

# 125-myth-of-multi-tasking-bookcast-productivitycast

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

book, people, organization, multitasking, tasking, productivity, problem, productive, attention, helen, message, phil, myth, noted, work, thought, francis, effective, cognitive, switch

## SPEAKERS

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

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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 are your hosts, Ray Sidney-Smith and a goose open out with Francis Wade and art Gelwicks



Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:17

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



Augusto Pinaud 00:22

I'm Augusto Pinaud.



Francis Wade 00:23

I'm Francis Wade.



Art Gelwicks 00:24

And I'm Art Gelwicks.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:25

Welcome, gentlemen. And welcome to our listeners to today's episode. Today, we are doing our second book caste, book discussions on books that we are reading and we wanted to share what we are reading with you today we are discussing the Myth of Multitasking how doing it all gets nothing done the second edition by Dan Crenshaw, he has written several books on productivity. But most notably, he has written and produced several courses on lynda.com, now known as LinkedIn learning, and that is the Microsoft owned company, LinkedIn, LinkedIn learning and the lynda.com platform. So if you ever go to LinkedIn learning or lynda.com, and you look at any of the productivity courses there, they're likely done by Dan Crenshaw. And so he has written this book this, do we call this an allegory or a fable of Helen and Phil, Phil being a productivity consultant that has come into this company to help out GREENGUARD with their productivity, specifically, the CEO, Helen, what did you guys think of the book? What were your ideas that initially kind of after finishing the book you thought about, and then then we can get into the kind of particulars of what Phil is really trying to portray here. What Crenshaw is trying to portray here through the character of Phil,

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Augusto Pinaud 01:40

another book was a really enjoyable I agree on on the issues of multitasking and the problems of lack of attention and lack of focus. So I, I think, for many people who think that they can be to certain degrees effective multitasking, it's important to understand what Crusher coal, by ground tasking, you know, that you can drive and listen music and versus actually when you need to put attention on the work and what is the cost of not putting the right attention to this to these tasks.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 02:20

He did attempt to bring a couple of new definitions to the world, I have frequently called what he was calling back tasking or background tasking. As meta tasking, that is something that is layered. And back ground or back tasking just didn't seem right, to me is the right term, I spent a lot of time thinking about this. And so the idea of kind of habit stacking, or these other terms that tend to muddle what is actually happening is, I think counter to my own productivity, when I think about it in those terms, they just don't make sense. If we are doing two tasks at once, one that doesn't require our full attention, and can be done either by a machine or simultaneously like having a conversation and driving while not is not the safest thing in the world can be done, or texting and driving, which is not safe and should not be done. Either. There are different standards of what can be done. And so this idea of back tasking, or background tasking, just didn't seem to stick with me as a term. But I recognize that it happens that we do it. And that it can actually be a very useful mechanism for time management,

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Art Gelwicks 03:29

the concept of back tasking to me as a rationalization within the book. I mean, it's it's talking about pushing something to an alternative system. Let's say you've got a video that you've edited, and it needs to render. So you're going to let the system render while you take some calls. That's fine, but you're not doing the work. And that's where I think it becomes a misnomer. And it actually undermines this whole concept of getting away from multitasking because we're talking about something else going on, but you're not actually doing it. So why

even kid yourself that you're doing it, you're starting something off and running. This is delegation, you just happen to be delegating to an automated system. So I don't know, I think it's an unnecessary addition. And it clutters the concept.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 04:14

Yeah, I think you could take the example of doing laundry while watching a television show. So there is a facilitated part here, which is that the washing machine and the dryer are going to do the bulk majority of the work but say that you're folding your clothes, or putting your clothes on hangers while watching the show. That's where you are in essence, you have your attention primarily on one activity where you're consuming something while still being able to do the other activity which is folding the clothes. I don't differentiate the fact that a machine is doing some level of the work like you said, you know, get video rendering and you go and do something else. You're still having to manage. If you're if you're managing the activity, then I consider you doing it. And so that's kind of how I've pieced those two pieces to So I, it's interesting because you're, you're differentiating that which is machine facilitated work. And that that you're managing and action based work that you're actually doing yourself manually. That's an interesting delineation.



