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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

Hello, everybody, and welcome back to ProductivityCast the weekly show about all things personal productivity, I'm Ray Sidney-Smith.

Augusto Pinaud 0:23

I'm Augusto Pinaud,

Francis Wade 0:24

I'm Francis Wade,

Art Gelwicks 0:27

and I'm Art Gelwicks.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 0:26

Welcome to ProductivityCast. And welcome to this episode, where we're going to be talking about amateur professional and the difference that is frequently hear the term amateur bandied about as an insult. But there's a long and rich history to what amateur really means. And being productive in at least my humble opinion, requires you to be an amateur and professional simply in the right amounts and contexts. So what does amateur mean and what does professional mean? And how can their differences help level up your personal productivity. That's the topic of today's cast here on ProductivityCast. So let's get into it. So, first and foremost, I'd like for us to all, co define, or at least debate the definition of amateur and professional. And I'll start off with kind of the origins, the etymology of the two terms, which is that from Latin amateur came to come from the words to mean to love, or a lover or doing what one loves and professional means one who declares or professes, and then in the early about 15 15th century came to be known as a person who declares a skilled profession, medical doctor, lawyer, those kinds of things. And so we've, we've certainly fast forwarded throughout the throughout time, and those terms have come to be known very differently. Professional today typically mean someone who has some kind of license or certification or something else like that. I'm in some contexts, and in some contexts, that just means someone who is a part of of a profession. And those all mean different things to different people. And we'll talk about that. And there's also these other kind of intermediary terms, program and pro, power professional and semi professional, which all have their own slight and different meanings. So with that as kind of a backdrop to the conversation, what are the other ways in which we think about the terms or the words amateur

Art Gelwicks 2:36

and professional? Well, I could say, an over simplify the whole thing. Amateurs spending money to do what you're trying to do professional is making money doing it. And that's about as oversimplified as I can make it.

Augusto Pinaud 2:50

This is how my definition start, like, like yours, you know, that's Dan Matera was that person who who was trying to but it was not Not really good at it and didn't, you know, was spending money instead of making money out of this, that was my definition before I read the War of Art from Steven pressfield. That Changed my definitions of that. And I've been following pressfield you know, the many works that he has done regarding this and some of the even derivative work that has come out of the world of hard, you know, Seth Godin wrote a book, Marshall

Goldsmith wrote a book based on those principles pressfield told, he sold his story or partial his own story, in the War of Art about being an amateur being a professional, as a writer, and that change, for me the definition on the sense to understood that it had nothing to do with the money I and again, my definition of star in the same way the amateur, you know, will never make money. Out of This is wasting resources wasting time, or trying to learn to be someday a professional. And when you read the Word of art, what you learn is that the amateur and the professional on pressfield terms goes more about a mindset not about the money, they may or may not make it. And that really change how I look at those two definitions.

Art Gelwicks 4:25

So what's the difference between an amateur and a hobbyist then because from what you're describing, I mean, if somebody is not, and I'm not trying to say that an amateur is an underlying class to a professional, because I know a lot of professionals who should not be making money at what they're doing. And I know a lot of a lot of amateurs who should. The definition to me is very black and white, until you look at it. I know a lot of people, especially myself in certain categories that I am clearly an amateur at these things that I enjoy. Doing and nobody in their right mind would pay me to do them. But is that is that enough of a clear galvanizing line? Or do we start to come up with all these kind of hybrid definitions to make us feel better about the effort we're putting in and the money we're spending, but we're not getting any fiscal return from it. Maybe the only return we're getting is the personal satisfaction of being able to do that thing, which there's a lot of worth to I don't, absolutely, it's a reason why you do things, just because you love them. But the cons, I guess, where my struggle really comes is more, tying the word professional to something than it is tying amateur. Because amateur, like I said, can be so many different variants. You can be passionate about it. You can be extremely capable about it and just not want to put in the effort or deal with the knowledge sense around turning it into a career or a job but professional has this oh I am I am a professional at this doesn't mean you're any good at it just means that somebody is paying you for it. Is there more to the definition than that

