

127-productivity-taxonomy-part-1-productivitycast

Sat, 3/12 5:19PM 49:11

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

tags, tagging, people, apply, structure, system, organizing, find, context, objects, data, physical, color, productivity, taxonomy, folders, items, ray, search, metadata

SPEAKERS

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



Voiceover Artist 00:00

Are you ready to manage your work and personal world better to live a fulfilling 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 Gousto pinout with Francis Wade and art Gelwicks.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:17

Welcome back, everybody 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 00:24

Francis Wade.



Art Gelwicks 00:24

And I'm Art Gelwicks.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:26

Welcome, gentlemen, and welcome to our listeners to this episode of ProductivityCast. Today, we're going to be diving into a topic that is near and dear to my heart, but I think is also really important for people to recognize as a fundamental component of personal productivity systems that I think is often lost in the world of just organizing your systems for action. And that is tags, the concept of using taxonomy to be able to be more productive. And this was a topic actually brought up by art Gelwicks. And so I'm going to hand it over to you art we were

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Art Gelwicks 00:59

talking about in one of the previous episodes, we're talking about organizing notes, and specifically recalling content from notes. And that always raises the specter of tagging. So I thought it would be worthwhile. Having talked about this in the past, for us to dedicate some time to this actual topic in and of itself, separate from applications right now separate from systems and implementations. But really what tagging means, what it means within the context of our personal and professional systems, information management for ourselves. And also, as we start to really get into it, how this helps us improve our organization. beyond some of the alternatives, things like folder structures and that sort. There's, you'll hear classically that, you know, tagging is better than folders, use tagging, don't use folders, use tagging, don't use folders. And I don't know if I necessarily agree with that in all cases. And I think that's where we need to start to dig into this, because there are so many variants of tagging so many conceptual pieces, that I think it's hard for people to really get their hands around as a starting place, but also to give it the extended life it needs for it to make a difference. I know a lot of people, including myself, have implemented different methods of tagging numerous times. Well, if you're implementing it numerous times, it means that numerous times it's not working right. So I wanted to see if you guys could help help me frame it up for the listeners as to what we think tagging is truly beyond just the Wikipedia definition. And also how we can start to help people out.

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Francis Wade 02:50

I think, first of all, we're there's different objects that can be tagged to or benefit. There's digital objects, which you mentioned, there's physical objects and psychological objects, maybe there's others that I haven't thought of. But in any case, the reason we tagged it is to, for me, it's like adding a handle to a suitcase. When you add the handle to the suitcase, you don't have to pick up the whole suitcase in its entirety, you could just use the handle. So it's a way of manipulating the object using a small kind of not substitute but a small attribute of the object. So if you're manipulating manipulating the attribute, then you don't have to manipulate the entire thing. And that makes it very handy or useful for us to get different things done. So a tag is always a bit of a manipulative shortcut. It allows us to manage lots of stuff, but only using some small attributes. So we're looking to get leverage the way you lose a handle on a suitcase. That's my



Raymond Sidney-Smith 04:00

theory. I agree with that in in, in large part, my thoughts on taxonomy is wide and varied, right. So if we think about taxonomy is just the categorization of a set, then we can go then deeper, when we start to think about it from a personal productivity perspective, which is, as Francis