Art Gelwicks 05:13

See, but I would also challenge the the idea, the consuming example, because, to me, there's a difference between active and passive consuming. And if you are doing something like folding your laundry, you're passively consuming whatever it is that you know is on the TV, because for periods of time be ever they how short, you have to disconnect from that to make sure you actually fold the thing in front of you. So for that block of time, you're not engaged, you're not doing that other thing, which is that passive absorption of whatever's going on, you're not taking notes, you're not capturing details, you're not processing the information, it's just kind of floating in the background. So and I find myself doing the same thing, if I'm working on a project, and I decided, Oh, I'll play an audio book. While I'm doing this, too. It doesn't take me very long to recognize the fact that I'm getting very little value out of that audio book at that point, because I'm not focused on that. It's background, it's, yeah, I might absorb something, but it's not an effective use of the dual task. If I if I want value out of something, it requires focus. And that's, again, this is where I struggle with this a little bit, because it does make sense to me to take things that do not require my focus, and I do not need to drive personal engagement to get the value out of to some other things, whether mechanical, personal or otherwise, but simultaneously doing things. And it just flat out doesn't work. I mean, his definite, his reference to what he often we refer to as time slicing, you know, jumping back and forth between things, I think is a much more accurate representation of this. With that



Raymond Sidney-Smith 06:49

I'm gonna, I'm gonna snap us back to the beginning of the book, and start from the beginning of the book, which is, it is called The Myth of Multitasking. And we find fill in this narrative, where he is a productivity consultant. And he comes and meets Helen, the CEO of green garb. And as he is introduced to her, she is harried and dealing with multiple people in her office, and finally makes time to sit down with Phil, and then they are capable of having a conversation

about her current time and task management. And what did you think let's just start at the very top of the chart in terms of multitasking, as he defined it, the idea of multitasking generally, how we've considered it and thought about it in society and work culture over the past several decades, because it is a fairly new invention. And we can kind of go from there. You know, there's a there's a story here. So let's stick to the narrative. And we can kind of make our way through the different pieces, perhaps. But what did you think about the presentation of the material of multitasking, and I'll just start with the fact that he basically posits that multitasking is a myth, because it is what we call switch tasking. Switch tasking is a mechanism by which we're never doing two things at once, the brain has to switch back and forth between those two things. And because we have to switch back and forth between those two things, he uses the parallel concept in, in accounting, in business accounting, or business management, we talk about switching cost, which is that if you wanted to switch vendors, switch systems say that you wanted to move from, say, one ERP system to another, there was a switching cost, that is you need to change the software that may include training, it may include moving the data, it may include any number of things that were that requires costs for the business to be able to do that. And he uses that concept to relate to how our brains have to switch back and forth between those two activities. And so he presents multitasking as a myth.

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Francis Wade 08:53

It's not neutral, if no, back when he wrote the book in 2008. I think it was newer, but but now we know that cognitive attention, it's not the doing in this general sense. We we know know, the sciences is is out there that it's the cognitive attention that we can't split. That's the it's not the walking into a gun. You know, we can do your body's doing all kinds of things. No, four of us are here recording this episode. And our bodies are doing all kinds of things. Our brains are doing all kinds of things. But the scarce resource that we have is our cognitive attention. And that's what that's the maybe the finding that's become more apparent since you wrote this book. It's not doing anything. Like this morning, for example, I listened to a podcast while I was doing my weightlifting workout. So essentially, my weightlifting workout requires no doesn't require any cognitive attention because I'm basically going through a habitual routine. It's an autopilot. So I don't need to give it I didn't do anything different. I didn't try To innovate, I just went through the motions. So I could listen to the podcast while doing it. Because I'm doing a physical activity. I'm not splitting my cognitive attention. And the same goes for walking with somebody and having a deep conversation, that walking doesn't interfere, because you're not splitting your cognitive attention. The problem with driving and texting is that it's splitting, talking to somebody else, while trying to read a book or watching a video while trying to write a paper. All of those are involved splits of cognitive attention. And that's the, that's the core, the core scarce resource that we need to focus on. All the other stuff, I think is just neither here nor there, if they don't require cognitive attention. So he's the protagonist, he's helping Helen throat, get over these problems that she's having. She's been splitting her cognitive Attention, all kinds of ways and trying to divide it into small bits and pieces here and there. And now, the thing we know is that if you don't spend time getting into the flow state, whether your cognitive attention at its highest, then you won't ever be at your most productive, you just know it takes 20 minutes to get to the point where you can be in the flow state, according to me, he sent me high. And if you don't spend that time, if you never spend that time to get into the flow state, then the kind of attention will never be at its best or its best use. So the in the book, she split, she was spitting, you know her attention every three, four or five minutes. And then wondering why nothing was getting nothing productive was getting done. And he explains it saying that it's switch tasking, and there's a cost to doing that. And he gives me an exercise. I've done the same exercise in my live trainings as well. And the results are always hilarious, where you, I