Augusto Pinaud 6:16

going back to pressfield on this one, okay. He he goes again because he goes into into mindset, okay. And he made some distinctions between that and again it doesn't go to the money but it professional he you know this is among the things I can remember that he you know, top of my mind he mentioned okay he shows every day he gets into the job every day. Okay, he acts in the face of fear, he comes prepared or he tried to prepare he do not take the failure or the success. Personally he asked for help he self validate he reinvented himself, when you look into your day to day professional life, you know, when I was actively, you know, being a sales manager, okay, I was a professional at there. Okay, but when I the first day on that job, okay, I was not I got into that profession. I wasn't, I didn't know what to expect. I came in there as a completely amateur. Okay, I wasn't showing every day. I wasn't sure exactly what I was going to learn or understand out of that I was not committed for sure. In the long term. I, you know, I was to john and i have not yet discovered how fun it was. But as a salesman, okay, as I begin learning that there was a moment where was that mindset change when I understood how It could be for me to be a professional in that arena. Okay. And that was the moment that I began studying that I began showing up that I begin committed to being not a salesman, but a really good one commitment to, to be patient to have kindness towards the mistakes, I made too many mistakes I make, but also the things that I was learning and even that money wise, in that mindset transition. It did not change and change over time, but not at that particular. Second, okay. I begin looking at that career now as a career, not as a job. And dad was for me in that particular example, what change from being an amateur to be a professional. I think

Francis Wade 8:50

there's a distinction between the process and the result. And we've been talking about both but I think there's a separation between the two There is the mindset and the actions of an

amateur and a professional. And then there are results of amateur and professional. I think anyone can commit themselves to being a professional in terms of the process. And they may never, ever achieve the end result of the professional recognition, the P the reputation, the the fruits of their labors, they may never actually reap anything that says that they put in a professional effort or follow the professional process. And no, we I in my mind, I leave I leave the end results to you know, the fates because that could be due to any any set of factors or any kind of influence or, like that's variable. But what I have control over is the process and the mindset. I think that's what pressfield is all about. reading the book, I haven't read it. But I think that's what he's trying to get the reader to focus on, which is the part that you can go in and do on a daily basis and strengthen and get better at and perfect and have it be robust so that how you feel and circumstances don't dissuade you from being a professional no matter what. I think that's what he's, he's he's heading after and then you know, the results are the results, but you'll get whatever you get, you can't guarantee any results no matter what you do. But you can strive to be a professional in your processing your mindset.

Art Gelwicks 10:39

So who gets to decide if you're a professional, this is where I'm struggling with it. I'm gonna go back to a sports metaphor for this because it's the easiest way for me to wrap my head around this. If you take something like college sports, college basketball, for example. These are all amateurs. They're supposed to be amateurs. They are some of them are so dedicated. To the sport, though that this is what they do 40 hours, 50 hours, 60 hours they are constantly working on this by decree, they get no financial benefit from this, their objective is to start receiving a financial benefit. So even if they did, they are far and above better than what we would define as some professionals who gets to make the call that they are no longer a amateur, but they are now a professional.

Augusto Pinaud 11:35

You go by pressfield yourself and an IQ. It is like if I go back to the sales example. Nobody called me or got into me and said, well, you are not an amateur salesperson anymore. No, it was the moment I made the decision that I was not going to be anymore. I thought I was going to take that. Seriously that I was going to Embrace it in a different way. That was the moment that for me that perspective change between being chromotherapy or non professional, you know, when you think on things that you do, okay, what are the moment that you have make the switch on your brain? This is not, I'm not playing with this, this is now something I'm going to take seriously. And I'm going to be professional at it that I'm going to take it to the next level.

Art Gelwicks 12:33

And I and I think that's, that's a great mindset thing. But let's take a look at it from the outside world. If I, I like to take pictures. I'm I think I'm a pretty good photographer. But if I start walking around saying, Yeah, I'm a professional photographer, just because I think I'm going to make that mindset. That's not going to stick. We know that. I quote, real professional photographers, gonna look at me and go Yeah, you're an amateur, go back to class. It's there has to be more to it than just saying you are. So what's the yardstick?

