

103-using-task-management-profile-focus-changes-productivity...

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SPEAKERS

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



Voiceover Artist 00:00

Are you ready to manage your work and personal world better to live a fulfilling and productive life? Then you've come to the right place. ProductivityCast the weekly show about all things productivity, here, your host Ray Sydney Smith and gousto pinout with Francis Wade and art gal, Wix.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:17

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



Francis Wade 00:22

goes to be a Francis Wade.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:24

And I'm marquel. wicks. Welcome, gentlemen. And welcome to everyone listening here to productivity cast. Today, we are going to be talking about something that's a little bit

unique, something that's interesting that I think you'll all find fascinating, which is a task management profile that Francis has put together. And to kind of explain a little bit about what we're going to talk about today. Francis, can you give us a little bit of background in terms of what you've devised, I

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Francis Wade 00:49

used to be a triathlete. And people who are brand new to triathlon think that trap on is a matter of being a good swimmer, being a good runner and being a good cyclist. And as you progress in the sport, you realize there's a few other dimensions that you also need to be good at, such as lifting weights, nutrition, and rest. So there's at least six disciplines that you need to be really, really good at to be decent triathlete that somebody who doesn't get injured and is able to complete races and starts to be competitive at a particular level. And most of triathlon training is based on individual sports and triathletes Think of how good am I at a given sport? And how can I get better at nice my weakest sport, and I don't need to focus so much on my strongest sport. So they tend to think in terms of separate disciplines? Well, I took the idea, the basic idea of becoming better at a discipline, the idea of breaking down one event into disciplines and took it over into task management, and said, okay, task management is also based on disciplines. And within each discipline, there are particular best practices. And within each best practice, there are levels of accomplishment ranging from people who do things unconsciously. And you could even you could apply that conscious unconscious diagram, where you start off being incompetent, and unconscious, all the way up to being conscious and competent. You may you could apply that to this example. But the idea is that someone starts off just doing and at some point, they become an expert, or someone who is at a world class level. And once I divided task management, so to speak, into different disciplines. I said, Okay, how can you focus on one at a time, because you probably can't improve more than a couple at a time anyway. Because we're just not able to improve that fast in so many different areas. If you knew the different areas, maybe you could focus your efforts and get better faster. And also be somewhat immune from the shiny, shiny object syndrome, where you get distracted by some tip that you've picked up on Reddit, and you're off to the races, perhaps trying to improve something that actually would make no difference overall. So the basic idea started in terms of how can you get better faster? I wanted to talk about two things. One is, how do you figure out your profile very, very quickly, because I wanted us to get over the hump of how do you find out what your profile is. And as an aside, I wanted to, I think I'll put up the simpler version of this chat that I have here, the one that only has the first seven fundamentals, so capturing through listing, but not the others.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 03:45

So we'll post that in the show notes.



Art Gelwicks 03:47

Okay, so here's, here's where I go with this. So if you want to talk about every about getting better, faster. The first aside from listening to a Daft Punk song to do that, you need to first I would think, know what you're trying to get better get better at, what are the measuring criteria, that you're going to those areas that you're going to focus? And then what are the thresholds? You describe this as being a triathlete I for some reason I keep picturing this in my son who used to run track ran hurdles for quite a while. And each one of these is a hurdle to get to that end goal. So you have to understand what are the not only the measures? I mean, if he's running 400 yards, that's the measure. But what are the hurdles in the way of getting to that end measure? And each of these different categorization areas, has their own hurdles, they're not all the same. Some people can blew right through them, other people can really struggle with them. So I'd say the first thing is, what are the lanes that we're evaluating? Are you implying that they're the same for everyone or are they different for everyone? Or is there some commonality?



Francis Wade 04:59

Right, that's great question. it the way you were, you'd say that a car, every fuel combustion engine, German car, the Stewart from the electrics and any other exotic cars, every car has a fuel system, electrical system, and air system if they have the same basic components, although they may work differently. And in task management, we all have the same component, so to speak the same seven components that are in the diagram in the show notes, essentially capturing, emptying, tasking, acting, those storing, scheduling and listing. And we all perform them, regardless of a Well, once we get into our teens, we're all performing them to some degree. So they all need to work together in order for us to manage our task from the moment of creation, to the moment when the task is complete, and to manage multiple tasks. So where sort of stock so to speak, in this task management world of our own creation, in which we're trying to get stuff done. So yes, it's a bit like seven disciplines, which are all we're all trying to manage at the same time. But without a heck of a lot of awareness, because we're primarily self taught.