noted, we are applying how we apply metadata in a website. You know, for search engine optimization purposes, we can think about the application of new data on top of the original set of data. So the items in our productivity systems, whether they be projects, actions, events, or otherwise, documents, you name it, the idea is that we're applying data that is not the object itself to the object, so that we're able to better contextualize and also better able to sort or filter those things in our systems and we lose something. When we don't do that, I feel like many times people set up systems and they actually lose capabilities, because they don't take advantage of that in the systems. And one of the things I really abhor is when I come across a tool that doesn't give me the capability of doing that kind of tagging. Now, there are some that I have cobbled together and have worked for me. So for example, I've been a Google Calendar user for many years. And I use tagging in that system. But I've cobbled that together, because I've had to use the search feature in order to be able to tag things because it's not, it doesn't have an inherent tagging capability. So there are these pieces in your world, we have to think through, how are you going to use a taxonomy to be best able to help you versus just I could have many different calendars, right, that's one option. And you can think about those as folders in a Dropbox OneDrive Google Drive perspective. But the reality is, is that that is a container tags are applied data, they are a way for you to be able to look at things across many areas of your system, many organized areas of your system. And that's really where tags become more powerful, is when you're capable of understanding that now tags actually serve two purposes. For me, I consider them an applied data or metadata perspective, where I am connecting disparate parts together for purposes of context. But then they also helped me connect other types of things for action. So what is really a reference type system, the other is an action type system. So we can use tags for say, I have all of my recipes, in a notebook in Evernote, that is for the recipes that I have, right, and they're all contained in there. But now I want to slice and dice, the different recipes in there to say, pastry recipes, things that are, you know, baked goods and that kind of thing. So I could have a pastries tag, but I could also then have a lunch and dinner recipes tag. And now I can separate those two apart, right, so there's that function of being able to do that. Plus, I could have a family recipe that is in my family notebook. And I can also tag that pastries. And that tag now gets pulled in when I search for all of the things that are tagged pastries. So now I'm not limited to where I'm putting things because if I can just apply a little bit of data to it, I can now find that data faster. At the same stage, I can have a notebook or folder for projects. And I can then identify a status to each of those resident projects as say, notes or documents. And now I can say, Okay, which of these projects are in status to, and then I can search for those, just by virtue of that singular tag. And that's the kind of power that I think a lot of people don't take advantage of in their systems, and really is, I think fundamental to you being able to be more productive.

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Francis Wade 07:59

I think it goes to the, to some degree with, with what Ray is talking about the programmers who write software for digital objects, I think there's a, there's a way in which they don't go far enough in anticipating the user's needs. They don't think through all the use cases, or they don't look for the unmet needs that the user is trying to fill. So they don't think as far as Okay, in order for me to meet that unmet need, I need to tag in the following way. So that the user can have access to the information in the way they want it. I think that kind of proactive thinking is actually kind of rare. I agree with Ray that I use so many programs that if only they had implemented this capability, it will be so much more powerful. But they left it behind because I don't think they understood the user's needs. I think that that applies across the board. Because if you're thinking of giving the users powerful capabilities, whether physical, digital or psychological objects, you have to think through what they're going to do with the

object. And then ask the question, what's the and I'll put the word minimum in here, what are the minimum tags they need in order to manipulate the objects to fulfill their needs? That thinking is missing in all parts of the world. I actually think people who are professional organizers who tend to dwell more in the physical world come in and fill that gap that they help people to tag and therefore sort of manipulated but that kind of thinking I think is missing in product design in general, but specific library I'm agreeing with Ray around the software.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 09:45

I would go further and I would say that talking about kind of the psychological mental emotional components of of tagging. People lack that also. And really, that's a that's a skills development issue, right, having the right mental emotional social skills To be able to say, this artifact, this mental emotional artifact needs to be organized in my way. And also with emotional regulation, there's a lot that goes into this, that if we start to think about, say, journaling, and effectively tagging and journaling, we can then do the reflective work to be able to sit back and say, Okay, I have this issue, and I want to be able to apply some productive action toward it, how do you do that other than by by looking at that data, and you can't do that if you're not somehow organizing that data, in a way. And of course, you know, there's machine learning now, and there's all kinds of ways but really, in the in the core function, what we're doing is we're pattern recognizing, and we are capable of then learning from it only by virtue of tracking and then looking at it in this taxonomical perspective, we are looking at it from what's the ontology between this action that was happening over here, and my outburst over there. And if it happens often enough, now we're capable of seeing those connections. So I see this happening across many, many different places, not just from a physical perspective, or digital perspective. But there is this emotional and mental management component that can really help you.

