107-ultimate-gtd-app-david-allen-productivitycast

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SPEAKERS

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

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V **Voiceover Artist** 00:00

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

Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:17

A quick note, before we get started with our episode today, for those of you listening, who are interested in engaging with others, listening to ProductivityCast, please find our digital community at WWW dot personal productivity dot club, sign up, and we'll approve you into the community. Then finally ProductivityCast channel and join that you can come on and episodes, ask questions and engage with the ProductivityCast team and community. It's easy to sign up and it's free. Again. That's www dot personal productivity dot club. Thanks so much. And now on with the show. Welcome back everybody to ProductivityCast the weekly show about all things personal productivity. I'm Ray Sidney-Smith

F **Francis Wade** 00:54

Francis Wade,

A Art Gelwicks 00:55

and I'm marquel. wicks. Welcome, gentlemen. And

Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:57

welcome to our listeners to this episode, where we're going to be continuing a discussion we've had around GTD with David Allen. And what we wanted to do was actually talk about the ultimate GTD app. According to David Allen back in 2019, David Allen held what I'm presuming is going to be the final GTD summit in Amsterdam. And he brought together all of his Rockstar advocates of GTD over the years, they all talked about different aspects of GTD, one of the things that David did at that time was open sourced basically released out into the wild, his own schema for what he thinks is or would be the requirements, but the ultimate GTD application, the ultimate getting things done application. And he had a detailed what he thought would work. Now take into account that David Allen comes from the Lotus Notes, platform. And I can 2001 he had Eric Mac, the programmer develop what is now known as he productivity. And it's the one that David still uses to this day, which sits on top of the Lotus Notes platform. But in essence, David has used and continues to use he productivity as his task manager on his desktop environment. And he's on a Mac. So I'm presuming that it works on the Mac as well. And so that's what David's been using for all these years. But David has a vision for what is the ultimate GTD software implementation. And he shows that in this document that he releases, it is 19 pages of fairly detailed notes and drawings showing what the visual should look like for this application and what it should be doing under the hood. So I will put a link to the PDF that they released, they released this on getting things done calm, and I'll put a link to this in the show notes. In essence, David has a series of features that he's looking for in the system. And so I'm just going to run down these pretty quickly so that we can have all a general idea. In essence, he put default debriefing process for the weekly review, he wants some way for the system to facilitate the weekly review for the individual to customize, list sorting, so that you can sort by due date, priority project, age, size, personal, personal versus professional, etc. Third, he has here cross reference projects to Related Actions waiting for his reference people, dates, meetings, etc. decision making and organizing expert system assistance to be built in a retrospective calendar, archive slash log global search a gateway to all other software. So while you are clarifying and organizing, you can have a gateway to all your other software that's connected to it allows free flowing thinking while tracking toward closure. It should be rules based customization so you should be able to it says For example, every a flight I'm guessing

American Airlines Flight scheduled schedule 24 hour upgrade, meaning that it would automatically let you know to schedule your 72 hour upgrade based on the flight upcoming prints any views and a handy hardcopy format so that you can take it on the go generates complete hardcopy systems with up to the second lists and data. You can tag any file location activities into your in basket to ensure later closure and then an alarm. I'm presuming he means some kind of time based trigger. So those were the big components he listed as features that he's looking for in at all. Do you feel like David got the vision right upon reviewing the schema.

Art Gelwicks   04:55

Okay, I'm gonna nitpick right out of the chute. He could at least type type this up that way God loves David Allen. But man's handwriting needs some help. But aside from that, I'm not. This is where I'm struggling. There are a couple of pieces in here as, as a software developer that I struggle with here. gateway to all other software immediately makes the hackles on the back of my neck stand up. Because that's, I mean that that's the Holy Grail. And it's so dependent on so many other things that it almost becomes the unraveling of so many solutions. Allows free flowing thinking while tracking towards closure. Okay, what the heck does that mean? Is it? Is it a brainstorming tool? Is it a structured brainstorming tool? Is it not a brainstorming tool at all? these are, these are really nice, high level things. But this is the same list, I look at it that the four of us would probably come up with sitting around the table with a bunch of beers for about two hours, and a napkin and a pen. I'm not seeing anything that is definitive, or even specifically derivative of GTD in this capability. I mean, this is what everybody wants a productivity app to do.

Raymond Sidney-Smith   06:21

And I think that's kind of the point. Right? So this is this is from 1994, by the way, so you know, we're not talking about something that was developed in 2015, or even 2010.