Art Gelwicks 06:18

So if we take those seven disciplines, then and I'm just going to pull one that you mentioned off the top of my head, the capturing one, let's start with that. One is the

example. How, how do I determine what quote level? My capturing skill is at right now? Because I have a perception. But if I sit here, and I look around at all the different ways I capture information, depending on the criteria, I could either be really good at it or terrible at it. I'm not sure what the what's the measure?

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Francis Wade 06:49

We actually have talked about this on our shows, how does someone know how well they're doing in anything. So the most expensive ways to have somebody assess you and tell you, which is sort of the doctor patient model, where you're not able to measure your you can't do any, most people can't do an EKG of themselves. So you need someone outside of you to tell you how good you are. So let's call that the first option, option one, an expert does an evaluation. So in terms of capturing it would mean someone is actually watching you do your capturing and then telling you how well you're doing. Most of us can't afford that particular option. So we go to a second one. The second one could be someone says, Well, here's what capturing is, at a very basic level. How well do you think you're doing? Let's call that an initial analysis where you just sort of hear the idea for the first time. And you kind of decide, okay, I think I'm at this level. So someone who reads for example, GTD here's a description, and then makes a determination as to whether or not they need to focus on that area or not. The book doesn't tell you to do that. But that's basically what everyone does. If you figured out you're already doing really well, you say okay, and you put a mental check beside the list in your head, and then you move on to the other areas of the book. Another thing you could do, which I have explored, the ones I'm about to describe, is to put together a quiz. So I have a quiz that you could do where you ask for the five questions, and it comes up with what level that you're at? No, the quiz is very basic. I mean, this is five, three minutes, maybe the answer for the five questions. And as you could imagine, you get a very, very rough idea. But it's better than the other levels I just mentioned, it's a little bit more refined. The next level could be that you engage in some kind of self study, where you actually come to understand what the best practices are in capturing. The best that I've seen that done in my experience is somebody who sits in one of my classes, and we spend about a half an hour on capturing. And in the process, they inquire they think they see some they play a few games. At the end of it, they have a decent idea of what capturing is because they know can do a better assessment of their own skills than they could before. But imagine that the four of us are well past that point to just a half an hour and a self evaluation. I imagine that we've read hours and pages on capturing. And we have a pretty sophisticated description of where we're at in terms of our expertise, and we have a pretty good understanding of where best practices are. That Matt Matt only comes from self study. And it's a matter of teaching yourself and also being objective about where you're doing really well. So that sounds like a continuum of skills all the way from not knowing a thing to sort of being semi expert

that evaluating your skills, it is it's kind of going from not being able to evaluate yourself to doing a really good job of evaluating yourself. Does that make sense? Oh,

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Art Gelwicks 10:10

it does to a certain degree. I mean, I there's no question this self evaluation process is critical. I think we're often people will struggle with it, no. And I'm going to take it out of the personal context and move it into the professional one. Focusing on things at one thing I do all the times deal with work intake systems, and capture is a key part of those intake systems. Because if you don't capture information accurately and consistently, you don't have work to do, and things fall through the cracks. So is one of the things that is useful with this kind of a structure that you're outlining a uniform definition of what successful capture is, or, as part of the exercise? Do you need to define for yourself? What successful capture is,

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Francis Wade 11:02

yeah, I have struggled with that myself, I have to hear what the other guys think. But where come down on it? No, it is, is that success is a freedom from defects or success is freedom from mistakes or errors. So if I'm able to capture the current demands of my time accurately, then I'm not making any mistakes in that discipline. In other words, I'm a I'm, I'm 100% effective with my task volume. No. However, if all of a sudden, you know, my wife and I adopt three kids, and the number of tasks that I need to manage, goes through the roof, all of a sudden, you know, just as a result of that decision, then I could start seeing problems and mistakes and errors and defects in my capturing. And then I'll have to make some changes. So I define success as a freedom from errors, which means that anyone can be successful at any level. But I'm really curious to hear what other guys think about all you, everyone thinks about that.