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Francis Wade 11:14

So LinkedIn used to allow you to tag your contacts. I know and they took it away that levels of stupidity that that that must have that insult. Oh, my God, really, the takeaway capability that I think so many were relying on, I know that no, no, you're left having to you can't search for the cloud. So you're stuck, you're stuck with having to deal with manage all of your contacts as if they're pretty much all the same in. And that's all respects.

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Art Gelwicks 11:46

I want to revisit a couple of points with that. I think you're hitting on a key problem. And that's so often that search is confused with tagging, that people feel that oh, well, search can be a replacement for it, you don't need to create tags, you can just search on context, they don't work the same, you don't think the same, they don't act the same. So that's, that's a, to me a non starter conversation. Tagging, we have to go back to a basic part of it, which is it applies dimensionality to information, whether it's physical objects, whether it's actual data, if you're applying descriptive content to data, the terms Metadata is data about data. But really, what you're doing is you're describing something in a way that is relevant for action. So if I think about something simple, like a pencil, pencil could be, you know, whoever made the pencil, the color of the pencil, the hardness of the pencil, the color of the eraser, these are all ways that I may want to then be able to find something based on I want a specific hardness of a black

pencil. Great. I've tagged those physical items with that identifier. If it's a screwdriver, I need a flat blade screwdriver, I need a Phillips head screwdriver. Those are tags, they help you increase the understanding of that particular item to provide that dimensionality beyond what it exists. If it's data, it's the same premise, how will you lose and this I'm really going to show my age here, the old teaching trick that we used to use in my classes to demonstrate to people about the concept of tagging was around punch cards. You take a card and you put multiple categories at the top of the card, the color of the item, the age of the item, whatever, and then you would punch holes all the way through the top of the card, everything else would have just regular holes. So the premise was you would slide a pencil through your stack of cards at say that the color blue, and then shake it and anything where that had a color blue on the card, the cards would fall out of the deck and everything else would stay hanging on your pencil. That way you knew which ones match that tag. It's it's a physical example, but it exactly applies to what we're talking about here. of dimensional context. For this information, I think we get hung up a lot on what's the right tags, what are the right things to be putting in, and if anybody can give me a list of the right tags, I'd love to see it because I've never seen one.

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Augusto Pinaud 14:20

The tags in my opinion has three components that are important. Number one, they are not necessarily permanent. You may have tags that you may use for a really long time but that doesn't mean they may not change. The second tags are something that are personal because tags really will come on how your brain things organized and look for stuff that's when the tags are useful. You know, if you get you know, we think on that recipe before, okay, if I don't need pastries, I don't need a pastry stags calm Not making one instead, mine may be, you know, comfort food, fast food or food that you can cook quick, okay, those were my will be my tags. But if you pass those to somebody else that may or may not make any sense to the other person. So those two things are really important. And I think it's sometimes then the third element is tax, a difference of other things can be combined or even in many cases should be combined. How you look for things when you think, you know, it's it may not be work may be too generic, maybe good to make an umbrella of tags under it. But it may not be a specific enough, depending on the number of actions you have. What people look is exactly that it's okay, what what do people who are been more effective than what I feel I am right now are using stacks, so they can make it work? That's the first issue you find on some of these tags tags are in general, personal, and depends on how you are going to look for that. So the question when you are going to make a tag is okay, when the intelligence self is going to look at this, how is going to look for this, and when they're not so intelligent self it's going to look for it is how it's going to try to recall it. And I tell people, both perspectives are really, really important, how you're going to think on this thing that you're tagging, when you're fresh, you know, full of mental power and everything else. But how you're going to look for the thing when you are tired grumpy, because those two ways of thinking and look for stuff are completely completely the opposite. And one of the issues with tagging, we tend to find them on one or, you know, we tag the thing when we're tired. So our intelligence self can't find it because it makes no sense. Or we do it when we were full mental power. And now our higher self is coming to this and say, Okay, this makes no sense.