Art Gelwicks   06:34

Okay, so now I'm going to struggle with it a little bit more, because you're right, I did just see the date on that. So why release the spec for something that's more than 20 years old, has been done in so many iterations? Just I'm not understanding the value of how does he feel that this contributes to the overall advancement of personal and professional productivity?

Raymond Sidney-Smith 07:01

I don't think that he thinks that anyone has built what he wants yet. I really think that's what it is. I mean, in the GTD summit, he said as much when he talked about it, that no application has gotten close, yet other than the productivity, which, of course, he led the charge with with regard to Eric Mac. But there are just some fundamental pieces that he talks about in and I'll put a link to this in the show, note all all the various areas and places, he's talked about the application development. And he talks about the fact that say, for example, with E productivity, you're able to list items that you want to do today. And then if you don't complete them, they kind of retract back into the system. So you have this temporary holding place for Oh, I want to do these things, you throw them into this. In essence, it's a it's a tag, and it then filters to that view, and then it goes away. If you don't do it today. It's like things like that. I think he's just he's looking for these finer pieces that are just not working.

Art Gelwicks 08:02

Those are individual features. And I mean, if you go through and you build software, I'm looking at this spec. And honestly, as at the ground level as a spec, somebody could easily build this, but I don't think anybody use it.

Augusto Pinaud 08:17

I think there's two elements, two elements on this one. And I agree, you know, we, we look at things based on on our personal experience, and it is important to to begin saying the person who make this note is not a software developer, okay, and this is nothing good or bad. And David Allen, that's simply a reality. The second thing is, over the years that I've been listening to getting things done, and, and so forth, and so on, you know, people is always looking, when the new applications come, what we have is the response of a developer, okay, doesn't matter who you pick, okay, of the interpretation of the book, okay. And every application that has come has come in to say, you we are the ultimate GTD application. This is the first time that was what the document was interesting for me is the first time that he commands, okay, this is based on what I wrote, think is the ultimate, you know, or should contain the ultimate application. All that said, The problem with this document, as great as it is, is that the more specific you make this document, the harder is going to be for the people to implement it. And I'm not talking about the software developers now I'm talking about the public, the person who is going to buy this, you know, think about this, if you grab a software as Excel Excel is being out if my memory serves me right since around 1982 Okay, it has the original version was a 5000 page manual that I don't think many people read. Okay, but how many people use Excel on the

day to day, things that cannot use more than the basic things, even I can. If we look at it, there is people who use Excel day to day that don't know how to do operations inside of Excel. So the problem with implementing all this is you have the guidelines, but at the end of the day, who is going to take the guidelines and run with it, and how much value they are going to get on the automation of all this? So I think these notes need to be look from both perspective, one from that developer, as you're saying, as a person who have that experience, I don't, okay, into all that software development, you look at this document, from a different perspective than the perspective, I'm looking at this document. And it's okay, when the client come and bring me this printer paper and say, This is what I want to do, how I'm going to explain to them if they can or cannot, with the tools they have, because the other problem we are going to have, and that is getting better and better as we get more web based, is Where are you going, because if you implement this on Lotus Notes, or OmniFocus, or you go now to the PC, or to the Mac or to just iPhone, it's going to change the tools you're going to have and the features, you're going to have to implement all this.

A Art Gelwicks   11:44
Okay, I will disagree with you at that at all. And I don't want to come across as negative on it. Because it is an old document. And it's around 94 was a time period of a different type of software design and a different platform of application. Looking at the document itself, stripping off, you know, all the core requirements and just saying, okay, is this buildable based in current time? Could someone construct something that would meet David Allen's basic specification? and looking through this? I'd say, absolutely. There are functionality, there's functions and features in here that are readily available. Now, there are more complex pieces that are helpful to see illustrations of for example, there's a page in here that talks about the in process. So he's got something coming into his in basket and is going through his logic tree of what he does with it. Those types of things are really useful for people to see as illustrations, even down to the first p or the second page where you're looking at this high level mock up of a navigation with projects and next actions and waiting for someone could use this as their own starting place, not from a software development standpoint. But using tools say Evernote or notion or something like SharePoint, to go through and construct something that would be very close to this mirror the model that he wants, and then be able to tune it and adapt it. So I think it's an excellent example of his thinking. I'm now of the opinion that maybe the title of it being the GTD killer app is doing it a disservice.

F Francis Wade   13:36
I agree. I agree with that. I think the document is a it's an interesting historical artifact.