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Art Gelwicks 12:12

But if we think about the seven segments are the seven evaluation criterias. Being able to define somebody who's just establishing a productivity solution for themselves, needs to address each of these seven areas. And, again, I'll focus on capture, because that's the easiest one. So we know everybody has to capture things into their system. So what do we consider a successful capture? Well, if we use Francis's definition is free from defect, free from defect on a capture means you have all the information you need to successfully complete that action. Ultimately, you get things like, who is responsible for what is the timing of it? What is the relationship to other tasks? that definition of a, a successful capture is just the starting place then to determine Okay, how well are you doing that on a

consistent basis? Now, it's not a habit thing. It's a consistency of execution. So if I go back to the professional side, and I think about evaluation criteria of a work intake process, I'm going to look at what are the number of incoming requests? How many of those were actionable immediately, because they were complete? How many were in actionable because they were incomplete? And that sort? I think, that same type of evaluation, comes over to here. Because what we're saying is, if I've defined for myself, whether you successful capture is, how often am I actually doing that? And what's the level I want to get to? And then by splitting that up into this idea of like a bronze, silver and gold level, it gives me thresholds to try and reach to know that I'm making process or progress in the improvement process. Does that make more sense?

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Francis Wade 14:11

Yeah, if you take the if you take the example I gave of the adopting three kids, all of a sudden, the mistake I made all of a sudden start making is committing things to memory. So I may I may capture, whereas I used to capture on my smartphone and or start capturing in memory because things are happening so fast, and things are changing so quickly. And all of a sudden, I'm making all these mistakes. And at that point, I need to do a reevaluation of my skills, or I need to change some skills like a move to the next level. But even before the mistakes creep in, what happens when we sit down in a program any kind of training and hear someone describe a skill is this very process that we're trying to The cipher, we always evaluate our own performance against the standard that we hear someone trying to teach us or tell us is a great standard. And we always sort of measuring ourselves against it and then deciding, is there a gap on how do I fill it?

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Art Gelwicks 15:20

You're absolutely right. When I listen to other systems, I do evaluate myself against those systems. And and I'll give a practical example of it. One of the things I hear in so many different systems is only capture once, only touch it once. And GTD is a big one for that, put it in the inbox, only touch it once deal with it. I'm sorry, that's not how I work, I will capture something, and then I'll rewrite it again. And then I'll rewrite it again. Because I use that as part of not only the process, but the ideation process I have around solutions. So for me, that criteria for a system of only touching something once I would fail at that miserably, but I would fail at it, because it's not part of the system that I apply. So you're absolutely right, that's the first thing I do is I look at and say, okay, is that how I actually work? And if it's not, I can't even use that as a measurement criteria. Because it's never going to give me a valid result.

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Francis Wade 16:25

And you may adjust your measuring stick to include this new criteria, right? You may decide, hey, you know, this is this, someone's may believe that it's credible and an added on. But the it's still you're still engaged in this, how well am I doing? What's the gap? Do I buy into this new standard? I remember going to swimming training as a triathlete, and hearing of different points of view from different coaches. You can't follow every coach that you run into, or else you'll never you'll never get anywhere, you've got to go through this thinking of Okay, what is he saying? What's the new standard? How do I measure up to that standard? And what should I do to incorporate the new standard that he or she is suggesting? Do I if I do, do I incorporate some changes to try and get there. This this evaluation is always it every time management program in the world people are people walk in and they hear a set of behaviors. And then they're left on their own to do this, measuring and weighing and deciding and, and they come away sometimes saying I'm going to improve our seven and I'm going to move to the top level in two months, which isn't possible. Sometimes they come away and say, I'm doing everything. The way to describe guy described it anyway. So I don't need to change anything. Which is probably not likely, because you're probably not perfect, according to anybody's standard. But this whole evaluation business is inescapable when it comes to behavior change, we have to, we have to engage in it just because it's the only way that we can sort of make sense of a new standard and then make steps to get better at it. It's in every area of life. It's not not just a matter of task management. This is just an application to task management.

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Art Gelwicks 18:22

So I have a concern that crosses my mind when I look at this kind of thing. And it's just based on past history and past failures of my own. We've got seven areas that we're talking about focusing on. How do I do them all at the same time. Because if I want to focus on one, if I want to focus on capture, that's great. And let's say I put all my energy into improving my capture process and getting it to what I considered the gold standard. How do I hold that there? While I now start to focus on the next part and try to bring that up? I mean, there's a point where I'm trying to hold everything at this gold standard. And that's not necessarily easy. How does somebody deal with that?

