Raymond Sidney-Smith 0:17
Welcome back, everybody to ProductivityCast the weekly show about all things personal productivity. I'm Ray Sidney-Smith.

Augusto Pinaud 0:22
I'm Augusto Pinaud.

Francis Wade 0:23
I'm Francis Wade.

Art Gelwicks 0:25
And I'm Art Gelwicks.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 0:26
Welcome, gentlemen, and welcome to our listeners to this episode. Today, we are going to be talking about voice productivity. And before the show started, we were talking about other things. And Arthur C. Clarke came up and I thought it was really interesting. So I'm going to start us off with this, which is Arthur C. Clarke is the British science fiction author. And he had these three laws that he talked about, of course, it's third laws, most known but I thought it was interesting for us to start off with kind of the other two, which is the first law of Clarke is that when a distinguished but elderly scientists, states that something is possible. He's almost certainly right. When he states that something is impossible, he is very probably wrong. Number two is the only way of discovering the limits of the possible is to venture a little way past them into the impossible, great for a science science fiction writer. Hmm. And then his third law, which is his most well known law, and the one that I want us to kind of kick off from is any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic. It really conjured up something really interesting about voice productivity, which is that just a few 100 years, there are people who would have you know, kind of been burned at the stake as as sorcerers and witches and whatnot for some of the things that we can now do without ever physically touching anything. And it's just remarkable that voice productivity has taken us there, we have this ability to use audio, both for input and output to be more productive. And I just I find it very fascinating. And I'm looking forward to this discussion. Now, in episodes 71. We discussed a little bit about this in the personal outsourcing episode. So if you haven't listened to that episode, head over jet ProductivityCast dotnet forward slash 071, you'll be able to listen to the personal outsourcing episode, we also actually touched a little bit on this in the IoT productivity episode, which was Episode 86. So if you go to productivity cast dotnet, forward slash 086, you'll be also capable of listening back to that episode. So feel free to listen to those episodes in tandem with this, because there is some other material there as well. But we were talking about this episode, Augusto and I have talking about it. And, you know, the reality is, is that audio productivity predates and goes well beyond what we know today in terms of voice assistants. But we have so much around audio voice productivity that I wanted to kind of have this discussion. And then Augusto brought up this other really interesting, unique use case of this did you want to tell us a little bit about how that came to be. And then we'll get into the conversation,

Augusto Pinaud 3:01
of course, and this happened to me working with a new client. It's a new client that I'm coaching. And as we were looking into his personal productivity, we got to the keyboard. And

when I publish 25 tips for productivity, one of the things that I said is learn to type, you know, typing when you spend your days, in the computer, the keyboard is your bottleneck, and the fastest you can type and the more you know certain things in a computer, the better you can use that computer. So when we test the speed typing speed of this client, it was really, really slow. So I told him, we need to get you a software to learn to type so we can get your speed up. So you can really be more productive at this to what the client answer. I'm not. To my surprise, what do you mean, you know, I'm not learning to type. So we need to find a different way. So we begin looking into the audio way and see if I could get this client to use the audio commands on his devices. So that way instead of typing the emails, he can dictate the emails. And that's how this episode came. Not only that it was really interesting for me, because as much as he's improvement in productivity came almost instantly he went from 2520 to 25 words per minute, to be able to dictate between 100 and 120. Not only that he now for the first time Feel free to do these emails to dictate this and it's really changing productivity in a way that I didn't envision. I my response has always been learn to type. You know, let me give you this tool. Let me teach you and I still think there is an incredible value into learning to type better and to type faster. But I have never considered the difference in the speed of that mostly because I, I personally have a privacy issue when I dictate, you know, everybody can hear everybody. And that doesn't necessarily appeal to me. But I understand that it's not a concern for you. Now you can go and type emails and do these things and really improve your speed and many other things. So I've been looking into this in the last week and a half or two weeks into how can you improve and really change things when we talk about this typing and input typing and everything else.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 5:40
So what I'd like us to do is to kind of have this conversation in three parts, we're going to talk about what are the ways we know voice and audio productivity can be used, productivity tools and workflows can be used. And then we'll talk a little bit about how we currently use voice or audio productivity technologies in our own productive systems, productivity systems. And then for you listeners, we can kind of close out with ways that you can get started with voice or audio productivity. And if you are already using these tools, then maybe how we would recommend leveling up in that space, what are some of the ways in which you can do more with some of these productivity tools, where you can get input and output by audio, and be more productive with it. So let's get started with what are the ways in which we can currently be productive. Using voice and audio,