asked people to recite the alphabet, and then count from one to 26. And then I timed them. And then I asked them to do okay, no, go from Z to or even a to z, but if worse from Z to A, and then interspersed the numbers between them. And that's when it slows down. It's always slow. And people are always amazed by it.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 12:29

I'll give the contrarian view to this, which first starting at the fact that what is considered muscle memory, but just consider it well worn paths, the brain takes less energy, when it knows what it's doing already, by virtue of doing it over and over again. So we are the patterns we repeat. So the idea of, say, driving the same route every day. So for example, I had the same route to work for a decade, and I drove that route every day. So if someone was trying to, to murder me, they would have known exactly where to set up shop and to assassinate me at any given time in that 10 years. That meant that if I was listening to an audio book, or if I was listening to a podcast on the way to work, my physical being, that is my entire alert system was on autopilot. And if something changed in my environment, my brain would kick into gear, you know, if a car cut me off, or if something out of the ordinary happened, I would be immediately able to recognize that that's, you know, your limbic system in play. And you would be able to then course correct quickly, that left the rest of my cognitive ability to experience whatever I wanted to auditorially you know, whatever, while I was working in the car, and, you know, within limitation, of course, because you want to be safe, that kind of thing, but most of mine was consuming and taking audio audible notes. So I would, you know, trigger my phone to take notes. And it allowed me to be able to drive and consume lots and lots of material over the over the course of that time, what we forget is that if you told me to write a one, two, b two, C three, over and over and over again, for decades, then I would become really good at that. And the switching cost would no longer be a cost. So the more we do something, the more repeated activity we do, the better we get at it. And this sometimes ends up being the argument against multitasking that multitasking can be done, but what we really are saying is that ad hoc action cannot be done in non focus time without a switching cost. So we have to recognize that there is always a switching cost. If we are doing activities that are not the same things we do all the time. If they're not automatic, you know, habitual as you noted before, Francis then automaticity doesn't give us the reduced cognitive load that we need to be able to make that happen. But if you do need to do two things at once, then you need to really turn that into a habit, you need to really turn that into some kind of automatic behavior, that then settles your brain into automatic mode for one part of it so that you can give most of your attention to the other thing. And I would imagine that in probably the next 100,000 years, humans will probably be able to do more and more of this kind of multimodal thinking, I really do think that ultimately, you know, we're thinking creatures, and we will probably evolve in that direction. But until that time comes, we cannot, and we are, we are limited by our biology. And we should take best effective what we know about it. So there is a switching cost for these activities that we are doing ad hoc, and we need to we need to take best advantage of being productive in that. So Phil argues that focused work that that I differentiate between two different things, flow work and focus work in the Qing Sacmi. Hi, world, Dr. Ching Sacmi. Hi, as you noted earlier, Francis, he talks about this idea of being in this deep space caught up in the moment, kind of like, you know, you caught up in the river and the tide of whatever's happening. That kind of work is one type of work focused action work is where you're doing actions that you are switching between, because you are moving back and forth between things, but you have them say on a list, and you're checking off those items down a list, maybe project oriented also

where you're maybe calling someone than emailing someone than doing something but it's within a context. I know, I was saying that I was giving the devil's advocate view. But really, I was reinforcing Francis's argument. Oh,

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Augusto Pinaud 16:50

and I think that's, that's one of the important distinctions is what is the kind of activities you are tasking? you multitask on some of those with is require what when one requires theory power versus the other one require? Maybe, can you the problem is not that and this is where I'm coming to disagree? With Francis Yes, in theory, we all know this. In the practice, as pressure increase, and, you know, pandemic came up, people forget this. And you see people in, you know, and we discussed this on an episode, before, people in two or three zoom calls, or meetings or teams or whatever, at the same time into machines paying attention to none of them, and believing that they are effectively multitasking to all these meetings were really in reality, they are not present on any of them. It is the same thing we have seen. You know, one of the things I love in that era, when when the book is when ask how much do you work well, and then the math work something like 190 hours a week will, you know kind of challenge when we only have 165. But the reality is that is 168 Sorry, when the reality is that's what most people believe. If you ask most people, that's what they believe. And then what happened is that difference between 190 200 versus minus 168, that's the amount you're pressing nowhere. Because you think you're present everywhere. And the reality then is you're present nowhere.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 18:33