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Francis Wade 19:08

Whether the first evaluation it should be my recommendation is kind of make it conservative because you're trying to get where you're at right now. Are you just like the martial arts? Are you a white belt, yellow belt, orange belt or green belt or the first evaluation that you do or at any point in time tells you where you are? No. And I believe that the in the martial arts you don't try to get every discipline to the blackbelt level. All

at once. If you're regardless of what level you're at, you're at. instead you're your teacher takes you through different exercises and drills so that you can improve them one at a time. Take that example and you go from I don't know what the belt is below black, but I think it's brown, maybe brown you go from brown to black in a period of Six months a year. And during that time, your Sensi puts you through a curriculum where you work on different disciplines. And you very gradually grow them from brown to black, you're still kicking and punching, and I don't do any of those. But you're still doing



Raymond Sidney-Smith 20:19

all these things, walking, kicking, punching, blocking,



Francis Wade 20:23

that, you know, you're, you're doing the same things. But the less you're doing them I know needs to undergo this sort of transformation so that you can accomplish the next level. And your sense is there to make sure that no idiot Don't try to do without all saved, don't try to go too fast. Go. He's there to or she's there to pace your improvement. Now, most people don't have that in the area of task management, you don't have a sense sitter, to give you that kind of guidance. So instead, you need to be the Sensi, who says, Okay, I have seven areas of possible improvement. And this is what I wanted us to focus on today. If you've done your profile, how do you choose and decide which one to work on? How fast to work on? Do you work on all seven? I think the answer to that is obviously no. But if you don't work on all seven at the same time, do you work on the weakest one? Or do you work on something that I like scheduling first? What's the criteria that you use? And it's a question I've put two people in different classes and I put to myself? And I thought that by sharing the question, we could come up with some some insights, I could make a difference.



Augusto Pinaud 21:41

So I think the answer to where you start, it depends on a couple of things. It depends on who is doing the assessment? And is the assessment done by some trainer who is looking at a path that they use to train people or is a self assessment, and then to look at what do you think will provide the biggest benefit for for you, and either assessment is right or wrong? It's irrelevant, but because they the data may not be completed for for neither of those assessments. So the question is, can you make a cookie cutter assessment that then will tell people, let's go 123 and four. So if you big, you know, the Getting Things Done methodology, as an example, you know, that people try to get to this mythical place

called Black Belt. And the problem is that target for what we understand as black belt moves, you know, and when you start and you have never collect, okay, you start collecting and you are pretty inefficient at it, but you're trying to collect process to organize and to do everything as you get really good at collecting, you may collect 235 times doesn't matter. It's part of the process now of organizing and processing. But you may get collected now to what you were calling the bronze or the silver or the gold. And now you start looking how the other pieces are not effective. That said, I have seen people is studying on the processing and the organizing, having a terrible, an awful collection, the scale. And that doesn't make them if I will have done the assessment, I may have a start them on collecting. But for them where that thing is starting to make sense was on processing or organizing. So I think that's also set of variables that I don't know, I'm not sure if based on that set of variables, you can then make a cookie cutter solution for all this.

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Francis Wade 24:13

Right? I agree that I as you because this is not swimming, biking and running. Because those are three discrete activities that take place, one after the other for the most part. There's some carryover in fatigue, from one sport to the next in the middle of a risk because you're getting progressively more tired, but they are three separate disciplines. And task management. It's the same task that's being captured, emptied, acted on know stored, scheduled and list that and listed it's the same task. So the task is actually moving from one, one action to the next, so to speak. So there's a dependency. So that's this is not a simple system like interest like this. is more complex because there's so many dependency. So the absolutely agree with you agosto, there's, if someone is strong and everything and weak in capturing, then I think, I think we would agree the four of us that they should go focus on capturing, because that's the first step, the first point at which a task enters the system. And if that's not strong, then everything else, nothing else will work. But it's the kind, that's the kind of nuance that comes when you understand the system as a whole, as opposed to just understanding the parts. If you do an assessment of each part, you'll come away with a particular understanding, but then you've got to combine that understanding. So that, you know, have a system wide understanding. And that's what takes you to the conclusion that you just said, Is that is that kind of illuminating?

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Augusto Pinaud 25:51

that's built, for example, the, the even if you make that assessment, correct, the problem now is you have in this particular case, you know, a significant amount of outside factors that can derail all that. So if you pick the people who by February of 2020, were, let's say,

silver, and then suddenly came all these quarantine COVID-19, you know, world change in life, basically, we, you know, as somebody said, you know, this thing of experience, history is not as fun as you thought, really by by by an assessment, okay, this person may have been doing well. But with all the conditions, conditions changing around now, in many cases, all those systems fall apart, right? So that assessment needs to be so flexible, that can account for those kind of things. And I don't know if that's possible, right?