Augusto Pinaud 13:12

Well, if you pick that example, okay, the moment you decide, you know what, I'm a professional photographer, what change on the job do you do? Right now you are doing it for fun. So just show up. When you are in the mood you show up. You're not trying, you know, you're trying to take a good picture, reasonable, good picture, but that's it. Are you looking to take the best picture every time? Are you looking to improve yourself in the art of taking photography? Yes or no? Are you? Are you looking to do all that? If you are not, you are an amateur. Because you are not looking to look that as your career. The moment you said tomorrow, you wake up and say you know what I'm leaving at and I'm now going to be a

profession. photographer and his dad really changed in your mind, Joe will even look at your current equipment in a different way.

Art Gelwicks 14:09

Okay, but you just said the key word in that whole phrase, career. At some point, there has to be external validation, whether it be financial or acknowledgement, accolade, whatever. That is almost always financial, though, because that's how we measure everything to indicate that you have transitioned from a status of doing it, because you want to, to doing it because other people want you to, but in many cases, he's

Augusto Pinaud 14:39

not immediately, you know, when I went,

Art Gelwicks 14:41

Oh, no, no, no, I'm not saying there's a light switch. Yeah, that would be nice. Oh, that that would be fantastic. But that I think that really becomes that challenge. And we start to get into and I don't know if this is something we want to dig into later or not, but this whole this whole idea of imposter syndrome where You are actually a professional, you are doing something you are getting paid for it. But in the back of your mind, you're going, why am I getting paid for this? I'm not I don't think I'm this good at this. It's, it's such a gray area of amateur to professional to, you can throw in terms of who's an expert. I mean, we start to get into all of these self evaluations and, and criteria to apply to our not only our capabilities, but also our self worth. That we have to start saying, Okay. What is the actual yardstick? And really, does it matter? I mean, I'm, I am not a professional speaker anymore. I was for a little while. I'm not anymore. Has my ability of a speaker changed? Absolutely not. It's actually gotten better I don't consider myself a professional speaker because I don't get paid to do it. But that's my yardstick. Not somebody else may have a different yardstick, I mean, getting to do certain events, Hey, you got to do that event. You must be a professional in it.

Augusto Pinaud 16:17

The goalposts move around

Art Gelwicks 16:20

how do we how do we help somebody figure out what the goal posts are so that they can do the right work in the in the most productive ways to get to those goal posts that they want to get to your thoughts here art, I think dovetails

Raymond Sidney-Smith 16:35

really well into the difference that I've seen in the work of Dr. Marshall Goldsmith. My favorite book of his is called triggers. And he talks about it very slightly, a little bit in that book, but he does explain it in many of his other books. And this is the idea between the difference between amateur and professional, and he uses it as a yardstick to determine whether or not You're doing right action in particular moments, right? Assuming that you are aware of your behaviors, you then become able to be an amateur or professional. And what he really means, again, like I said, is right relationship with that particular other person or the context of the work you're doing. So if you go to work, and you treat people well, and you stay on deadline, and you are organized, and you are paying attention to the overall organizational mission, and then you go home, and you don't do those same things. Doctor Goldsmith would consider you an amateur being an amateur at home. And that's a real that's a stark difference. And I don't believe it to be pejorative. It is, I think, an assessment to help you understand how how to set up your mindset, as opposed to let's remove the profession. construct that is Career and all of the things that come along with whether you're making income or money off of off of being a hobbyist, an amateur or professional, take those things off the table. But just look at it from the mindset of how you are practicing. You're in your world, right? How you are, how you're

creating in your world. And then the amateur hat for Goldsmith becomes a stance that you are living below the standards of another part of your life. And so he's he's talking about having equal standards. For example, I think he thinks that if you want to be an amateur work and amateur at work at home, I think that's probably okay. Like because that's the standard you've set for yourself. And, and then once you decide to level up and be a professional, across the board, then you then you have a yardstick for knowing when you're being an amateur say with your friends or Being an amateur with your hobby, because you're not living up to the standards you've set for yourself back to gousto point of being a professional at that status. It's about setting a standard. I think in my interpretation of Goldsmith,