So what were some of the training interventions, I would call them behavioral interventions that Phil proposed to Helen. And it was kind of on two levels, because one was he focused on Helen, because she was the leader of the organization. And I very much agree in this particular case that having, in this particular case, a hierarchical system, where you have a pyramid of order, you work with the leader, and then the leader models, and then you're capable of training down stream to the rest of the organization, especially in a smaller organization, where the leader creates the culture by virtue of their example. And that frequently has a lot of the the development work of the people the following the primary leader or leadership within the organization. What do you think about the message that Phil kind of presented, which is that you should work with the leader first in an organization and help them develop before you you start helping the people below?

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Art Gelwicks 19:39

I don't think you started just at one level. I think you have to attack that problem from both ends. A lot of times that those drivers and I want to back up to a thought that I had earlier. Multitasking with the misnomer is most commonly at least what I've seen reaction. It's a reaction to an environment you do not have control over. You have work influences coming in, you have workload and work streams coming in. And you are reacting to those to try and manage these parallel streams. Often, leadership is responsible for the cause for those parallel streams, but also other members of your organization, whether at your own level or below. And it is just as important to tackle it at that level as well. There's a part in the book where they're talking about Helen and Phil are meeting and Sally pokes her head into ask a question, and

actually gets all bent out of shape. Because Helen won't answer the question right, then, because she's Helen has established that isn't as a behavior that's acceptable to interrupt her to get answers. The problem is, Sally has also accepted that as an acceptable behavior. And anyone within these environments, leadership needs to empower their personnel to be able to say, You know what, that's not a good habit. That's not a good process to be in. You shouldn't be interrupting, you shouldn't be driving, you should be cognizant and coherent around people's availability. But we don't do that. We have common objectives to say, Okay, we need to get this done by this date and time come hell or high water? Well, that's fine. But it doesn't mean that it's going to be done well. And I personally, I think it has to be tackled from not only at the leadership level, who needs to set the example. But at the grassroots level, where the reinforcement and the willingness to say, No, I'm going to follow this new set of standards, regardless of what you want to push on me, needs to come into play as well. I think the book did give that illustration? Well, I just don't think they I don't think he did a good job of empowering Sally in that context to say, You know what, I'm just not going to go interrupt her

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Francis Wade 22:00

yet that I think there's a bit of a simple assumption that what would happen next is that Helen would evangelize the idea to everyone around her. And they would pick it up, just because she's the one in charge. And because she's the one who's seeing it. I think that's what you're hinting at art, it's not as simple as that. And I've just not seen, I've never never been in a client company and seen the simple idea that the book presents implemented on a large scale. And I hope you guys have because I'm hoping that there are counter examples out there. But most organizations have grown into, you know, Rube Goldberg devices that really don't work. That's when it comes to my, my working with you, my colleagues in the same company, we are just not on the same page in the sense that we have a thought through way of being productive that we all agree on, that we've all received similar exposure, similar training, we're all developing our practices, we're all continuously improving them. We're trying to become more productive. In this one way, this is just one way of being productive with each other, let alone email and all the others, which are a whole nother problem. And I've not I've not heard of a clear cut case where a company has I've heard talk of it. So I've heard it mentioned. I've not seen a company say we've done it for five years or two years even. And this is how we did it. And here's how we made the journey from everyone doing their own thing. And to norms that were just inappropriate and weren't thought through and just happen by accident. How do we get from there to where we're in? We're all in sync with each other? I'm not seeing it. I hope it exists. Because the things I see no. Oh, yeah, we all have an open door policy. Oh, yeah, we all have. We all believe in open, open, open open space or open seating, where everybody's in a one big room, or wherever something is important. The boss needs to forget important. The boss needs to interrupt whoever he wants, that works for him, in order to get them to do things immediately, regardless of what they were working on before. That's the default. There's no other there's no other practice in their mind that says let me see if it might be a courtesy. But that's more of a point of etiquette than it is a productivity principle. So I'm not seeing that. I'd love to hear you guys give me some examples of places you've actually seen this happening. But this is one of those things that just seems to fall through the cracks because no one are responsible for it. So therefore, the worst practices take over and they run the show and are buddies shrug their shoulders They hate it. But