However, that doesn't make it the basis for good software design. And I think that's why the two, the two programs fail that, that tried to build on these on these specs.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 13:57

I think there's two different kinds of things. Wait, what two applications failed? I'm not like an activity still runs and David loves it. Yeah, he

Francis Wade 14:06

loves it. But they're not commercially.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 14:11

They are commercially successful. I mean, they still run I mean, just because Eric Mac is limited by what he feels like other systems can do is like I'm what I'm challenging is that monetary success is not necessarily the arbiter of or the measurement of David's vision. Right?

Art Gelwicks 14:34

Well, I mean, not, not to not to tangent there. But I mean, he put out a platform, and I'm gonna call it a platform because it is adaptable GTD as a platform to cover as broad an audience as possible airgo the applications should reach as broad an audience as possible, if we surveyed our listener audience, as to how many people either have used have heard of or have any idea what productivity is I think it's going to be a pretty small number. So I don't I don't know that I would say that it's a successful application, it may be a successful implementation of a particular vision. I'll give you that one. But I don't know if I'd qualify it as a successful solution.

Francis Wade 15:17

The point is, is that he didn't, he didn't get what he wanted,

Raymond Sidney-Smith 15:20

right? That is true.

F **Francis Wade** 15:23

I don't mean feel in an engineering sense. I mean, he, he obviously released it at this point, because he said, neither of them got to where I wanted to get. And I think I think there's a reason for that, which is that any software and I've seen other people try to do this with software based on a book, The software is, if the software is intended to implement the ideas in a book, that's very different software than that, which is intended to solve those problems. That the to divert. And what you can put in paper, and what you can get by with, in text, when you write a book, you cannot get away with in software. The two, the two activities of developing for a book and developing for a live user in 2020 are two very, very different activities.

A **Art Gelwicks** 16:17

It's similar in analogy to when you have a movie made from a book, that the two, the two may have the same core. But they diverged very quickly because of the difference in the medium. Well, it's the same thing that we're talking about here. And, and again, I'm not trying to be critical of David, I think he he's got fantastic ideas and establishment here. But I'll throw this out there. If he's had this idea for an application since 1994, and has not been able to get to a solution that he thinks is what he considers the killer app. To me, there's one or two problems, either one, he's approaching it wrong. or two, there's some complexity in the underlying system that makes it basically impossible to build an equivalent version. And I'm not sure where the challenge is, but there's a roadblock in there somewhere that is preventing the construction of the, quote, killer app. But I think again, we're doing it a disservice by continuing to use that phrase, because we all know, regardless of GTD or any other system, there is no killer app for any implementation, because everybody has their own variations of it. And we have to take that into consideration. I I personally, I think that's what's derailing, at least in my mind,

F **Francis Wade** 17:41

right. And that's the difference between a killer movie and a killer app that says, a movie, you know, you consume in a couple of hours by watching it, it's not requesting that you change behaviors, and it doesn't expect you to come in with any behaviors that are any different from basically passively watching. But a productivity task management app builds on what you're already doing, and has to take into account. No current technology, this was written before the internet was popularized and available. It's not it was before more battle is around. And our behaviors today are very, very different than they were in 1994. So if someone were to try to go for the killer app, the place to start isn't, isn't from ideas that were written back then it's from what are the problems users are trying to solve today. And that's really the only place to start from if you really want to do commercial

software, that's going to be popularized on a large scale.

A Art Gelwicks   18:46

So let me ask a side question. Maybe Maybe we can circle around this thing a little bit. If we take this document as not the quote, killer apps, but but his vision for the solution based on current state of technology, current state of productivity solutions. I think it's doable. I think it's functionally capable to map to all the things we've talked about so far. There's no reason why this couldn't be created. The question is, should it be? Should there be one, quote, GTD killer app, and I had the same basic reaction when writer Carol brought out his printed bullet journal, because one of the core aspects of that was the fact that you could make it whatever you wanted. But as soon as you have a quote, official, something you've established a yardstick to measure everything else by whether that yardstick is accurate or not. So I have to go back and ask Should we have a specific app?

Raymond Sidney-Smith   20:04

GTD is supposed to be considered a mental model, or David, I think has sometimes talked about it as a mental operating system for life and work. And so if we think about it from that perspective, what he's trying to do, he's he's trying to build the software that you use on top of the operating system. And that, in and of itself is a complex task. Right. That's a that's a that's a hub, if there are no problems, they're only projects. That's a big project. And so I think that I think that the notion of having a an application, a one single software for everyone is pretty foolhardy. I think that you need many different types of software to fit just the four of us. We all have very different needs and wants as it relates to very subjective things about our software. Better yet. All of the people on the planet, I think, for GTD ears, if we narrow it down, just to that small band of people who who practice GTD has vision works. I mean, his the what he's the the schematics of what he drew out, I think, fundamentally work. Will it be all the features that everyone wants? I don't think so. But I think just staying true to form is, is what he's trying to really get at the heart of is that these are these are the components he feels like are necessary to practice GTD. Well. Does that make sense?