Art Gelwicks 19:16

I think you're right on target with that it does, it does require you to say, okay, the word professional is no longer a badge that I'm going to wear. I mean, it's not I go to an event and it's like art galleries professional, okay, fine. The heck with that. But it's a standard that you're striving for. And you can use, quote, professionals in that field, as your yardstick for the standards that you want to reach, levels of production, quality of work, insight and capability, all of those different things that you can apply to say this in this field. professional photographer, public speaker, landscaper doesn't matter. This is what a professional does. This is the level of work they deliver. This is the quality, this is the consistency, this is the timeliness. So if I want to consider myself a professional with the ability to be paid for this work, whether I am or not, I need to reach this level of standard. And that I think is much easier for people to think about, because it means they don't have to say, I have to get paid for this before I consider myself professional. Now. I just need to make sure I'm delivering a professional level of commitment to what I want to do. And then I'm okay with that. I could be paid for it if I wanted to, but a lot of people don't want to make that transition. I've had that conversation with a lot of Young men talking about, you know, their career aspirations. I said, Look, you know, some say, hey, I want to be a chef, I want to be a mechanic and I go, do you really love doing that? They're like, yes. Like, do you want to do that every day? Yes. Do you want your livelihood to depend on you doing it every day? Well, okay. Now we have a different conversation. And I think that I think you're right on target with this if we take professional away as a litmus test, and more as a standard of excellence.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 21:35

Precisely, I actually I've put a couple of links in the show notes for folks who are listening who would like to read a little bit more about this and kind of the debate there. But there's this really, I think, useful article. I don't agree with everything it says but inc.com put out an article Jessica Stillman wrote it, and they put out what they called 15 differences between amateurs and professionals. And two from Michael perspective, if we just take out the word amateurs and professionals and put in something like has standards and doesn't have standards, you start to you start to understand where this is kind of coming from. I'll just read the first few. But it says, you know, quoting amateurs stop when they achieve something. Professionals understand that the initial achievement is just the beginning to amateurs have a goal professionals have a process. I would call that a system. Amateurs think they are good at everything professionals understand their circles of competence. Amateurs see feedback and coaching as someone criticizing them as a person. Professionals know they have weak spots and seek out thoughtful criticism. And then I'll just stop here at number five, which is amateur amateurs value isolated performance. Think about the receiver who catches the ball once on a difficult throw professionals value consistency, can I catch the ball in the same situation nine times out of 10 so I recommend reading the next 10 or So just to give you an understanding of The what is the difference between what we're talking about in terms of having standards in your operating procedures of of your general life? And then looking at specific areas and determining what are those particular standards, and I think a lot of us don't do that. And going back to your point, art about having a standard, I was recently talking to a client, and they were asking me about how I approach language learning, which is a hobby, I would consider myself and an amateur

at learning languages. And that is, there's no, you know, income potential there for me or, you know, plots of income potential there for me. And yet, I love learning languages. I love studying languages. And so what is what is the driving force behind that? And I'm like, well, there's a system behind it, of course, and it's obvious to me but it's because I've set a standard and so I've taken my language learning and struck To very similar to how you would structure academic courses, right, so there are 15 or 16 weeks semesters, there's a syllabus, there's there's a structure to the process. But there's also the other side to that, which is testing and examination. So could I take a proficiency proficiency test for some kind of language, you know, accreditation, that, you know, professionals would take, whether that's the emphasize or or somebody else's particular language proficiency test, could I take that test and pass it at that level after having studied for this number of weeks and months on this particular language at that level, and that's the, that's the goal. Not becoming a, an interpreter. You know, I have no intention of becoming an interpreter, but I want to be able to use the language where it's useful to me which, remarkably, language is so useful to me in so many different areas of my life, you know, the number of times I'm in a city, and I hear someone speaking in another language and I'm able to understand them culturally or otherwise better is is remarkable. But that's not a profession for me. And that's the difference is that there's a standard. I consider it and work at it professionally, even though it is absolutely in that hobby amateur space.