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Art Gelwicks 25:01

I think you just call that one of the best examples of saying one do one thing and doing something completely different. And that's that myth of the open door policy, you know, executives, oh, I have an open door policy, anybody can come in at any time. Yeah, you have just created your own interrupter of a nightmare. And you have now demonstrated that to the rest of the organization that that is expected. That is how they are expected to behave. Well. Now, if you're going to complain that you get interrupted all the time, guess what, dude, you did this to yourself. So understanding the context and the repercussions of this, yes, so many organizations, they talk a good game, they lay something out, they'll maybe they'll stick to it for a year or two, until the next idea comes out in a book published somewhere and some executive gets a hold of and says, Now we're going to change to this way of, of working. It just, it doesn't work. Only from the top down. Like I said it has to be absorbed across the organization. What's the classic statement, the first step to solving a problem is knowing it exists? Well, the entire organization has to recognize that there's a problem. I mean, I've been in in groups and on teams where for some reason meetings, for example, spiral wildly out of control, and you wind up with literally 25 meetings in the course of a week. That's just insanity. And when you look back at those meetings, and you realize that you're talking about the same thing in five different meetings, and four of those have the same people in them. It's a craziness level, because out of each one of those more work comes and the expectation is, you'll be doing that work, while you do the meeting work, you will be multitasking, it doesn't work. It's just a complete fallacy. And anybody who tries to sell that has got a bridge for sale as well. So I look at it from the standpoint organizations talk a good game with this. But the change happens at at the local level. And you know, like they say about government, you know, you think globally but act locally. That's exactly what happens. This change happens within teams. It happens between individuals and colleagues, it happens within divisions. Google is not going to Tim Cook is not going to say this is how we're going to operate. And the next day that is that how they're going to operate. Now, Steve Jobs was not going to be able to do that he'd love to be talent he would. Elon Musk is gonna say, Yeah, this is how we know it's not, don't tell me it is because you know, it's not. When you dig down into the organization itself, that is not how you're functioning. So when we look at this type of a book and this type of content, it brings to light, Truly this myth, this fallacy of how this type of work happens and how we manage our work. But I think the best illustration of the entire thing is that this is all about personal responsibility. It is responsible, being responsible to the work that you are committing to deliver. And we keep talking about productivity. And we keep talking about productivity. And I've really had to rethink this a lot lately. I think it's about effectiveness. I can be productive, I can say yeah, I delivered eight things this week, all at the same time. Guess what, they were all garbage. Because they weren't, I wasn't nearly as effective in doing them. Because I didn't provide them the focus and the concentration that they needed. But I still can tick those boxes. I've met those SLAs. That's great. But was I effective. And that I think that's the thing to take out of this is that the hat, the habits and the behaviors we have currently, whether they're individually or at an organizational level, are not effective. It's rare that you find effective ones, you find lots of methodologies, but you don't find truly effective implementations of them. And I think that's where I started to struggle with the book a little bit later on is because again, we have this hate we found the problem. Yeah. But that's great. Now, what



Raymond Sidney-Smith 29:09

I'll give the flip side to this, which is that I deal with a lot of micro businesses. And so the small business, I think world is maybe perhaps a little bit different than larger businesses, and that I am capable of meeting businesses at the very early stages of their, of their creation. And that allows me a little bit more latitude with those business owners. The same thing kind of applies