Francis Wade 6:38
I don't use a lot of audio. So the little bit that I use, in terms of productivity, is I so I produce a column for the newspapers on the topic of productivity every two weeks. And I've done it for about 10 years or so. And one of the one of the techniques I use is that once I've gotten to almost the final draft, or it's been vetted by my colleague and wife, I actually record it. And the reason I record reason I recorded is not for the recording or didn't start off that way. But it started off as an attempt to even though the bumps in the manuscripts were 100 words. And so every two weeks, I reread over the article I've just written. And what I'm listening for is where the the grammar is a little tricky. The words don't flow, where I'm repeating words anywhere I could make improvements. And I started out doing that just for myself, just listen to how I could improve the text. And then I decided, why not why not recorded just for the heck of it. And then at some point later on, so why not publish it? for the heck of it. So I turned it into a podcast. But the the major, the major productivity improvement is, yes, it's cool to have the podcast. But it's the reading overload and capturing it on video and hearing my voice as I'm reading it, because it helps me to write become a better writer. I did that for my book as well. I read every chapter and then tried to listen to where things weren't making sense or where I was getting into problems. But that's one of the it's this. This is one that's been recommended for years. But it's a bit of it used to be a bit of a pain in the ass to do it's become easier.

Art Gelwicks 8:30
It's interesting, Francis, because I do something that's kind of the exact opposite in process. I use Microsoft Word Online and their dictate function when I'm going to script, a podcast episode, because sometimes I want to have it scripted out rather than just being extemporaneous. So what I'll do is I'll actually dictate as if I were doing it, extemporaneously get all the text into my Word document. And then I can go back and just edit the document itself, rewrite it, because it sounds much more natural, because that's how I said it. And then I can work it together into something logically more cohesive, and then be able to reread it back as a scripted recording, that dictate function has saved me any number of times, rather than having to sit there and type everything because after a little bit of time, writing by hand, my writing style diverges from my speaking style, not too far, but enough where you can tell one versus the other. And in cases where I want it to have I want it to be much more natural, that dictate just makes it so much simpler.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 9:38
So I'm going to go kind of old school here and talk about the fact that we have a couple of technologies that we've been using for years and years for voice or audio productivity. Not quite sure which one I want to call this. I think we'll we'll stick with voice productivity for the sake of it, but I think about this in kind of a gentle To realize the audio perspective. And so first there are audio books. I mean, going back to Francis's note from earlier, which is that, you know, we've been having either authors or voiceover artists record the, the, you know, the books that they have written into an audio version for people to listen to, for, you know, years and years. So, audiobooks are a fantastic way to be more productive. And those are definitely something that's a core part of my own world, I listened to lots of audio books. And they are the way in which I usually listen to books that I really like, if I don't read it on an annual basis, I, you know, there's certain books like getting things done on writing by William zinsser, you know, the various books that I really just enjoy reading at least once a year, sometimes a few times, if I want to indulge myself, but you know, the reality is, is that audiobooks are a great way to listen to material that you might otherwise not read. Like, there's some books that I know that I'm just not going to be able to read because, one I don't particularly like the author, but I knew I know, I need to read the material for work purposes, there are books that are just really long. And I want to be able to have the ability to sit down and read some of it and listen to some of it, the audio book gives me the chance to do that, while I'm driving, or while I'm going for a run or walking the dog and that kind of thing. Really fantastic ability there. The the other part that I think is really unique is that we've had kicked into Windows as well as the Mac, a fairly structured and strong capability of interacting by voice. For many years. Now, I know I'm most familiar with Microsoft's speech recognition application, and it is baked into Windows 10. And when you activate Microsoft speech, speech recognition, it goes through a process of you training it to learn, it's really training you by the way, but it says that it's training, you're training it, but but really, you're you're learning how to be trained to use it, but you learn all of the various audio prompts. And then you can do so many things with it. In essence, with Microsoft speech recognition turned on, and you becoming proficient with the tool, you can do everything on the computer without a keyboard and mouse. So it becomes this true audio assistant, more powerful, probably than Cortana could ever be on Microsoft, but just recognize that kick right into the operating system, you have speech recognition, and you can you can do voice typing, you can control the interface, you can literally, you know, navigate the computer and tell it to do things, open applications, close applications, switch applications, move the move the mouse, you know, move the cursor on screen all by voice. It's a very powerful tool, and it works across, you know, application, you don't have this problem of worrying about, Oh, is this going to work in this browser? Or is this going to work and in this place, because it's the operating system, it really has strong control over the entire interface. So that's my point on ways that you can be productive using voice audio, you can be listening to more material. In audio. There's also the factor that music is something that can be highly useful, right? There are different types of music. So I use brain.fm. And I have for several years now and really

enjoy using it because it's this highly useful type of music that it's not specifically using binaural beats, it's using some other form of algorithm to produce music that helps put your brain into various states. So if you want to have a focus state, if you want to be able to put yourself into say, take a nap or sleep state, it has these abilities to help you relax, help you focus that kind of thing built into the underlying audio. But you know, there's music that gets people excited and queued up to go right there. There's music that's good for exercise, there's music that's good for just relaxing. So I think music is a really great productivity tool that we use all the time and don't recognize its power. And if we just give a little bit more awareness to that, we can then start to say, Okay, well, let's set this music playlist for this type of work this music playlist for this type of work, and maybe no music for this type of work because I don't want any audio in this environment. They're just certain types of places where music I think really has a strong space in productivity.