A Augusto Pinaud   21:40

Does it make sense also, let's let's let's make a quick query in here, I, my system has been a nominee focus, his only focus came out or probably before that it was an outlook but your system, I know Ray system lives in, in remember the mail. So where your system leads, if we go and we'll all of us will come and make this document. So let's ignore everything else,

if I will go right now and pick up set of base of papers and make what will be my ultimate GTD app. You know, there will be elements on there that may or may not exist, and may match or don't match this document. I think what what is interesting about this document is what was the criteria, he was looking into that app in 1994, but also where what he was considered. And at that time, I'm probably to this day, the basics of what he need to really be effective into that getting things done, or into his own system of getting things done. If we get this document and you go and make an art project because of your own specific realities. What you do for work, your life, your own set of variables, that application will, there are certain things that are going to match, there are certain things that are going to be different. What I think is great about this is it gives the people the fact that that application may or may not exist, it doesn't exist, from his perspective, even as a person who invest with Eric Mack into building this, they could not, you know, we're able and we can argue with the limitations of Lotus Notes or we can argue with something else. But they could not make it happen. Can Can we make it happen? Yes. But he's going to happen the same thing. And we were discussing that some episodes back where Witter will The problem is, which are the features that you are going to be considering for your own GTD killer app that are essential? versus what are the the ones that I'm going to consider that are essential for me, you know, if you look at the second page on that, and we will put the link on the PDF on the notes, you know, he had the ability to push a button and get an agenda for the day, I will love to do that. Okay, that pulls my calendar, but then sick clean out of the calendar, what is there to block in a space versus what I really want to go and then give me you know, a rundown of everything else can that be done, of course can be done. The problem is I want to get it done on the platform that everything else that I have leave you know when we release Episode 72 where we talk about nazmi teams. What I think most B teams bring that is great is that it produced the opposite of what we are David Allen plages productivity application is thinking on what he needs for his own personal productivity. And that's what he'd make it that's what he needed for his own personal productivity when you add art personal productivity, Francis personal, productive To raise personal productivity, I was to personal productivity all that is out of the window,

A Art Gelwicks   25:06

you hit it right on the head, though, you hit it right on the head, when you said a few minutes ago, you mentioned wanting to build this in your own tool. And I think that's the inherent problem we all run into. We all have our own tools and systems that we trust right now, because this stuff has been around forever, or at least since 1994. And before. So when we look at something like this, we start to say, what can we do to implement this in our own tools that we're using? The problem is this type of a spec, and I won't just single out this one, any type of a spec, you try to define, to implement a set of business

requirements into a particular platform has to be conceptually high enough, but functionally detailed enough to be able to match up with the capabilities of the platform. What that means, though, is that means that you have to have a deep understanding of the platform capabilities, you have to be an Evernote expert, a notion expert, a SharePoint expert, to be able to work backwards into the requirements. So if you're not an expert in those tools, the next option is give me an app that does all that stuff. So I don't have to be an expert in another platform to try and build this. This is where we get into this recurring challenge. And I'm not going to say it just for GTD, I mean, across the board in productivity, we're looking for that quick turnkey solution, the silver bullet that solves the problems of trying to implement something that it guides us through it. And I and I'm looking at one of the pages specifically in here that called out to me, he has a page in the document well down in the document that talks about coaching feedback, where you're trying to do something or coaching messages where you're trying to do something, and the application is actually taking you through GTD coaching to get to that end result. That's a neat concept. I like that capability. But the gap that you have is that the platforms, people who are experts in the platforms, aren't GTD coaches, and the GTD coaches aren't experts in the platforms. So there has to be a lot of synergy between those two parties to be able to come up with solutions that allow you to have this kind of virtual coach in an application. And you run into that a lot through this. So I think we've got that core challenge of, we assume that there's a way to build a tool that does this. I don't think there is, I think there's ways to build multiple tools. And we're seeing that as we look through this. You mentioned having a daily summary. Well, what popped in my head is, well, that's the front page of Outlook. If I go in Outlook, I see all my emails, I see my calendar, I see my task list right there. I've got it right there on one screen, therefore, it's my killer app for that particular need. Is that the case for everybody? Absolutely not. So I don't want us to get too hung up on that part of it. But I think this is a great opportunity for the productivity community as a whole, as Francis mentioned, to look at a historical document to look at where a lot of this thinking was granulated and concentrated so that David could push his methodology forward, which triggered a lot of other methodologies not only derivative of that, but also inherited from, and I think it's one of those things where let's look at it at what it is this is. This is gonna sound ridiculous. This is like the Constitution of GTD. This is the framework, the founding father framework. It's how we interpret this today, that makes the bigger difference.