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Francis Wade 17:13

But there's a human factors side to this. That is, I think Ray Ray sort of hinted at the psychological emotional. It's interesting, because when I went looking, so I've been I've been

researching tags for psychological objects for five years or whatever, and there's nothing there is zero, there is the only place you can find research on tagging is by computer scientists talking about digital objects. And even then, the conversation is extremely narrow. It's not getting into anything emotion, it's not getting into anything general, because we're looking for our general practices, to which tagging can be applied sort of general day to be alive. And in the academic world. Anyway, as far as I can tell, the issue of tagging the Human Factors side of it, it just falls right between the cracks. It doesn't belong to any discipline, therefore it belongs to non therefore the only things that you can really find just still not a Wikipedia search to make sure they're really written by computer scientists, for computer scientists, and not really for the average person, but the average person needs what we're talking about, the average person needs to use on a daily basis. And that's where the knowledge, it's not nice to write the book.

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Art Gelwicks 18:34

Think about it this way, though, if if we get into the question of folders versus context versus tags. But if I take it back into a physical existence, we think about categorization of content. So if I have, maybe I have my old index cards, or business cards, here's a great example. I have a stack of business cards from a conference. So we always have that thing. So you either start to go through and categorize those, or we used to have those things back in the day, we start to categorize those into sales contacts, or technical contacts, or maybe by company or things that have relevance to ourselves, and whoever else is going to be using it. Well, we do that because physically, that's the easiest way to interact with that information, because we can go grab the category, and we've already got the subset. But if we think about it from the context of tagging, or tag relevance, if you could flip over every business card, in writing this special magical ink, each of these categories like this is a technical contact, this is financial contact, and then be able to wave a wand across of them. So everything for that business context sticks to the wand. You've gotten the physical experience of tagging, as per se. So psychologically, when we start to think about it, we just don't have a mechanism to wave that magic wand. We have to create mental buckets and operate from within those buckets. It has nothing to do with the metadata itself. It has to do With how we interact with it. And I think one of the things that we have to remember in context is we talk about tagging. Tagging itself is basically useless. Unless you utilize the tags, the more complex your tagging interaction becomes, the more definitive and refining it becomes, the more powerful it becomes. But that's the challenge is everybody seems to think I need to lay out this tag structure first. And you're absolutely right. When you were talking about this being a Gousto, talking about this being, you know, a personal and transient type of thing, I made a note that it's more dynamic and creation, its relevance grows as you start to apply these contexts in and then be able to go back into your tags and say, Okay, give me everything for this project for this week, that was a set of meeting minutes that included to do items. Well, those could all be relevant tags. But what's that done? That's gotten me to the one piece of information that I can actually work with? So many technology systems now will say, well just search for it. Search for what? What am I going to find in there? I don't know that there is that relevant marker, that hole in the punch card, to allow me to do that search and tagging or context or however you want to name it, the application of metadata to our information is what makes that possible. But we have to accept that and you're right within software, they have to support that. I'll be honest, one of my favorite applications OneNote drives me insane, because it's tagging is terrible. absolutely horrific. I don't know where they came up with this backwards idea for how they handled tagging. But it's it's just a train wreck. So to me, it significantly hampers the use of that particular application. And you're right, this is something that is an informational piece that people should take in to recognition, if they're going to use a system. I'll go to the analog side,

if I've got notebooks. Tagging can be very useful with paper notebooks. where the problem is, is how do I access the tags? How do I go through and do do my punchcard on an analog tool, tags really lend themselves to the digital experience, find, then work with it that way?

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Francis Wade 22:21

It makes me wonder if tagging isn't the part of the solution to information overload, but also physical, overwhelm, or having too much stuff in your home. What personal organizers do if tagging isn't an essential operational activity, to filter all of the stuff, physical, psychological and digital stuff coming into our lives. And of course, we're not taught to tag. But imagine if we were taught to tag as teenagers in anticipation of having to deal with volumes of everything in life, I wonder what difference that would make, you know,