Francis Wade 14:42
So I've experimented with using coffee shop, kind of noise. They have a few people who've who've recorded the songs on on YouTube. And if I work and just play those copy, you know, kind of background Starbucks kind of noise in the background, where you can't quite nickel the voices. So you can't quite hear people's conversations. But you can tell they're talking. And other kinds of coffee songs like clinking, kind of hissing, kind of things you would expect to hear, I found it really useful is something about having company but not intrusive company, that has always sort of worked for me. And having that sound in the background, makes me think I'm not just working alone, I'm working for a purpose, or I'm working in a context. And just having that actually actually has helped me a great deal to focus. And especially when I need to hit a deadline, that's really useful.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 15:45
I've added coffee activity into the show notes for anyone who's interested. But it's an application that does just that as a web browser version and other things

Augusto Pinaud 15:53
I've been saying about using Beethoven Ninth Symphony in a particular version for my weekly review to increase productivity. But not only that, even that has come to levels, you know, I agree on the audiobooks I agree on the podcast. I mean, like, like us, you know, there's this kind of information, this kind of discussion will not work the same when a blog post that I said, works, my opinion really well on, on the podcast, and, but now, a lot of houses are coming to having to be gay is having too big G's, having to automate and many, many things. And that increase of over the time of seconds, a lot of the productivity is, you know, I love the fact that I can tell big a, you know, to turn off everything on the basement. Yeah, I have little kids, the lights stay on most of the time. And I'm convinced that those automation, you know, has saved me enough money to justify the thing that just tell big a, please shut up the basement when the when the kids come up, and it is fantastic. But like that, you know, like the example. I said, for my client getting directions, I don't know, when he's been the last time I actually pull my phone, open the maps, and search for the address, instead of say, hey, bigass, drive me to this address or get me to this place or, or get me to my next appointment and those kinds of things. So really, the voice productivity has come in, in a big, big place, you know, getting the weather, right. If you think about it, getting the weather otherwise means open the browser type the weather direction, you know, search your zip code, or where you are, and then get it. You know, I can go and say, because Give me the weather on even give me the forecast, read me my calendar. That's one of my favorite things on on the iPhone is to be able to go, you know, after I'm coming out of meetings, and I'm feeling I'm going to get grabbed a what do you what do you what is coming next. Even that I review my calendar, frequently, it's always good to know what is coming next, instead of being pushed is a way for me to be more proactive and reactive about the calendar. And I can do all these, you know, just using voice productivity.

Art Gelwicks 18:16
See, I found that voice productivity in audio books, for me is a different topic of conversation, because I actually struggle with audio books a little bit, I love them. But they're, they're a bit difficult for me to get all the value out of them that I want to get out of them. But that said, voice productivity, for me is a big thing around the idea of immediate capture, and sharing information back to me when I'm away from my computer. So things like remind me that this is going to happen at this time or remind me every other day to do this thing. And that way, if I'm sitting in the living room, watching TV or reading a book or something, all of a sudden madami wakes up and says hey, here's your reminder, go feed the animals, that type of thing is incredibly useful. It's not this massive productive productivity gain. But what it is, is it it instills greater confidence in my system. And we always talk about that, that you have to have a trusted system. I consider that a very valuable part of my system. It's not perfect, but it means that I can deal with those particular things in a way that I know that they will be handled. adding things to my to do list. I use a couple of layers for voice automation, where I'll tell mattamy to put something on my to do list and it has its own to do list which is part of the challenge because you want it with like a to do list. But I also have an IFTTT routine in the background that says if something goes on my to do list in Amazon, go put it on my to do list to do list. So that way I know it's going to get to the right Place. So you have to think about your system and say, Where is the direct value for this going to happen? And like gousto said, being able to say what's happening the rest of today? Or what's the weather for tomorrow? We don't think of those as productive things. But think about the amount of time you would actually expend to do that task. And are you saving that time to be able to use for something else.