in the in the small organization world where I've worked with executives now in companies of many different sizes, all the way up to you know, much larger organizations, but the but the ones in which I've had greatest effect with have been the ones that have some level of autonomy within a larger organization, or they're much smaller organizations. And they're kind of two different people here. I think I agree with you art that the the people who Are they at the bottom of the pyramid, if we want to use a hierarchical group or organization, which not all organizations are not hierarchical, but let's presume that there's still a pyramid involved. But the, the way in which I found it is to find an advocate inside who is as close to the middle or, or near to the bottom is possible, someone who's really wedded to that material, and then find someone at the top or a group of people at the top. And that allows us to be able to drive the message from from both ends. If you have these internal advocates of your message along with the leadership team also bought in, then training those two, I found to be most effective, because then it kind of starts to spread amongst the right people, the nearest to the leadership are going to start to absorb that message or that content. And then the people at the middle to bottom of the pyramid are going to start to spread that message very quickly, especially if you start to see results from those people, it becomes or more organic than not. And so just like planting seeds, you just have to plant a lot of them in order for people to start to germinate these ideas. And my goal is never for an entire organization to adhere to anything. That is like democracy, it is messy, and it takes constant nurturing, and it's virtually impossible to get everybody on the same page, the goal is to get enough people that the organization changes, if we can have a shift in the organization's outcomes, then I consider that effective, I consider the effectiveness of the organization to be the thing that I'm working toward, it's not the effectiveness of any one individual. So I think about it in that sense, like, I can't get everyone to do this. I guess the other side to this instead of like a Rube Goldberg machine, as you noted, Francis, I'm thinking of this as bricolage, right, people just need to take whatever they have, and build together the best baling wire and duct tape structure that they can in the organization to get things done. It's more inviting more people to be MacGyver. If you understand that reference, then to be someone who is just a skilled productivity enthusiast, but if they can figure out how their system that includes post its, and you know, stickies on their desktop, you know, app, the stickies app on Microsoft, or whatever, and, you know, Google Calendar, if they can make that work with their system, then great. Now I have the kind of interesting world where I'm coming in to any organization, because of technology, people are wanting me to help them invest in a specific type of technology. So I'm usually capable of inserting myself in one category and then saying, but you know, that you could really do so much more across many different categories. And, and that really helps create an inroad that allows leadership and staff to, to think more broadly about what their capabilities are, and more broadly about what my capabilities are for them. So I think it all ends up being how you introduce a concept, you have to start slowly. And I think Phil did that here in the Myth of Multitasking, he started off slowly with one person, it's a small organization that seems to be growing. And he tried to just kind of get this one person kind of around it, and then did more training for more of the people. It's of course, textbook, like that's the thing I thought about the book. It was like everything was so pristine and perfect in the book, right? There was no real, there was no great conflict, there was no great problems that occurred, everything was exactly as it should have been. And that's a very quaint concept today, that everything just works out. I understand the message, right? He wanted to very much like Dr. Ken Blanchard's books and that kind of thing. There's a clear message that's being narrated. And so there isn't a need to put in the challenges unless those challenges are teaching a lesson about how to overcome them. And so I appreciated that about the book, even though it wasn't the most convincing. It wasn't a Harry Potter, it wasn't a Lord of the Rings type of, of conflict, you know, Hero's Journey message, but it definitely conveyed the Messages that we needed to anything else about the Myth of Multitasking that popped out for you, and who would you recommend this book for?

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## Art Gelwicks 34:25

That's a hard one, because the the premise of it is applicable to pretty much anybody who would read it. I mean, that's, there's truths to be found for anyone who's trying to do any work. I think the people who would probably benefit the most from it, though, may not recognize that fact. And it would be leaders and team, you know, project managers and tech leads and all of those different types of roles, who are helping set a tone, but not necessarily like the C level of an organization. That that I hate the term middle management person is the one who can set that framework up. But they have to recognize that one, there is a problem. And two, they are substantially responsible for solving that problem. It's tough because you're handing somebody a book to say, hey, guess what, you have this issue, you just don't know it, go read this figure out, admit that to yourself, and then go fix it. Not everybody takes that too well. So I would, I would recommend, you know, anybody who had who working with themselves, or at least one other person, if not more, there will be valuable stuff that comes out of here. The hang up is this is the type of thing that it's easy to backslide, you can make progress for three months, four months, six months. But I can immediately see you backsliding into old bad habits very quickly, just depending on the nature of work often, if you have a type of work that is very interrupt driven, well, guess what, you're going to wind up slipping back into this, if you are not fastidious and diligent about preventing that from happening. So the books a good start. But it's literally just a start in my, in my estimation,