Francis Wade   29:05

I like the idea of that because it It allows you to appreciate document like this, but but at the level of sort of constitutional level, which you might say is principles. But the application of the specifics, the specific behaviors. I doubt there's anybody who uses implemented GTD the way David Allen implemented GTD at the level of specific

behaviors because nobody copies anybody else completely. There's always some variation. The problem is that you can take principles and apply them to different software and say they are they're all supportive of the general principles, which I think is true of all the task management software. They generally support GTD principles. However, when GTD gets down into the weeds are the behaviors that comprise GTD such as the ones that are described here. That's when you run into trouble. principles, yes. But specific behaviors vary by individuals, so much so that trying to have someone use the same software to follow the exact same behaviors, I think is to get to where Ray's going, which is everybody wants their own version of, they don't want their behaviors to be prescribed to that level of detail. First, they just don't have the sort of autonomy. But I think just in terms of practicality, back to what I said, I don't think that's anyone who has implemented the behaviors that David Allen has implemented in the way that he has done it. So the software, he's the description he's written is fine for him, and maybe the one or the person on the planet who follows those behaviors exactly the same way. But then once you start wanting a bit of a difference in the behaviors, you then need different software. So software is not generally forgiving of you wanting your own behaviors, it just, it just doesn't work that way.

Raymond Sidney-Smith   31:08

So there's an inherent conflict between what we're talking about, which is that I'm trying to kind of summit what is the inherent conflict of what we're talking about in the sense that if you have a prescriptive application, then there is a problem of subjective or preferential bias. So the individual will want certain things to change. And that will not fit the prescription of the GTD practices that David Allen has itemized on the other side, then is flexibility. And when you create an application that is too flexible, then when you can do everything five different ways that requires a lot of training, to use the application, and then lower levels of user adoption. I'll take a case in point I used to be an independent consultant for a technology called time matters, which still exists, it is a legal case, practice management software, or legal practice management software. And you could implement GTD to a tee for exactly what David is talking about here. And including the prompts, and everything else like that. Now, it's for legal case management, right? So it's, it's so you could run a law practice, not a GTD system, but you could totally adapt it for those reasons. One of the jokes that I frequently talked about when when training people to use time matters. And billing matters, it's it's its invoicing companion tool, it was that you could do everything in time matters five different ways. And that was a problem for people because they just wanted one way to do things. And because you had a keyboard shortcut, and you could find a way to filter and automate this particular piece. And you could go into the file menus and drop down and find the functions there. People just were so confused about where they should enter any particular function. And that's a real issue

that every developer needs to address, which is, how much flexibility Do you give to the user on the front end? And how much flexibility Do you give to the advanced users on the back end, and you need to you need to get to some level of balance there. And that's just always going to be a problem. I think that that's always going to be an issue, which is why, in kind of my opinion, the schema that David provides, is great for him, and probably for a vast majority of GTD practitioners, but the number of people who will actually use those features is probably going to be slim. So they would need to be turned off until they wanted to actually see them.

A Art Gelwicks 33:53

I agree with you completely. They're right. I mean, you if you look at this type of an approach, and I'm trying to compare it to how we would construct something like this, I'm I'm in a build mode for some reason this morning. This is the type of thing that would work really well on a platform that allows templated solutions, because if you look at his pages and just translate it in a raw manner, there's sections of this spec that are useful for some not for others, therefore you do or you don't want them as part of your application. You either want to turn it off or not having there in the first place. Well, if they're templatized, you can just turn on and turn off the pieces that you do and don't need. Does that violate the core integrity of his vision for this? Yeah, probably. But honestly, that was 1994. We've moved past that. Being able to provide and this is I'm fighting this right now I actually have an email to decide whether or not I include dashes and a social security number. I mean, it's it's this kind of thing from a user story. standpoint? Do you provide ultimate flexibility to meet every possible edge case? Do you build to 80%? and have that 20%? who's like, oh, wow, that's not exactly what I want, tried to draw them to the 80? Or do you just say, this is what it is use it as it is. And if you don't like it, sorry, go build your own. It's the classic dilemma. I don't think it devalues the document at all. I don't think it devalues the core concepts. I think it's an opportunity to I would love to see experts on the different platforms take a hold of this thing and start to try to implement some of the more complicated pieces of it. I mean, I'm looking at it and from the Microsoft world, this thing would make quite the fascinating power app. Because it could all be self contained. Would it be perfect? Absolutely not. It's Power Apps as a platform has its own problems. So I'm going to circle back to that key point though. And, and I think it's a problem in the productivity space. We keep looking for that miracle pill. And we have to stop that. And even something like this. If we just say that it is what it is, this is a thought exercise. And it's an opportunity for us to evaluate our own systems, our own solutions, the larger systems and solutions as a whole and look for opportunities to improve, then it has a great deal of value. If it's a roadmap to the perfect solution, well, guess what you're going to get lost.