Augusto Pinaud 20:25
And it's funny, you mentioned that because we we live in a privilege responsibility relationship here with the kids. And it's funny to see how they have catch on that. And now they have alerts, you know, they are not, you know, shower, unready by a 30 day start losing privileges, how it works, and he's how he will work forever. So, but he's funny now that I ate now, a had an alarm that I did not set was set by the kids, to remind them that he's eight, and they need to start getting the daily fight of who is going to shower first. So even that we don't think about those things. You know, that's something they create given watching example, I'm, I understand, but they created but then it took out of me the fight of his IBM, time to start getting ready, what do you guys are going to do one, you know, they know, if they're not ready by 830, then they start listening privileges, the Kindles get out of the room, you cannot read tonight, that it's a privilege to be able to read in bed with a Kindle. So when you start balancing those things, you know, even that little age, you can teach them to use this boy's productivity to their advantage. I can't tell you how many times during the day, you hear the announcements on big a here in my house one way to the other, you know, so instead of doing what we did, when we were kids that was trying to shoot, shout as loud as we humanly possibly could. So we don't move out of the couch, my kids do it through an announcement that is a lot more civilized than what we did.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 22:08
Let's move along in terms of what we're currently using, we've kind of touched on it a little bit. But let's let's dive into this notion of what we're actually utilizing with regard to the technologies that are out there. And we can kind of dive in, I'll start with this, which is that back in the IoT episode, I talked about this, but I use a lot of the IoT devices, both at home and at work. And so these devices are tied to my Google ecosystem, so that I'm able to use the Google Assistant. And that really has been helpful in so many different ways. And if you don't know, the Google Assistant has something called Google routines. And if you're inside of the Google application, or inside the home app, depending upon what flavor of Android or iOS device you're using, you're able to actually create these routines so that you're able to say, you know, when this happens, then do these other things, controlling light bulbs, being able to

control audio and playing news, for example, you know, when my alarm goes off in the morning, it automatically and gently plays some of the news reports that I like to listen to in the morning, it's at a quiet volume so that it just kind of gently wakes me up and I can hear the types of news that I want to listen to in the morning and then I can kind of get my day going and that can be incredibly helpful and also you know play it you can have it transfer you know from one device to another so save I get up and then I go into the shower or something like that I can go move that audio to another device so that I can go ahead and continue listening to it in the right form factor you know now I want it to play in the speaker in the the bathroom as opposed to the one in on the phone that kind of thing

Augusto Pinaud 23:52
like that big a also have the routines I can even tell them you know hey, I'm going to go to sleep so I start turning on the lights and turn certain lights that I want to have on so it's really useful I don't have news in the morning for me the morning required well when I wake up before everybody and I really value that quiet time before everybody gets out so for me it's it's about quietness and that time but it happened at night there are certain things I want to know so when I tell you know start a night routine, I want to know what is going to be the weather tomorrow read me my calendar and there are things like that that I that I do that I like to do and get so that's really useful on those routines was big a that's probably the one I've said I will use the most out of Siri out of sorry BK and when you go now one of the issues that at least for me and you know on I bring the last language issue English, obviously is my second language. And I have over the time, a lot of issues recent, my house is full of big A's is because big a, at some point was the one that better understood me as speaking on English as well as the Spanish I, you can set themselves they you can do the communication on both languages that I think is fantastic series catching up. Big G. I don't know, I don't I don't have any any big G's devices in my house. But it is interesting when you talk to people who speak more than one languages, what is their interaction, because it tends to be that one of the languages, it's better than the other. And I thought it was your native language and I need doesn't happen to be your native language. So I don't know exactly what is the issue, but being able to interact on both languages really, really make a difference for that.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 26:10
I think it's important for folks to know that there's a G board. And g board is an application that Google has put out there. It's a keyboard application. And if you were trying to do multilingual typing, g board knows how to do that. And, and so that would also work in voice typing. And so just be mindful of that if you if you do need that if you're multilingual, and you need to be able to type in multiple languages, I've had this problem on several clients, iOS devices, and them not being able to, in essence, just type in whatever language they want to at that present moment. And keyboard actually does a phenomenal job of you being able to say, Okay, I want to be able to type in English, you know, German, Spanish, and it just knows that you're typing in those languages as you're doing it, and it has swipe built into it. So you can just swipe your your characters, really, really great application. For that

Augusto Pinaud 27:10
my issue with typing is, for whatever reason, and this is an goes to be known issue is, I feel that when I'm writing a book, I want to privacy Jen, I don't want anybody to hear what that's first off your first draft is, therefore, typing is better than than dictating for me. But if he's emails and stuff, and I'm in my office, or even text messages, the voice, it is fantastic for me to go as typing. I am one of those person who when they get the voice messages get annoyed. And mostly because I'm on meetings, a lot of the day I can read a text message coming to me, but I cannot read or listen in the middle of a meeting or voice text. So there is that distinction, I don't believe that when you send a recorded message to somebody you are doing productivity, I think you're doing the opposite, because that person need to wait until a moment where they

can hear that voice message so that I will not include that as productivity. In the world of use scenario.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 28:25
I consider that actually the opposite on the tail end of gastos thought there about voice audio notes, I think that it's really important to also recognize the flip side of that. So I use various different types of technologies, primarily Google Voice for being able to receive voicemail messages. So it manages my voicemail. So if my, you know, my family calls or friends call that kind of thing, they're going to be taken into the Google Voice, voicemail system. And what Google Voice does, on my personal site, it also does this in Google workspace, on the business side as well. But when you get a voicemail message, it can now take that audio and transcribe it. So it does the opposite of what really a goose does problem is, so you get the benefit of both of those things, right. So you get the audio file, but you also then get a machine transcribed message that shows up for me in email. And now, based on the text of that email, I can say, Okay, if these words show up in this, for this to this person in the office, to be able to deal with or for this into remember the milk for me, so that I know there's something that I need to do regarding that thing. So I will then instead of the voicemail message sitting in my voice mailbox, which I very rarely, if ever look at any more. I just am not inclined to do that. And I really love the notion of being able to capture voicemail, send it and centralize it into my one box right in my inbox one environment. And now I can control where and what happens to that thing productively if it's something that needs an action that can get forwarded into my productivity system. And it's not trapped now in some other proprietary system that I have to go dial into in order to get access to

