, there's a tool called brain.fm and uses some really powerful audio technology to be able to help you Do a whole bunch of different modality type work, focus, relaxing and otherwise. So brain.fm I'll put the links to all of these in the show notes, too, is having some kind of place or repository for what you're working on. And those of you who are probably listening to this are pretty well acquainted with productivity software. But I think Trello is a great one that's collaborative and capable of helping you manage in a visual space. Not necessarily even thinking Kanban or personal Kanban. But just having an immediate space where you can collect details and have threaded conversations with folks and those kinds of things based on cards. Then, just on a, like a privacy perspective, most people don't think about their home environment and data privacy and data security. You should probably get a VPN and just because if you are going to work from anywhere outside of the corporate enterprise, and if If it doesn't provide a VPN to remote into your office, you have some options there. One is using some kind of remote desktop protocol. And so talking to your, you know, whoever manages that for your company, obviously, there is the obviously, but there is Chrome Remote Desktop, which is a very powerful tool that Google provides for free, you install it on your work computer, and then you can access your work computer from your home. And so therefore you are, you're capable of, in essence, routing into your device at work. So you don't have to install all the software that you have at work on a home device. And there's the licensing problems and all those other things. So if you're in that kind of challenge right now, as you're transitioning, that may be an option, install that at the work with the right approvals if you need them, and then and if you work for yourself, then you can just do it anyway. And That way you can now, in essence, connect to your work network and login, you do have to have the computer on and active in both places, the one that you're trying to access and yours in order to be able to do that with good internet. So be mindful of that. But a VPN, I think it's just good practice all around. your ISP is likely collecting lots of data about you, which means that if you're doing any level of work, they're collecting data about your company and your clients, if you have clients and so you just don't want that you don't want the potential extra data security problem. And this coronavirus crisis has has spurred a whole bunch of new malware and other types of cyber attacks and people are going to prey on you from working from home. And so one thing you can do not the only thing but the one thing you can do that I think is helpful is setting up a VPN because Cuz it can do some things that can block mal malefactors. bad actors in attacking you. So I use a service called private tunnel. It's actually run by the open VPN folks. And pretty affordable, it gives you the ability to go ahead and in essence, connect and encrypt your data between you and where you're trying to

connect out there on the internet. Very, very helpful for just being able to put, you know, it's not the end all be all in terms of security, but it's at least one step in that direction. So with that, we hope that we've given you all a good kind of overview in terms of the things we can all do to get started in working from home more productively in this age of the novel coronavirus and kovat 19. And we wish you all the best of luck in personal productivity. And so just a couple things before we close out as always If you have a question or comment about this cast, you want to add another resource or you have a question about working from home, feel free to jump over to the podcast website, there at the bottom of the page. For that episode, you can leave a comment or a question and we'll be glad to respond. We'll have links to all of the items we talked about there in the show notes. So you can just click on them and jump to those items. We also have a transcript, both a PDF and a text based transcript. So you can scan through and see if you miss something you can you can jump to it in the conversation. If you have another question about personal productivity, feel free to visit productivity cast dotnet forward slash contact, and there you can record an audio message for us or you can type a message and send that over to us and we'll be happy to review it and maybe we'll make that a part of a future episode to discuss thank you to a goose dipping out Ventus Wade and our galaxy for joining me here on this cast. If you can leave a rating and review on Apple podcasts or Stitcher just helps us know that we're doing the right things in the right way. is the right time. And it also helps us grow our personal productivity listening community. And so thank you for doing that. That brings us to the close of this episode of productivity cast, the weekly show about all things, personal productivity, stay safe out there, and I will see you next time. Take care, everybody.

Voiceover Artist 56:18

And that's it for this productivity cast, the weekly show about all things productivity with your hosts, Ray Sidney-Smith and Augusto Pinaud with Francis Wade and Art Gelwicks.