Francis Wade 26:57

I imagine someone practical example, who was never late for a meeting in the office COVID comes, and they're working from home, and they're late for everything. And they can't understand why there could be multiple reasons why but the change in location and the the lack of visual cues and the reminders that are there, and all the rest of the things that used to be there to allow them to be on time are all gone. I know you have kids, and you have dinner, and you have the dog, and you have the TV, and you have Facebook and and all of a sudden you're late. So there's there's a, there's got to be this returned to the evaluation, let's call it that, once you start to pick up on new defects. So let's say that the move from home to, to, from work to home, no causes a defect, a set of defects around being late. So if you're aware enough that you could pick up that oh, my God, all of a sudden, I'm late for everything, which would then could then take you back to do another evaluation and say, okay, that evaluation was done of my way of managing my tasks in the office. No, I have an indication that I need to reevaluate my skills because something has changed. I don't know what it is. And I need to focus my efforts on precisely the kind of purrito effect precisely the, the small tweak I No need to make. So that that can survive working from home, the smallest thing that I need to, I need to make sure I sort of laser focus on whatever that thing is. So that I don't, for example, I can think of a car, if your car can't start changing the tire doesn't help. It might be convenient, easy, quick, and you know how to do it. And it might be even fun. But that's not going to get you to the result that you need. So you need to have an understanding of how a car works in order to laser in on the precise factor that's causing it not to start, the same goes with our task management. So having moved home, to do the evaluation, you do no need this level of personal skill so that you can zero in on the change you need to make



Raymond Sidney-Smith 29:23

what kind of dwells on me around an assessment is really in the in the case of task management. It's really systems and environment, that, that those two levels of context really matter when it comes to deciphering whether or not you're you're optimized for that environment and the systems that you're using. So I'll give the example. as a as a youth, many many decades ago, you know, my mother was my system. I came home from

school, she managed homework, she managed clothing, she managed food context and the system in my environment, gave me the clues to make sure that all of the capture happened. All of the organizing incubation reference, those major systems in your in my life, were kind of done for me, you leave home and go to college or go out into the workforce. And those systems, either were developed by you, you know, purposefully by a parent, by an educator, or by a mentor, or you self develop those items. I think that when you come to any assessment, as you're developing the profile, think about the context. So as you were talking about Francis, when I'm at the office, I'm going to have a very different level of capture than when I'm at home, or when I'm working from home during a pandemic. Those are all very different contexts. And they require you to think about not just the context of the the systems you have currently in place, are they? Are they fungible? Are they mobile, are they capable of weathering different types of as you were calling them deficiencies, and those all come together in terms of weighing the scale in your favor or against you. And that just tells you more information, I think it's about it's about getting a feedback loop that is faster than slower, so that you can make those modifications, not so much of a static. And I don't think I'm hearing that from what we're discussing, but I want people to understand that this shouldn't be something that's that static, you should be able to take this assessment at any time, know where you are, and then start to ideate solutions to getting better at the whole process at optimizing your environment. One of the things that I don't see in the current assessment that I think that people should always consider is that one of those systems or class of systems is your biological world, right? So your sleep rest states, your nutrition, physical, mental, emotional health, your social health. And what you do for rejuvenation, these are the seven foundational pieces I always talk about. The reality is, is that if those systems are not in place, then your task management capturing process is probably pretty bad. No matter what systems you have in place, if you are not getting the proper sleep, and you're and you're deficient in that area, then you're probably going to do a pretty poor job of execution across your life. So I always I always think about those systems. As always very foundational, like you were talking about the the martial arts analogy there. And having a background in martial arts. My brother is a martial arts instructor. The first things you learn from, in my case, in Chinese martial art, my sifu, the teacher, the you learn stances, you learn how to stand, the foundation is learning how not to fall over in these stances, which are fairly intricate, you need to be able to have a good foundation, you need to know how to hold yourself in your position. And and then the next step is learning how to move from one position to the next. And that's, that has a lot to do with it. So infrastructure, I think is the most important part of any task management profile.



Francis Wade 33:34

Yeah, he's so easy to agree with that, no, that we're seeing people's infrastructure and

environment and biology. And relationships interfere with task management that every other part of what used to be a nice, you go to work, go to the office, and it's a nice cocoon away from it's meant for you are supposed to be supportive of you getting work done. And all of a sudden, people have switched over to this other environment that is not designed for that purpose at all, for many people who are working from home for the first time. So that's probably scope for a an assessment or evaluation of everyone who is working from home for the first time. I imagine if we had more time to prepare for COVID if we knew it was coming six months ahead of time. So smart person probably would have come up, come up with it and said, Okay, if you're making a transition home, here's what you need to put in place so that you can be minimally effective. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. People were thrown into the deep end. And I suspect that it's all going to heck, and folks are trying that there's so many you guys have probably noticed or listeners have probably noticed there's so many webinars right now on surviving COVID from home, working from home, working remotely. There's so many there's so much focused on that Transition that's not going well for so many people, and people offering help and different kinds of assistance. And really we have, we just didn't have time to prepare. And a lot of things just weren't thought through. And there's a lot of errors and defects and mistakes and emotional stresses and biological problem, you name it, and they're all happening. task management is just one of the ones that's happening at the moment.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 35:26