Augusto Pinaud 30:18
Yeah, you see, I wanted to say My issue is not with a voicemail when it gets in the phone. And again, this as you said, this is a personal thing, my issue are exactly that telegram voicemail that people is expecting me to reply. And I get in your place that sometimes a quick answer that I can provide, I say get into my voicemail on the phone, and it gets text translated most of the time. On the case of those telegram things, it cannot be translated, or at least I have not yet figured out how to grab it. Not even try but how to grab it from telegram or or WhatsApp and convert that text somehow by the machine. So I get really a text message instead of that voice

Raymond Sidney-Smith 30:57
gets a little bit more complicated to do it. And I agree with you, I'm right there with you, I think that you should not use audio notes. Because people are much less likely to listen to them, when they're incapable of listening to it in a in an office environment, for example. And you just need to know, you need to know the person to whom you're sending those messages. You know, I have a colleague who does video messages in telegram, and they're incredibly adorable. But it's also not something that I can, you know, I just I can't read that message and respond back to it. Because if I'm in a meeting, you know, if a little message comes up, and I'm in a meeting, and I'm not involved necessarily in the meeting, I can easily look at that message and say, Oh, yes, no, whatever, or I'll respond to that later. But now at least I know the message and it can start to percolate in the back of my mind, I can't do any of those things of the video. If it's video, I have to I have to wait. Same thing with those audio notes. So it would be really lovely. If at some point, these these applications like WhatsApp and telegram and messenger and otherwise, signal threema, you name it, have gone ahead and start to audio transcribe them on device for security purposes, right. So it's not it's not doing it, you know, on some server, but doing it on device so that we're then able to read the message, whether it's, we can consume the message however, we want to whether it's video, audio, or, or otherwise, you know, giving us the ability to basically listen to the message, if it's text, read the the message if it's audio, and otherwise, it's giving us all this features and what's good, what's good for us in terms of convenience, there is also good for accessibility. So it really does help people with different abilities get access to the technology that we're utilizing. And that's good

for all of us. Because, you know, there's so many assistive technologies that I use on my devices for productivity purposes, not necessarily because I have a limited ability, but also that we all have limited abilities at any given time, right. So I'm talking about a limited ability, which is that I can't listen, I can't use audio as my mechanism when I'm, say in an environment where I can't turn on the audio, right. So that's a that's a limited ability at that moment. And the situational limitations give us the ability to then use assistive technology. So we are all benefited by assistive technologies and accessibility. So I really do push people for and toward supporting those things. For that reason, I wanted to I want to just note, a couple of other small technologies that I think are just really useful for me in my own productivity world. One is I use reminders, which is a little application on Android, I'm sure you can find these on iOS as well. And you can find them probably different apps that may be even built directly into the clock application on Apple iOS. But in essence, what reminders does is it gives you the ability to just play a tone, or flash your screen or do a couple of other things to note a particular time sequence. So all I want throughout the day is for kind of like a grandfather clock when it just basically gongs on the hour, you know, just hear an item. Well, I want that on the half hour. And so this application allows me to set a specific time throughout the day, write a section of the day, my eight hours of work, and every 30 minutes, it goes ahead and I play a gong because it's just a very light on you know, low tone. And it's very quiet. I've set my notifications for it to be very quiet. But it's just a very, you know, kind of almost calming tone so that every 30 minutes, I just got a very light Gong. And that tells me that 30 minutes has passed. And what it's really done for me actually over the course of now many years that I've done this with this application. And prior to that with other applications, the the gong gives me a better sense of time. Right, so that if if I'm, for some reason, caught up in something, I'm like, Oh, that was 30 minutes. And, again, we are not very good with time. In general, humans can't exactly know the length of a minute, for example, different parts of your life, you're going to, you're going to calculate the minute differently. So when you're younger, you're more impulsive. Therefore time was faster, you're gonna always expect a minute to be shorter than it is, when you get to be an older age, you're going to think that a minute is more accurate over time. But people who are middle aged tend to think minutes or longer, you know, like this, in the in the, in the research in the literature, it shows that we see time differently in different stages of our lives. And so the reminders app, and that little Gong every 30 minutes throughout my workday really helps me reset the clock on a regular basis. So I actually know how much time things are taking and how much time is passing. For me if I if I hear three gongs, and I'm in a focused action session, you know where I'm really getting real work done. And I noticed that 90 minutes has gone by, that's a really good thing for me to know. Even if I'm still in the session, I can say, Okay, I can continue here, or I'm going to take a pause. And this is time for me to take a break, because I've been working for 90 minutes straight, and I need to do some self care, come back, and then I can go for 90, another 90 minutes strong. But I can't do that if I if I wear my my myself out. The other item that I really use quite often now today is an application called narrow. And I've probably spoken about it here before but it bears repeating. There are a lot of long read articles, you know, articles that are really, you know, extensive articles that I want to read. There may be white papers, scientific reports in scientific literature, with all kinds of jargon in it and those kinds of things. And many times I want to be able to both read and listen to something and I like to read and listen to the same article, it kind of forces all of my senses onto the page, seeing if I'm listening to it and looking at the words, I'm forced to keep my focus on my attention on what's being said. And I can always back it up and do other things, I can play it faster. There's all those things. So anyway, I use this application called narrow, and na r o CO and I'll put a link to this in the show notes, of course. And so you're able to now take the audio, the text, throw it into narrow, it turns it into a natural language voiced podcast, Episode Two, a private podcast feed that you can subscribe in your podcast, you can also play it directly from the website. So you know, once it's done its conversion, you can just open up narrow and play it directly from the website. And now you can listen to things. The great thing for this is, you know, if you come across 15 articles a week, and you're putting them into a read later system, but you're not actually reading them. And so it's piling up, just discard that system. Now you