Francis Wade   36:39

I agree with that. And arguably, we wouldn't even be having this conversation if David Allen had implemented if instead of writing his book, he had implemented an app, if he had forgotten about writing the text, and just went ahead and tried to commercialize software that followed this spec. I don't think we'd be having this conversation today.

Art Gelwicks   36:57

That's a crazy good point. Oh, my goodness, think about that. Think about the number of software applications that have been written over the years around a productivity solution that don't have a book attached, that have disappeared. They came out, then people use it a little bit. Oh, this is great. This is the most wonderful thing. And then a year later, where are they? They're gone. So I couldn't agree with you more there. Francis. I think that's the crux of this is maybe cuz it's

Raymond Sidney-Smith   37:28

David. So this leads us kind of neatly to my final question for us all, which is what GTD app Do you feel gets closest to David Allen's vision here? Like what what are the applications on the market? Let's say that the the Pareto principle way 80%, there may be more in terms of what he's looking to accomplish,

Augusto Pinaud   37:52

I'm a good student is going to go to Step backs on that answer. And the first I will go into, into hardware, okay, and maybe a combination of hardware and software, because OmniFocus obviously, that is the app I'm going to discuss can't work on anything other than a Mac. But OmniFocus there is an article in the show notes from a guy from the Netherlands. So I'm not even going to try to pronounce his name, who got the the 19 pages of sheet and then create the shortcuts on iOS and with somebody and integrate them with only focus to to make his understanding of the David Allen killer app is a really interesting article to read. Recently, the last four weeks OmniFocus lounge, something called on the automation that now will allows you to have the same power you have any scripts on the Mac on the iOS. So you can really go from create integrate these workflows and these things where he will be able to pull from OmniFocus to other apps, bringing it really, really close to that universality of things that you can go open back and forward between the things using shortcuts and a script. The issue with this is completely geeky. Okay, it is awesome. It works. But it requires you to have a certain level of geekiness and a certain level of a certain time to be able to geek out you know, if you don't Can you do a

lot of it? OmniFocus Yes, you can as you can and many other applications. The question is, where is your your time you know, me when I discovered getting things done 20 years ago, I had a lot more time Interest maybe into this geeking out and spending time, you know, at hours of hours of hours of hours of research so I could do this little feature. Now, I want the 20% work really well and the other 80%. Sorry, I don't have the time. It's on a Sunday, maybe and maybe someday I will get there, but maybe not. So that is the first answer that you need. Where are you? How much time do you have to tinker into this and spend time solving that feature so that way you can push a button on the iPad, and then synchronize the mind map that I used for think on the project with the project on OmniFocus? Or it's simpler to just copy the link or the URL for that document on the web and paste it on the notes of OmniFocus. That's now the first answer we need. Again, answering your question OmniFocus will feed a lot of that if you live on a Mac environment or an iOS environment. But anything really will do. If you know what is the 20% that you need to accomplish?

Raymond Sidney-Smith   41:12

So there are several applications out there that I think are doing the core functions of GTD practice. Well, and this is where I think David Allen is mostly blogged about which is, you know, if you manage lists, then you're doing GTD in a lot of developers perspectives. But in reality, that's that's just that's just the entry level stuff. You know, if you want to go into more intermediate and advanced level stuff, is when you're starting to facilitate the actual core functions that GTD tries to give you that mind space that headspace to be able to focus on the more creative and, and high focused actions that require your full brainpower. And that's what I'm, that's what I'm most interested in. And so there are a few applications that are trying pieces of this, I think, amazing Marvin, the team there is doing some really interesting pieces, where they're they're not focused specifically on GTD, but they're focused on being able to implement all the functions of it and giving you more features, like what GTD is trying to do, I think Nirvana is doing some of that as well. There's an application called, I'm gonna butcher their name, but it's either finite or fino if it's French pronunciation, but it's ephi. And OT, they are currently in they were an alpha, I think they just launched in beta on Android. And, and this is kind of the additional problem, right? So David is really looking to do this software on a desktop device. He noted in his, in our interview of him that he is really doing, you know, all of his work on his MacBook Pro. And he doesn't really intend to do that on his phone or tablet. And for the rest of us. That is not true. For many of us, we're doing work across many different devices. And we need that application to spread across all of those devices. So something like find out or if you know, is, is not useful out the gate, because it's only available on a mobile device or something like GTD next, which is also doing some really great work at at developing out the the task list management functions and project management