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Art Gelwicks 23:00

it's challenging because we have tagging, we've gotten away from it in an analog space. If you think about going back to the library and pulling up the card catalog and the Dewey Decimal System. It's a tagging reference that has an A mechanical for lack of a better term mechanism to drive your interaction with those tags. So I want to find a book about butterflies. That was written by a European author, and it's going to give me a way to go get that physical asset. But I think, again, this is one of those challenges, we think about digital space and digital clutter. Yeah, but it doesn't really exist. So is it actually clutter? Or is it just immediacy of relevancy, I may want to have access to everything I've ever known, ever seen, ever interacted with. But there's no way that I can have that access at any given time, I need to be able to go dig into it. I shared an article with with you guys earlier about zettelkasten in the application workflow. And they use how they use tags within that structure. Those concepts, knowing that I will never retain everything I've ever seen. But I still may be want to, I may want to be able to access it. Tagging metadata is the only way that's possible. Even in search, I wouldn't even remember what to search, but to be able to start to see those nuances and those relationships. And I think that's really the key. When you start to look at this data, it's not so much getting back the 47 things that you tagged as this projects, meeting minutes, but being able to see the relationships between those in a relevant filtered set and say, Okay, now that I look through these, I can see where this train of thought started to go, where I can see where we started to have the challenges. That gives us something that we can't get through other informational structures. which is an opportunity for our minds to do the thing that computers will never do that contextual relationship and finding things outside the zeros and the ones and be able to jump to the next leap in the the concept. So.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 25:18

So if we if we want to consider this just on a, a couple of points, one is what you're talking about really art is the concept of whether or not you organically start tagging, or whether you manufacture a tagging system. And I always say to folks that they have two options, they can just bring a little bit of awareness, as I talk about always, with regard to getting more done is that if you want to, if you want to really get more done, bring awareness to these faculties that are necessary for you to be more productive. And one of those awarenesses is, Are you already using tags? The answer is yes, you just aren't surfacing them in your world, you are applying all

kinds of data to things that you don't, you don't bring awareness to. And therefore you can't formalize in your system. So this idea of are you aware of what you are working with. And if you bring more awareness to it, then you can apply that metadata. And so then you might take your system of choice, and just start applying kind of rent not randomly, but applying your tags to the system. And over time, you will see that you gravitate toward using certain terms. And not to get too far into the academic weeds here. But there is there are hyper NIMS and hyper NIMS. And when we think about language and structure, hyper NIMS are basically the specific tags you would use underneath a grouping. And then hypo NIMS are the category of that grouping. So say for example, you take blue, red, orange, and those are colors, colors are the Hypponen HyperX NIMS, are the three individual items. And you can use both of those tags, for example, you might decide that the organizing structure, that is the happenin colors could be the folder, and then the items that are the hyper NIMS then become the tags, right? We have the ability to then slice and dice on that level.

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Art Gelwicks 27:13

Can I say just a couple things completely out of context. For anybody who listens to this show regularly, you should understand a couple of things. One, I love this show for the fact that there is not once that I do not come away from without learning something. And and somebody who lives in this space. I learned something every time. The second is if you could have seen the live camera feed when Ray started talking about Alan M's and whatever's and both Francis and my eyebrows went straight up, like what is this? This is this is what this show is all about. People just say you're totally right, right. I mean, I just I think people struggle so much with that starting place. Maybe this is why GTD is has such legs under it is it provides at least a jumpstart into this. I don't know where to begin. Great. We'll start with contexts. And here's your context and use these. But is this not also where people then fall off the cliff quickly because they they don't know how to make that their own. And just second Augusta brought up something earlier about this being personal tagging with a group, I think is a whole different conversation like a project team. Now you get a whole different ball of wax, because now you have to agree on a common taxonomy, and then apply it equally and then monitor it and make sure it's being applied. These are all really complicated challenges.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 28:36