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## Francis Wade 36:14

I think the book was great for 2008, my first came out, I don't think it has the same cachet, or relevance is kind of a strong word. But it things have changed, you know, in the last 13 years, we all know know that texting and driving. So that's not that's not a revelation, we all know that multitasking, while doing certain things is bad. We all know that if you're trying to be in a zoom call, you shouldn't be on Facebook COVID has accelerated some of that, because people's workplaces have changed. They've gone from working in the office where they could be more focused to trying to work at home where the dog is yappin. And the kids are crying. And there's multiple tugs on your attention at any one time, I think it's gonna happen again, once people go back to the office, they're going to notice, for example, that maybe I could focus on where I, maybe I was alone at home, and I got a whole lot done. No, I'm back at the office, I'm getting nothing done. I think the message, the core message, I'd be hard pressed to find someone who doesn't know the core message of the book today. And I think it's understood, it's accepted. What's not accepted as art was pointing out, which is, okay, you may individually accepted. And that may be very nice, but you may put someone who is who is the most devoted unit asker on the planet, the person who uses the flow state the most effectively, you put them in a bad organization. And you're good to conform so fast that they, they were able to spell multitask after a couple of months in that environment. People quit as a result. But the system that they're in is way more powerful than their personal habit patterns, convictions, knowledge, experience awareness, even if they're the CEO, or the chairman, the whatever. If there is no agreement around them for for the principles in the book, then, and it's already spent, you know, they spent years going in the opposite direction, then they have all the challenges that are talked about. And the book book is great as an awareness piece, I think back in 2008. The second book, if there were a second, if there were a follow on book, it would be, here's how we transform the organization, the interlocking practices of hundreds and even 1000s of people,



Raymond Sidney-Smith 38:49

people who are just starting a business, people who are just starting in a leadership role within a smaller team, this is a really good start, as art noted, like, it's a really good starter book to get you at least aware of the fact that this is a problem. I would disagree that this is a well known thought, I think that there are so many people on the planet who still believe that multitasking, because of the cultural, the the Moray, that somehow doing more in less time means doing multiple things at once to get more done, is truly productive when we have to balance out both time management and quality management at the same time. And these just are intrinsically connected. And we just tend to still believe that somehow people should be rushing from meeting to meeting, that busyness is actually business. And that's not true. And while we're all speaking to the choir, we're preaching to the choir here. The reality is is that beyond us, that message has dissipated very very quickly. There are so many more people who I think need this message and so we have to in some way, shape, or form, kind of continuing the religious metaphor here, we have to proselytize the message of the Myth of Multitasking as best as we can, which for me is like, I don't care about debunking myth, I care about modeling focus. And so really what we should be talking about is how do we show people that focus matters, and focus makes a difference. And I see so many people fragmented and stressed out because they're fragmented, right, your brain is doing more work than it needs to. And you'll get more done just by doing less cognitive work, you will actually create more output, and it will be higher quality, and it will create less downstream problems for the people around you. So these are the things that we have to keep pushing in terms of messaging, those of us who are interested in being productive ourselves. If we are in an interdependent world, we are affected by everybody else's lack of productivity. And so we need to make sure that we are bringing those people to the table. And that means opening the dialogue and just introducing them to these concepts. And if we can do that over and over and over again. Hopefully, we'll we'll see end results. So thank you, gentlemen, for this conversation. I really enjoyed it. We were discussing the Myth of Multitasking, the second edition by Dan Crenshaw. And with that we are at the end of our book cast discussion. The conversation doesn't have to stop here though. If you have a question or comment about what we've discussed during this cast, feel free to visit our episode page on productivity cast dotnet there on the podcast website at the bottom of each episode page, feel free to leave a comment or a question, and we're happy to read and respond to those there. By the way to get to any ProductivityCast Episode quickly, simply add the three digit episode number to the end of ProductivityCast dotnet forward slash So this episode is 125. So if you go to ProductivityCast dotnet, forward slash 125. You'll be taken to the episode page for the episode. Also on ProductivityCast dotnet, you'll find our show notes are transcripts which are both readable on the page, as well as a downloadable version in PDF. If this is your first time visiting, feel free to like and subscribe and rate the podcast if you're able to in all of the places including your podcast app of choice. And if you have a topic about personal productivity, you'd like us to discuss on a future cast, you can visit productivity cast dotnet forward slash contact and there you can leave a voice recorded message from that page. And you can also type a message into the contact form and maybe we'll 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 every week, you can learn more about them and their work by visiting productivitycast.net as well click on their name or the about page and you'll be taken to their information. I'm Ray Sidney-Smith and on behalf of all of us here at ProductivityCast Here's your productive life.





VOICEOVER ARTIST: TIZI TO

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