functions. But then we missed the rest of the of the workflow map. If people really think about GTD, we're talking about not just action management, but we're talking about incubation and reference and calendar. And, you know, something that traditionally an all in one productivity system like outlook is trying to solve, which outlook doesn't do this very well. And, and connecting those pieces so that we have filters and rules that allow us to be able to surface the right information to get into flow as quickly as possible. And then to get us out of flow appropriately and track and maintain us throughout the day in a way that helps us stay productive even when the rest of the world is fighting against that point. So I think that there are some really interesting applications that are being developed. I am very much probably in the camp that the software doesn't exist yet, because we haven't quite understood as noted earlier, I think if for you to really build a fantastic GTD focused app, now that David has open sourced this schema, I think that more developers will be able to sit down with it and really start to understand it better. You could probably build this in Microsoft Access with enough time and grit. And, and and as you noted art you could probably build this in Power Apps. If if Google didn't deprecate the App Maker, you could probably also build it there. But you could probably still build it in Google using Google Apps Script. The point is, is that you need to recognize how much of this you need, and then go look at the applications that are out there that are going to help satisfy that. And then if you need something additional, like the coaching, maybe that's just a set of reminders that you prompt yourself with using another application and getting the appropriate triggers there. So for myself, I've been able to do a lot of what David's talking about using remember the milk and Zapier connected to other applications that integrate it, because remember, the milk isn't going to handle reference for me. And to some great extent, it's not going to handle waiting for us from for me, since I handle waiting for is in a different way outside of Remember, the milk, then traditionally, is considered a list in GTD applications. Generally, I think it's kind of foolish, the way in which people have interpreted the waiting for list. And and in a modern world, you know, since David developed, the the principles of GTD waiting fours are and should be adapted for the way in which you communicate the follow up, not passively making a list and hoping that somebody gets back to you with regard to those things. So it's, it's about really, really deeply understanding GTD for yourself, right? Understanding your productivity principles for yourself, and, and going beyond GTD, for example, if you just understand how you work, what is your work style, what are the things that need to be shored up? What are your weaknesses, the things that you know, you don't do very well, maybe you're not very good at organizing. And and so your files and your desk, your digital files, and your digital and your physical desk are just messy? Well, how do you support yourself in those ways? with software? How do you support yourself in those ways through other behavioral interventions that make sure that you're staying on task and on track to your goals, projects and actions? I think that's the kind of stuff that we need to be thinking about more, when it comes to finding kind of the ultimate anything, or the killer anything, we

want to make sure that we are finding the tools that are keeping us on track. And if they're keeping us on track, then it needs to probably be more than one tool, I just really don't see one tool doing everything.

A Art Gelwicks   47:32
No, I agree with you completely re there is no tool out there that can do all of this. Not singular, not in the consumer space, at least there are tools in the corporate space, but they aren't individual tools, their entire platforms. And they require a deep understanding of how the platform works and how it interconnects to be able to meet these requirements. But two things occurred to me as you were talking, they're the one thing and the second part builds on it is that if we were to get a, quote, killer app from somebody, how would we know that it's the, quote, correct implementation, because to know that, you'd have to be a GTD expert to be able to compare what they've done with what the concept was. So you have to be an expert in the business requirements to understand if the platform was configured and constructed correctly. Which leads me to my second point, I think the better expenditure of energy is to become experts in our own systems. Don't spend a lot of time trying to figure out what the best way to implement somebody else's particular killer app is on a particular platform. Put that energy into your own system, put that energy into figuring out what you need, what you don't need, beg, borrow and steal from all of the ones out there. Get comfortable with the tools that you like, and then configure your own. Yeah, it's a big step for a lot of people. It's not the easy turnkey magic pill that I talked about earlier. But I think it's the only way you're going to get to something that works for you, and makes you in the end more productive.

F Francis Wade   49:19
Yeah, I agree with that. I would add to it that and if you if you are in the software development business, trying to pick up specs from 1994 and get them to work is if it's an intellectual exercise, that's one thing or an academic exercise that you know, you could do in a master's level computer science course that's that's most of those are one kind of commitment. But the commitment to produce widely used commercial software comes from a very different place and that requires an expertise in business. behaviors. You know what, it's nothing to do with GTD per se. It's what are the behaviors that people engage in here in 2020, and are likely to engage in in the next five years around their task management or their productivity or whatever you decide to focus on. So that's more, that's more behavioral than it is anything else? I think.