Absolutely. And so back to my my point about hyper NIMS hyper NIMS is the idea that once we have created an organizing structure, then we can choose our tagging structure. And so often than not, what happens is we get kind of flummoxed on this idea, as you talked about art, like, how do you get started, the idea is just to surface to awareness what you're already doing, you're you're already doing it internally, now we're just bringing in external. And it doesn't matter whether it's digital or physical, really what we're trying to do is applying those in the external world, what is happening in our internal worlds. And so you might choose the tagging facility within your software. Or you might choose to do something like we've done since the age of Gutenberg, or before the age of Gutenberg, which is we have tables of contents in books. And then we have indices or indexes in the end of those books. Those are our organizing structure and our taxonomical structure. We use this function for being able to do two different things. One is what's a bucket of information that I want to be able to see in one place. And that's an organizing structure for narrative, as well as for understanding what this bucket of information holds. There are maybe 3000 4000 words in this bucket called we call it a chapter, I

suppose in a book, right? But if I want to look for all of the things that mentioned the word blue, I'm going to now go to the end Next, and it's going to tell me on page 3679, you know, 123, this is where the word blue references, we can use this same function and apply it to our own productivity system. And we don't have to do it all, you know, for everything retrospective, we can just start going forward and making that applied data happen. And as we surface or come across that data again, in our systems, then we can add to our taxonomical structure, right? You go, okay, you know what, I'm looking for blue, and you and then you do the hard work of going back and searching the entire system of yours, whether that be paper or digital, for blue. And when you find them, you say, You know what, since I've done this work once, let me go ahead and just note where they are in my physical or digital system going forward. That means tagging those items. Now for the future reference, the bullet journal effectively uses this concept, to a great extent, and to great effect. And we have lots of examples of how we use this. This is a tool where we can start with templates. You know, many people ask me, Raymond, what are your various horizons of focus? What are your areas of focus on accountability? What how do you label them, and I always say to them, here's the template, this is what I do. But now go make it yours. And I think that helps to jumpstart for a lot of people. That's why David Allen and getting things done provides the context lists that he does, because those are the ones he sees people most often use, I know that as soon as I saw them, I thought, I need to update this to be mine. These don't fit me. And that's, that's great. That's because I wasn't a high level executive in some, you know, fortune 1000 company paying David Allen, you know, high dollar rate for coaching, I just wasn't that person. So I didn't need those contexts. That totally makes sense. And it's not wrong, it's just, we need to make it our own, we need to make it work for us. That means our work style, our organizational structure, in terms of our teams, and our own personal structure in terms of our systems. So I think it just all of those things need to come together so we can better understand what tags are in our world, and how they're going to work in our world. Because you may decide that I only want tagging for reference, not for action, and therefore they shouldn't ever touch my action system. Or I may decide that I only want them for action. And I don't want them to touch my reference system. Because I always want to bucket everything very clearly clear defined lines between those buckets of data. And that's understandable, everybody has kind of a different way of organizing. But you also then have to think about how language and this is why I bring up the hyper nemen Hypponen conversation comes up because language comes into play here. And we need to think about the words we use, which is if you're using a word over and over again, that is an abstraction of something, just like a tag is an abstraction of those of that of that word as well. And so we need to think about the abstraction of data and how we feel as it relates to that thing. And what that relationship is, once we start understanding the relationships of those things, then we can start to identify, you know what, when I make phone calls, I call that phoning a friend, I don't say calling a friend. So when I write my actions, if I write phone at the beginning of every task that's phoning a friend, phone, Bill, phone, Susan, phone jack, that's gonna give me in essence, a tag to then search for throughout my system, right, we've not even we've not used anything else other than language to be able to bring those people together. Now, we could also use colors when we're talking about, you know, colors before, you can use physical stickers on folders, and just put physical stickers, there needs to be no language needed to then apply a taxonomy to the folders that you have in your standing, you know, file folder system, you just now know everything that's blue is related to, you know, family, everything that's green is related to money, and so on and so forth, we can create this level of taxonomy and connect those together by the way, I the way that I actually have connected Google Calendar to the rest of my texts, you know, taxonomical structure is through color. Since Google Calendar gives me the ability to color calendars, I have decided to create multiple calendars and apply calendar event colors. So you can have to give a calendar color and event color. I've used those two structures to give me the variety of tags, the number of

tags I need in my system to match up to the colors that are actually word represented in my taxonomical system. So now I can see that if this is that color, and it also contains this other color in Google Calendar, I know what it's related to in my system because I have a legend with the colors identified. And that's the that's the kind of flexibility and kind of fun of being able to bring these pieces together that otherwise you might feel limited in doing