And you have to recognize that the people who are you, you listeners out, there are probably the folks who would prepare if you knew this would happen, but the vast majority, so say, say we're the 20% of folks who if we knew this was coming, we would prepare, we would set up systems, we would put it infrastructure to make sure that we were, you know, poised and ready for change. Most people are not, if you told people that, you know, two years from now you're going to have an issue they would probably still live for today, humans are not as good at not at planning as we would want everyone to be. And so we have to recognize a level of compassion for others in that regard. And also put in mitigations, put in stopgap measures, so that we are able to still be productive in the face of many others who will not be in any given change, you know, one of the big changes is going back to back to work, you know, at some point, once you know, the pandemic ends, there will be a transition of people going back to offices and going back to their, you know, metropolitan areas. And that's going to impact productivity, you know, think about getting on a subway or, you know, sitting in, in getting on a on a bus, walking into, you know, you drive downtown, or you drive to to your main street office, and you know, or location. And you go to a place where there's going to be a group of people funneling through an office building lobby, an elevator, or those kinds of places, those are all going to impact productivity, because Are you going to want to be capturing when you

are trying to take care of your physical safety, you know, you know, it's like,



37:17

you know,



Raymond Sidney-Smith 37:18

the last thing in my mind is mind like water when I'm worried about catching or transmitting a virus. So there, we have to really take into account our mental emotional health in this regard as well. So it's like, you know, and this is obviously a very narrow circumstance in the greater context of task management profiling. But we do need to be mindful of the fact that our systems need to be a little bit forgiving to some things and not forgiving to others. So for example, I shouldn't give myself compassion for not capturing generally. But when there's something dramatic happening in my world, that should give me license to have some compassion, not just for myself, but for others. And for me, it's mostly giving that compassion to others, that stymies myself from giving me compassion because I'm, I try to give as much compassion to others as possible. And then I don't give myself as much. So I end up being very hard on myself. And that can actually compete with my own productivity. And so we need to be, we need to be mindful of who we are, what we're, you know, what we're what we're composite of, what we're made of, and then look at it through through those eyes. Because if we don't really understand ourselves, well, then we can make some of some really kind of off the cuff. Maybe harsh assessments of ourselves that then don't help I really believe that assessments like the tool you're talking about Francis can be very helpful, because it's, it's a, it's a view from the outside, so to speak, you know, if you answer it, honestly, then it should be able to give you some data that is a little bit more concrete, then you just feeling like you're productive at the moment, or feeling like you're doing something good with regard to your task management system, when in reality you might not be



Francis Wade 39:06

is that as a question that you're raising about people's transition back into the workplace, which, of course is probably going to catch us by surprise and people wouldn't have prepared for again, and I even heard of reverse culture shock. You know, I wonder, right? If folks stayed home long enough, in terms of task management, okay. Yeah. But how about mental health? Certainly physical health, the example that you gave, social Moore's which would have changed the feeling of autonomy that you'd have developed when you were at home. All of that is going to something's going to happen to all of those all of the

above time blocking, for example, you know, we, we know that someone needs to, or we can guess that someone needs a time block more when they're at home. When they come back to work, they may not need the time. lockers not as much. But there's going to be habits, practices, routines, frames of mind all these different elements, it'd be great if there were an reboarding. Probably a better word, but a way to assess where you're at before you go back into the workplace thinking that everything is going to be the same. Because what you're implying is that there is no same to go back to. But that means that there's a gap. That means that a great assessment would allow you to sort of measure the gap, and then decide what to keep what to change what to adjust, and what to be aware of as you make the transition back in and not just jump on the train and just try to resume where you left off. Because that may not be possible.