Art Gelwicks 25:17

And I think that's really the key of this. And you've brought to mind something that happened to me over the weekend, and I think, kind of catalyzes this a little bit. I got the opportunity to be the announcer at a basketball tournament championship game tournament, which was a lot of fun, in a good classic, you know, Watson's murders, you know, that kind of thing. So, during the introduction parts, though, we had a young lady from the school sing our national anthem. So we're both standing there side by side. I'm standing there with my sport jacket on looking very looking very professional. I do my announcing part. She does her singing then we get a chance to talk. This 16 year old old young lady completely He has won numerous awards and championships for her singing. She is looking to do this for her livelihood in some various capacity, she puts out a professional level of effort towards this interest, she has me totally amateur level of effort on doing the the announcing one looked professional. I had my sport jacket on, but the other one was what I would consider a professional. And I think that's one of the things we have to take into consideration. And I think we've all said it in various ways. It is truly a mindset. And it can be misled by perception. So you have to be careful and Cognizant, if you want to be considered a professional. Not only do you have to put the work in but you have to be willing to show that you've put the work in To be recognized. So

Francis Wade 27:02

I think I think there's a continuum of, of seriousness, let's call it that. We're ranging from around a mature to a world class, the best world class professional, any given any given area. And, you know, the distinction, amateur professional is a bit crude. But I think along the way, let's say that there's 10 grades from rank, mature to World Class professional, we're world class means that you're the best or one of the best Michael Jordan. And all the way in between, there's all these different levels of, of skill. And I think it's useful to it's more useful and rather than to say, Are you an amateur or professional, which basically divides it into two grades? I think reality is a lot more nuanced than that. Maybe more like 10 and see if you're if you're seeing are depending on your level of seriousness, you get to choose whether you want to be at a two or a nine, or a one or a 10. And the choice is just one of you know, it has each choice has consequences, and obligations and the public investment of time and money, attention, focus, energy and all the rest of it. And I think what ram particular was hinting at was that you know, you choose, you choose your poison you you choose, do I want to be a two here and a five over here and a seven over there? And what you said art is that you work conditions that choice is also where's my income coming from? Where What do I and there's also what do I like to do love to do. There's also the inner satisfaction, and you know, you you make your

choices in different areas of your life and you experience the consequences accordingly. Then you adjust. I remember when I moved back to Jamaica in 2005, from Florida, things that I was doing in the states didn't have any professional value here. Just because the economy and the culture and a number of factors, I could have stayed being a professional in those areas if I had stayed in the States, and I chose to make the transition and to experience the consequences of having them having somebody things move around. So some became really important that weren't as important. Others became far less important, but by changing the circumstance, I essentially had to, you know, move, it's the threes and fours, the nines. I had to re establish a new set of priorities and then go to work at developing some skills that I didn't have. Just because I was a serious about them, and in allocating the time, the energy, the effort, the money All the rest of it. So I see it as a, as a kind of a holistic development that we

Art Gelwicks 30:06

humans can engage in. And you're I think you're really driving this point home because readjusting your level sets, I'll go back to your Michael Jordan analogy, basketball, obviously a 10. No question about it. Baseball, not so much. But you think Michael Jordan should be attended everything? Well, that's not the case. And we look at ourselves and you just outlined it perfectly. We're not all the same level, regardless of what we're doing. But there should we should be able to work on a consistent manner of execution that works for us that we are able to take whatever we want in that continuum of amateur to professional and work it up those numbers scales. So if I decided tomorrow, that I wanted to be a figure skater I'm going to start at a negative two, how am I going to work up that? Well, there has to be a consistency and a methodology that I can apply that I know I can do all the time to hopefully work it up, will I get it to attend, almost guaranteed not. But I have the opportunity to improve and looking for those methodologies that work for us every day, day in and day out, that we can continue to improve ourselves to whatever degree we can in whatever areas we want, really, I think is the core of personal productivity because we're producing not just things, but improvements in ourselves at that point.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 31:47

So do we have any other thoughts regarding how the differences between any of these constructs affect mindset and our personal productivity is there anything else that We wanted to discuss in that space.