can actually turn them into podcast episodes, put them in onto your phone. And now when you go like I do, and go to walk the dog, you know, you go for a drive to the grocery store, you can now play these audio files, which are the articles. And now you're listening to the articles as opposed to reading them. And you're fitting in the audio in these moments of personal time that you otherwise would have go unused. Or if you're standing at the grocery store line waiting to checkout, you can play an episode of one of the articles that you wanted to read. And it can get through it. And of course, you can use speed right, you can turn it to 1.25 1.5. And that saving you seconds that turn into minutes that turn into hours of time saved over the course of the year in listening to these things in in faster time sequence. So listening to things sped up does take a little bit of training, ear training. But once you listen to things a little bit faster, most of the time, you get really proficient in listening to these things faster. And it's been just so useful for me. And I highly recommend listening to long reads via audio. And you can always go back and read the you know, what I like to do is I go back to the text and I will then go back and highlight items. And and that way I can lift it out and put it into Evernote for myself. So I'll take passages and I'll say, Oh, you know what, that's a really good passage. And I'll go back now into the text and grab those quotations and put them into my system so that I have them for future reference. But it's really useful for being able to toggle between text and audio easily. I struggle

Art Gelwicks 39:26
a little bit and I love the idea of narrow I'm actually going to look into it now because you're right, that is one of the challenges I have I have pocket and Feedly and all those wonderful things where I've got a ton of backlog of articles to read. And I have this habit of dropping into this audio drone mode when I'm listening to a lot of things in sequence where I'll be working on something else and the podcast becomes background noise and I miss content and I don't want to miss content. So I have that dilemma of do I stop what I'm doing and focus on the podcast or Do I keep doing what I'm doing. So that's that's kind of a me issue. But I don't think it's just me that has that that challenge. But one of the things we didn't talk about, I use the voice assistant on my smartwatch quite a bit. And not so much specifically, I have a Samsung smartwatch. So not that I use Bixby but what I use is the text to speech capability around messaging. So for example, when I get a text from someone, it'll pop up on my watch and show me the text, we'll all use voice to respond to it. The real advantage of that is it's hands free, I can flip my watch, give a quick response, and then just move on with what I was doing. That's, that's where I see the real benefits of this is taking care of those things that if I had to make an intentional effort to remind myself to do that later on, they would likely get forgotten to do. But I'm, I'm a big one on home automation stuff, too. I mean, I sit down in my living room, and I have TV mode, and I have night mode for the lights and things just adjust as I need them to. And I'm working to do more and more of that. The challenge that that none of us have really talked about though, and this is the one thing I did want to call out where I see the biggest limitation with voice tech is remembering what you can say to it. Because so much of the voice technology still requires a fairly straightforward but structured syntax for it to be able to do what we want it to do. And then we have to remember all these commands and things. If it's on the screen, you can see all you have the user experience, you can see all the buttons and options and toggles that you need to throw to make it do things. But if it's voice, you have to remember what the correct commands are and what the correct sequences are for it to be able to work. And for people who aren't used to that, that can be a pretty high bar. Because it gets very frustrating. You tell it something that you think is perfectly clear. And it responds back like sorry, I don't know how to do that. Like, Yes, you do. You did it a half hour ago. But you may have said it slightly different than. So I still think we've got a little ways to go with voice assistance in the natural language context for to be more flexible with the different ways that we speak as people. But it's only going to continue to get better with that kind of technology.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 42:39

And I would argue art that we are literally in its infancy Hmm, you know, we're seeing Matt Ma and big G and big gas and others doing things that are remarkable and fantastic. But they are they are children right now, you know, they are they are probably newborn babies. And in terms of of context, right, and we're gonna see them do so much more over the long term, but I think they have a lot of room to grow. And they are still so nascent, that we're going to see this huge and dramatic productivity increase once we are able to seamlessly communicate with these assistants in every capacity of our world in ways that seem natural and are both secure, and even sometimes private. So there are some real challenges. And I think that we are at the very beginning of all of this and it's very exciting to see it all happening.