A

Augusto Pinaud 40:48

Well, as Ray was saying, you know, we are technically, you know, most of our listeners are the people who plan to people who are looking at this, and a lot of us, you know, were caught by surprise on I was one of those, okay, I've been working at home for nine years. Okay, I have pretty settled routines, the office works, everything else. So in the midst of all this, I move to a new place to a new home. Okay, that always effect but then I don't top of that, subtly, the routines and things that I have changed when now I had three people into the equation of being home, you know, and as the people who lose their offices, dynamics change, okay? There are people who were working at home, even the ones who plan suddenly the dynamic change, hey, there is people who come walk into your office, there was a, I was doing an interview, and then somebody stopped printing, okay, himself instead, that never happened when I was hold on myself. Okay. Britain had never, never turned on in the middle of an interview, but are part of the things can, because when you have that assessment, you do that assessment on a set of circumstances, you know, I knew there was something said on the last five minutes who make me think on David Allen. GTD cue, I think it's called, okay, if you go and do that assessment, consistently, you know, and various people who recommended that I think are recommended to do that, before you start your weekly review to see which you are you can identify, okay, when you're mine is even before you start out, and when you do it consistently, what allows you to do is to identify what is working, what is not working, even maybe when week to week, nothing on the system has changed. And now you're dealing just with the mental aspects of that. So that could be useful.

F

Francis Wade 43:01

Yeah, it makes me think that we're the fact is we're always assessing tool to learn or to Sensei, or no Sensei, we're always, we're always estimating and making adjustments, the

problem, or the challenge is that we can do it unconsciously. And then realize that we didn't assess quickly enough and know we're suffering. Or we can do it consciously and proactively and with some thought, some pre thought, we've hinted here that if, if we knew we're going to be working from home, if someone knows they're going to work from home, they could have done an assessment. They know they're going to be working back at the office, so they can do an assessment before they go back to the office and explicit assessment. So making it explicit and and in front of you, and actually going through the reflection and the the, the scoring or the the answering the questions or the getting the feedback from somebody or however it's done. But that whole process is done consciously is better than if it's if we're aware of or doing it as opposed to, unfortunately, what's likely to happen is folks just don't jump on trains and jump in the first train and say, I can't believe I'm doing this. And then it will be like a shock one shock after the other that first day back of the office,

A

Art Gelwicks 44:31

the biggest challenge that people have run into with this working at home concept. It's not that it's new. It's the it's the scale of it. And this is the mismeasure and this is what gets me riled up about a lot of these posts and all everybody wants to do a post about Oh, ways to be successful working from home. The difference now is it's working from home full time. Everybody's Okay, yeah, I can work from home two days, three days. I'll take my laptop. I'll take My notes, this is getting a new job this is getting moving to a new office, it is the same process and methodology, when we think it's this kind of one off completely new environment, and we start to redefine all these things, because we're now working at home. No, don't don't clutter the concept with the fact that just because it happens to be your couch, your desk, your printer, your coffeemaker, the criteria for success has changed. The complicating factors may be different. Yes, you have, you may have a three year old running around the office. Well, honestly, I think a lot of us know that we have co workers that run around the office acting like three year olds, so that the benchmark is not that far off, it's just the height of the co worker. So where we start to think about this, and we look at our evaluation criteria, our criteria needs to be applicable regardless of the situation. So that we can adapt and say, Okay, if I'm working from home full time, if I'm working from home one day, a week, if I'm working from Starbucks two days a week, how am I still going to be successful and, and meet these measurement criteria that I need to be able to keep things moving forward. And I think that's the point that so many of us are not communicating to people. And, honestly, we need on this podcast, we need to make sure we're communicating this to people as well, is that we have a time period now that's being forced on us where people have to be adaptable. We have lived so long in developing rigid systems of operation and legacy systems of operation that in so many cases, we can't even define the system. Just because we do the system, we don't even understand it,

we just turn the crank and crank out the widget, we have to start to develop flexibility and adaptability into our own processes, and then build them into the processes that we work with everybody else. If we can't do that, there's no way to be successful with any sort of measurement, because we're not willing to adjust those coaches who sit there and tell us, okay, if you're gonna go jump over this hurdle, you got to make sure that right leg comes up a little higher, or else you're gonna trip every time. It's basically the same thing. Okay, Coach thanks, and then not doing any of it. Because we think we know better, we have to be adaptable and this and understand, we're going to fail, we're going to trip over a whole lot of hurdles before we're able to get around that tracks successfully, once, twice, three times, and be okay with that,