Art Gelwicks 32:02

I just go back to that I just go back to the whole imposter syndrome thing. I think that is probably the easiest way to sabotage ourselves when it comes to trying to go from amateur to professional status.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 32:19

Could you explain for folks what the imposter syndrome is?

Art Gelwicks 32:22

Yeah, and in a nutshell, what the imposter syndrome is, is it's a self defeating prophecy where you start to achieve and recognize not only outside but inside a quality of work in a particular or quality of knowledge base in a particular area. But the imposter syndrome kicks in and you start to immediately compare yourself to others in that area and say, Wait, I don't know as much as them. I can't do as well as much as them. I'm putting myself out there as being more than I actually am. Therefore, I really should be doing this. I'm going to paraphrase. I'm being a poser. Well, 99.9% of the time, you're not. You're not trying to oversell yourself. Some people are, but for the most part, you're not trying to oversell yourself. It's your mental way of saying, I'm afraid of getting out of my little box and pushing into an area that Yeah, I might fail. So imposter syndrome really creates a mental boundary line, that you force yourself to not be able to cross that no one else has imposed on you. But often it's self reinforcing, because you'll

hear we talked about a little bit ago, how amateurs will hear criticism or hear criticism as a personal attack. Well, imposter syndrome feeds on that. So if you're working on something, let's say I talked about the public speaking thing If somebody comes and says, You know what, you're really bad at that. That's one person's opinion in a long scope of things. But imposter syndrome says, right? See, see, I told you, I told you, you couldn't do it, because they said you couldn't do it. And that's your brain being self defeating. So being able to identify that in ourselves, and I think just about everybody has gone through it at some point in time, being able to say, Okay, I get it, but it doesn't change where I'm trying to go. And also setting up those tools and those methodologies again, to help us get over imposter syndrome, I think is probably the biggest and most impactful way to get from that amateur to professional.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 34:44

Well, that brings us to the close of this discussion. Thank you, gentlemen. This has been a lot of fun. And I hope that what listeners take away from this is that if you can set standards across your life, at least in my perspective, and I think you know, again, take it with a grain of salt in that sense, but from my perspective, it is about creating a set of standards across your life that you want to live up to. And then living up to those standards, and not trying to live above those standards, where you may, as art was talking about start to feel this level of potentially fraud or that when you feel success, it's luck kind of thing. We want to be able to identify a goal and reach that goal with high levels of success, right, which is achieving that goal as often as you want to achieve that goal is close to that often, that was close to that frequency as possible. And as we do that, we're able to feel better about what we're doing, and feeling better about what we're doing creates confidence. And it's kind of a self fulfilling prophecy in that sense, because of us leaning into action leaning into production. And so if you have a question or comment about this cast, or something that we did discussed in the casting like to get further clarification or you have a comment about it that you want to let us know we missed something, feel free to head over to the podcast website there in the episode page is a comment section, feel free to leave it there, and one of us will be happy to respond. The episode page also includes a couple of really good things, our show notes, which have links to all the things that we mentioned in this particular cast. And so they're easily jump to from there, we have a PDF download of the automated machine created transcript of this episode, as well as one that you can actually read on the page. And you can search the page for particular sections and jump to it. You can also subscribe which is just following our podcast there in your, you know, favorite podcast app, whether that's Apple podcasts or overcast or Google podcasts or whatever. They're all available to you there on the website. If you have another question that's unrelated to today's to topic but that you'd like to talk about with us, or you want us to talk about about personal productivity, please visit ProductivityCast dotnet forward slash contact. And there on the page, you can leave an audio recorded message for us or you can type a message and that will be sent over to us. Thank you to goes to pinout Francis weighed in our galaxy for joining me here on this and many of the other productivity cast casts that we have episodes that we have. If you could, please leave a rating or review on Apple podcasts or Stitcher. I don't really know of any others that allow ratings But either way, Apple podcasts and Stitcher we know that those are really great for us to just hear the feedback. But it also helps us to grow our personal productivity listening community. And so those who have left us ratings and reviews, thank you, and to those who are thinking about it, thank you, too. That brings us out to the close of this episode of productivity casts a weekly show about all things personal productivity, and take care. Here's your productive life.

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