Augusto Pinaud 43:33
I wanted to before we before we close and talk a little bit about what what at least I recommend on on on the iOS or would you know I talk about my Apple Watch, I talk about language typing, you know, I did note pages, you can use Google Docs, emails, Scrivener. As I said, for me, the difference on the devices was the use of air pods and any headphone can do is, but it is different when you try to use the microphone or the device versus when you use an actual headset, at least in my experience. It's been completely different when I do one or the other.

Francis Wade 44:15
Just wanted to add in that I've used the voice recognition in PowerPoint presentation mode where it picks up your voice and then displays the text. And it's it's the most recent incarnation is quite good. And I speak as someone who speaks with an accent. That's not America, Percy. And it picks me up very, very, very well. And of course if I'm presenting to a group, and the for example, the bandwidth is not that great and their words dropping out here and there. It does help to get the point across it does help people's comprehension to hear me and also see the the words being typed. If they're accurate, it's it's good and it's been pretty accurate. Recently, and I'm very comfortable using it in the future.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 45:03
So this is Microsoft PowerPoints closed captioning function.

Art Gelwicks 45:06
Let me throw something in on top of that, since we're talking about PowerPoint, PowerPoint online with Office 365 has released a capability, where they call it the presentation coach. And what it does is it allows you to rehearse your presentation. And it actually records as you rehearse it, and then it uses AI to analyze your speaking. So it will look for ohms and ahhs and overly complex sentences and delays. So it's leveraging the voice AI technology on the back end to improve the presentation you're delivering. I've used it a couple of times, it's actually not bad. As a person who has taught public speaking before. Its coaching requirements, or recommendations are pretty solid. They're not perfect, but they're a heck of a lot better than just trying to make it up on your own. And I think that's, that's a great example of where this technology is now going to start to move towards. It's not does it get better for just taking our commands? But does it get better at interpreting what we think we wanted, and giving us the correct thing, then, granted, if you go back to our previous episodes, now we get into this whole world of privacy and protection and things like that. And that's a whole different conversation. But if we just think about how does this get better? And how does this help us out? When you think about tools like Help Desk solutions? Or how do I find out a piece of information, we spend a lot of our time googling something? Well, natural when natural language search was introduced into Google, it changed the game, because you could just ask the question, what is whatever? Well, now you just say it out loud. You know, we asked one of these devices, what is this piece of information, this massive universe of information is at our fingertips. And it's now not even at our fingertips, it's just in the air around us. So I wanted to bring out the PowerPoint piece, because I think this is indicative. And we'll see this with more

platforms, and more tools, have the combination of voice command, and AI to really take these to another level. Wonderful. So

Raymond Sidney-Smith 47:15
in our last few minutes together, let's do kind of a beginner, intermediate advanced, what are things that just in a minute, each of you would suggest to a beginner. And what are things that you would suggest to someone who maybe is a little bit more intermediate or advanced in terms of embracing more voice productivity in their world? Sure, as a beginner,

Art Gelwicks 47:40
the easiest way to get into is either start using whatever smartphone, you have the voice assistant on that if it's Android, Google, if it's orange, or Amazon, you can use both on your smartphone. If it's iOS, then start talking to Siri. The other thing that I would say is, if you're not comfortable with that, well then invest in one of the little home voice units, I mean it the price of admissions under 50 bucks in so many cases, set realistic expectations. Don't try to change the world with that one little device and be patient with it. Because not only is it figuring it out, but you're figuring it out as well. And you have to work together on that for it to be effective. But that would be my first recommendation. Start small start easy. Pick one thing that you want to work on maybe getting your shopping list under control, or getting your to do list under control things you forget to put on there and use that as your point of focus.

Francis Wade 48:38
Take a bit of a Luddite when it comes to these things, which is if if there's an improvement to your workflow, then use it but I come from the process point of view, which is that if there's not a clear improvement that you can figure out forgetting forgetting about the technology, but looking at the process in which your workflow the way in which you do your work. If there's an improvement that can be gotten from minimum investment of time and effort then sure try but I if there's not a material improvement that you can find first before the technology even exists, then I would say if you want to play with it, sure, but is it going to be or should it become an essential part of your workflow? Again, this is where I become the Luddite I say only put it in if it makes a material difference.