Raymond Sidney-Smith 47:48

I want to piggyback on what you're talking about art here, which is recognizing the importance of persona. And the fact that there was once upon a time when I worked something like 16 1718 hours a day. And that was kind of my identity when I came back home that I was I was a hard worker, but my working hard was being away from home. Right. And, and this was not conscious, I don't think it was a was a purposeful effort on my part, but I was very busy, you know, running my company, and I was just, you know, head on fire all the time getting things done, you know, I was very into it. And the reality is, is that the people around me started to give me that feedback that I was, the reason I was so quote unquote successful was because I was always at the office. And when that changes, and you're always at home, and people see you doing what you're doing, that's a little bit different. And, and so there's like you're your own persona, how you see yourself how others see you as well. And this whole working from home full time may not be what your employer, what your manager, what your colleagues and coworkers want, they, they may want to go back to the office, they may want you back at the office, and that may misaligned with where and how you see yourself being productive. So for example, I might say to myself, Oh, well, I'm being perfectly comfortable and want to continue working from home and work remotely after this is all over. But that might not be with the manager or employer, you know, uh, you know, your employer thinks, and therefore you need to kind of check all of those pieces to make sure that everybody is aligned. I recently had a friend of mine talking about this, that he goes and travels quite a bit. And when he's when he's home, not on travel for work. He is usually going into the office and it's a pretty long commute every day when he's doing that. And now he has worked it out with his, his manager that now he'll just go on the road when he's on the road. You know, six, seven weeks at a time, great, when he comes back home, he's just going to work from home, there's no reason for him to go into the office now that he's been able to show them, show his employer show his manager that this is perfectly fine, I'm comfortable working from home, and I'm getting the job done. And I'm happier. But I'm more willing to stay with this

company long term, if I'm given this kind of latitude. So there's, there's all of those pieces as well, including potentially, you know, a spouse, or partner who sees what you're doing now, and now has a different perspective on what it means to be productive in your job they may not have seen before you being productive, and that's going to obviously change the dynamic for for you both. I will note in Episode 25, we talked about the homes right, he stressed inventory. And this is a really good time for everybody to take it. Now there are other life event or life stress inventories out there that run like 90 items deep, I just happen to like the homes, right, he stress inventory. It's about 43 items, and it just identifies what has happened in your world in the last I think 12 months, you then take a value for it. And based on that value, you can tell whether or not you are in a high stress environment or low stress environment. These of course, produce health breakdowns, typically. But the point for you is to know how much stress you're dealing with right now, you may not at all be feeling a lot of stress related to certain parts of your life, but feeling a great deal of stressors in another part of your life. So just keep that in mind as you go forward with regard to any task management profile, that the the the context within which you live has a great deal on the efficacy of the task management that you do. Then with that, Francis, any final words of wisdom for folks regarding to the task management profile?



Francis Wade 51:53

Yeah, just to reiterate that, it's it's just an assessment that's on paper or electronic assessment or some advice. This particular assessment is just taking out of your mind what you're going to do anyway. Because you have to, you have to assess, you have to keep assessing, especially in these times of great change. And as you as you assess, you've got to, hopefully be flexible, and hopefully be committed to making small changes that will take you towards your destination. But this is a part of what it is to be human. And right now we do need all sorts of ways to, let's say, keep our antenna up so that we are aware of what's changing in our environment and in our lives. And that's a way that we can thrive through this particular pandemic, this particular set of challenges that we're all going through at the moment. Wonderful. Thank you. Thank



Raymond Sidney-Smith 52:49

you. While we are at the end of our discussion, the conversation doesn't stop there. If you have a question or comment about what we've discussed regarding task management, profiling and adjusting to changing climates, please visit our episode page on productivity cast dotnet there on the podcast website at the bottom of the page, you can leave a comment or a question, and we'll be happy to get back to you and respond to your

comment or answer your question and maybe even have it in a future episode. I'm also on ProductivityCast dotnet. On each episode page, you'll find the show notes. So the links to what we've just been discussing including Francis's task management profile assessment. All those links, and anything we discussed are easily jumped to from there the links there. It also includes a text transcript, so you can read and download that in PDF. And so go check it out. If you have a topic about personal productivity you'd like us to discuss on a future cast, please visit productivity cast dotnet forward slash contact, you can leave a voice recorded message or type us a message with your fingers on the keyboard or screen. And maybe we'll feature that in a future episode. I want to express my thanks to gousto pinout and Francis Wade and our guests for joining me here on ProductivityCast each week, you can learn more about them and their work by visiting ProductivityCast dotnet Also, I'm Ray Sidney-Smith and on behalf of all of us here at ProductivityCast here's to your productive life.



Voiceover Artist 54:18

And that's it for this productivity cast the weekly show about all things productivity with your host Ray Sidney-Smith and a gousto been out with Francis Wade and art galax