A Art Gelwicks   50:24

Yeah, I got specs from last week, I can't interpret much less stuff from 1994.

F Francis Wade   50:33

Yeah, I'd be surprised if the 94 specs go any further than just a curiosity or a historical roadmap or something that says, Okay, here's a milestone. And here's what it looked like and, and how interesting it is, I don't think there's there is or will be flowering of software companies looking to pick up the specs and say, oh, my goodness, the golden, the golden ants of the Holy Grail. This is what we needed all this time. This is the missing link, which will then kick off a whole set of new prototypes. I don't see that happening. I don't think it's going to happen that?

Raymond Sidney-Smith   51:13

Well, I'm going to respectfully disagree with you, I think that there are a wide variety of people who have been developing task management apps, who are not in the camp of and don't understand your perspective on time demands, and on moving from the current space of manual task management to say, an automated task management to say an automated calendar management function, where you have automated scheduling, I think we're not quite there yet, as a society, I don't think, you know, as a human race, we're not yet there. And so those task managers are still going to be the predominant form of, of action management. And I think that there's going to be a proliferation of new products on the market, or those who are developing those applications. Now that this is available to them, they are going to kind of needle over every detail to figure out what David drew is really trying to get at, and then start to adapt and bring those pieces into the into the software, I think that's a good thing. I honestly think that the more we can more rigorously understand the psychology, the the underlying user to design and user interface components, and really coaching behavior, which is something that people forget, which is that that combines not just our psychology, but with our, our social behaviors, you know, so that we are understanding the components of accountability, the components of having an independent voice of ourselves, while we're trying to be our best selves, is not usually our inner dialogue, and the power of the functions within a team and collaboration. Those pieces all need to be taken into account as we develop software. And I'm, I put the challenge to anyone developing any software that says they are GTD focused, and not just make it a task list manager, you know, that is, that is the baseline, that is the Okay, I can I can put together a set of databases, what makes you better than a Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets workbook. I mean, that's, that's the level at which I see many of these task managers. And to some great extent, I'm one of those, remember, the milk is just the task list manager, right. And it's a very fancy one with a lot of stuff baked

underneath its hood that makes it more than that for me. And its ability to integrate, obviously, with ifft. And Zapier has extended its functions for me to make it really what I want it to be. But for those out there who are really trying to do what David's trying to get out. And I think there is true value to what he's trying to do there. You must think beyond, can it manage lists, it needs to go beyond that and start to facilitate those other components that really makes it a partner in action, not just a, a slave to little lists that you can manipulate. And and that's that's really what I'm really interested in seeing. So I know that I know that you may think, Francis that this is just an artifact for academic study.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 54:26

But I really do hope, I guess it's more of a hope that people will look to this and see ways in which we can not just look at what the schematic say, but what people are really doing today. And and building upon that and saying, okay, for the new age of work, this new digital age of not just working in offices, but also remote work, how how can individuals and teams get more done? How can they really truly be productive in that environment and I think if we can do that, we can have really, truly Great software. So thank you, gentlemen, we are at the end of our discussion today. But the conversation does not have to stop with this audio. If you have a question or a comment about what we've discussed during this cast, please visit our episode page on ProductivityCast dotnet. there on the podcast website there at the bottom of the page, feel free to leave a comment or a question. And we read and respond to all of them. So feel free to go check those out. Also, on ProductivityCast dotnet. On each episode page, you'll find the show notes. Those include links to anything we've discussed. So you can easily jump to it. Like the the schematics that David released, there's a link to that in the show notes. There's our transcript as well, that is a downloadable PDF and so on and so forth. So go ahead and check those out and the resources are there for you. If you have a topic about personal productivity you'd like us to discuss on a future cast, please visit ProductivityCast dotnet forward slash contact, you can leave a voice recorded message and as you can record directly from your browser, on your desktop or mobile. You can also type a message and maybe it will feature you in a future episode. I want to express my thanks to Agusta pinout Francis Wade and our galaxy for joining me here on ProductivityCast. This and every week, you can learn more about them and their work by visiting ProductivityCast dotnet. Also, I'm Risa D. Smith and on behalf of all of us here at ProductivityCast here's to your productive life.

Voiceover Artist 56:19

That's it for this productivity cast, the weekly show about all things productivity with your

hosts, Ray Sidney-Smith and a gousto been out with Francis Wade and art galax