Augusto Pinaud 49:33
I will add to that you know these things in many cases is hard to say what is going to be that big material thing that Francis is mentioning. The thinness in the opposite in in you know when we talk about death by 1000 cuts. What happened with all these little artificial intelligent things is the opposite. is we get it's not really a big thing. It is a ton of Little things together, that gets really, really nice. You know, when you go and tell them, hey, you're hearing evidence, hey, turn on the coffee machine turn on when you get that night turn on them, of all the lights. And now you have all that, you know, my, my wife, for example, sometimes set timers, you know, you can set timers, hey timer for kid number one timer for kid number two, if I'm cooking, I can set and I need multiple timers, I can tell these device, Hey becae, I want to have a 15 minute timer for this thing and a 20 minute timer for this other thing, a nice 30 minute timer for this other thing. And I do all that via voice and free automatically, you know, I, I install one of those things on, on my parents, I can even go and tell Hey, big a, you know, call mom call that. And it does all that communication instantly, you know, especially when, in the case of my parents, you know, you are not going to call them via phone or to foreigner, you know as long distance calls is going to be anyways, some kind of digital you want to have their internet speed is too slow. So it cannot even be video. So all those little things you may not see any one of them per se, it's a really big improvement to to feed into Francis requirement. But the combination of them in second by second by second make it so worth it. You know when, when Alexa, when Amazon came in, in Prime Day and offer the devices even cheaper, I went and grabbed a couple more because we know there is a couple of dead spots in the house, it will be nice to get an extra assistant. And again, it is not that any of these devices are going to change

significantly. But he's going to offer that little difference that is going to be overall really, really nice, you know, and as you get more comfortable with them, yes, I agree with hard you need some training, the device needs some training, the voice needs some training your speech and your commands, need some training, but also work on the other side. So at least was big a at least was big g you understand how do things work, you can also do it with big s, where you can now set up the routines and can you can use shortcuts, called a shortcut using big s and then get those same routines as you can get with big a or big G and then really simplify your life, you know, it's really, really nice to be able to tell how big a from the road, okay, I'm getting home, and then let him make a to run all that routine. That means getting home, even before you get there. You know, it seems silly, maybe. But it's really nice to be able to do all those things from the distance from the device, everything was your voice without doing anything else.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 53:12
So I just want to make two points, and then we can wrap up. So for those who are maybe intermediate, and advanced, and I've been using some of these technologies already, there are some really foundational pieces that you can put into place that will help you increase this through automation. So one is that a lot of people don't think about this. But as I talked about, at the top of the show, we have speech recognition on Microsoft, we have voiceover and text to speech and speech on the Mac OS platforms. If you go to System Preferences, and then go to accessibility, you can turn on some of those audio functions. And with tying voice triggers on your physical devices, you can actually do what IoT is doing with voice and tie them to certain things. So for example, I have I have speech recognition tied to active words for on my, on my desktop on my Windows computer. So I'm able to say specific trigger words, and then it will turn that into a paragraph or a template document in Microsoft Word or into Google Docs or otherwise. So you can use voice to actually trigger much more sophisticated automation. I also do this in the browser using a combination of different types of browser, macro recorder technologies. So whether that's imacros or chrome automation, those are two extensions. I'll put those into the show notes. And and then those are then tied to sometimes if to pro or Zapier or Microsoft power automate, to really tie together the ecosystem. So from voice to native desktop, speech to then browser and then beyond that to all of my web connected software. I'm really able to tie together all of these pieces To create a cohesive system that does a lot of automated functions. So just be mindful that you can tie these things together. And they can be, and to help you be so much more productive going forward. And so Thank you, gentlemen, for this conversation. This has been a lot of fun. And while we are at the end of our discussion, the conversation doesn't have to end with justice. If you have a question or a comment, join us in the conversation over on the episode page on ProductivityCast dotnet on the podcast website, at the bottom of the page, feel free to leave a comment or question. You can also find your the show notes to all of the links to the anything that we discussed. So there are links that you can jump to there's the text transcript, both to read, you just click on the read more and we'll open it up and you can read it or you can also click on the download button. You can download that as a PDF and review it as you're listening along. If for some reason you can't find an episode in the podcast feed inside of the podcast app of your choice. If you go to productivitycast.net You can find all of our episodes to listen back to you can also download them and listen to them later. If you have a topic about personal productivity you'd like us to discuss on a future cast go ahead and visit productivity cast dotnet forward slash contact you can leave a voice recorded messages they are or type of a message and one of us will look at it and let you know if we're gonna feature it on a future episode. I want to express my thanks to Augusto Pinaud Francis Wade and Art Gelwicks for joining me here on ProductivityCast this and every week, you can learn more about them and their work by visiting ProductivityCast dotnet I'm Ray Sidney-Smith on behalf of all of us here at ProductivityCast Here's your productive life.

VoiceOver 56:34

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