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Art Gelwicks 34:58

just to provide a purely practical references to how this can be done. In my show notes for today, I just added a tag called productivity terms. And I've got hyper NIMS, hyper nem as the terms that have been tagged that way. But I also added a tag to define. So what I'm going to do is I'll go back later, and I'll say, give me all the terms that need to be defined. I'll plug the definitions in, and then I'll remove the to to be defined tag. And now I'll have a way to go back and say, give me all productive activity terms, just to provide some relevant context. Before I did that, that tag did not exist. So being able to create tags on the fly is a critical part of this entire thing that we're talking about. I'm not saying use my tags, I'm not saying use anybody else's tags, I'm saying when you find something and you need to label it, label it. And then sometimes as Augusto said, those labels can be transitive. I mean, they don't have to, are transient, they don't have to continue to exist past their action. But Ray, you're absolutely right. Sometimes it's not necessarily connected to having an action, it is purely for reference, if I think about and I don't want to dig into the tools, but to do list has a great tagging methodology that's defined into it, it's a little cumbersome to interact with, but it helps me frame up how I want to pull that information back to my, my RAM state, out of the hard drive storage.

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Augusto Pinaud 36:25

So all these tax systems, you know, and I agree with Ray, I use colors that are the end of the day, our tags, I can look at my calendar, without even look at the detail. And based on the coloring, I know what what are they tag off, they are not all the same color, there are different colors. And each one of those belong to a different tags same on my system, same on on many thing. But one of the things that I want to reinforce as critical is, are these tags, really what you look, you know, as you were saying, or Okay, when I look for the definitions, this is what I do. And then I changed the tag. This is really important to look as you build this tag system, what you use when you are on the top of your performance. And when you are on the bottom of your performance, because if you can set those two points do we'll be able to find stuff. And one of the common things I found when I'm doing coaching is people tag things or create those tags at the top of their performance, and then cannot find it when they're not there or at the bottom to increase the possibilities that you will find it. Alright, so



Raymond Sidney-Smith 37:44

as we come to the latter part of our conversation, what I wanted us to do was to talk a little bit about how someone can apply tags in their world. And we're going to come back to this conversation. In our our next next week, we're going to come back to this conversation and really talk about applying tags in how we use tags in our own system. We're going to deep dive there. We're going to talk about organizational tagging, really this whole concept of can we use

it in organizing documents and so on and so forth? Or can we use it in an action based system? And obviously, the answer's yes. And we're gonna talk about that, and, and so on, so forth. But I wanted to talk about just kind of how folks can jump into tags today, what's one thing that folks can do to try tagging kind of dip their toe in the water of the tagging world

F

Francis Wade 38:36

actually think they should pick a part of their life where they're experiencing some degree of stress, I don't, I don't think I don't think tagging, due to the overhead that's required to do tagging well, is something you just apply everywhere for the heck of it. Because you got some spare time, I think you're looking for the areas of your life where you're having a problem a challenge. And it could be as simple as tagging the items in your garage. If your garage looks like a you know, like a bomb hit it, that is stop everywhere, and there's no rhyme or reason in order to organize it. To sort it and to really make it work you really start need to start by tagging and saying okay, over here is the workbench for the carpentry stuff. Over here are the supplies that the household needs. Over here is a sporting equipment that you come up with first to tag, you know, before you start organizing, and then you spend a moment and think actually pause the thing Okay, where how do I tag what with what and why. So you're thinking through what you're going to do once everything is tagged, even before you start tagging, and then execute the strategy accordingly. So that's It's, it's different than I think most people when they go to organizing garage will just be so pissed off and just start throwing stuff away. Just that that can work just take a lot longer. But if you can pause for a moment and say, What's my outcome? And how? How will my tagging or in other words, categorization of different objects, how will that play into where I want things to end up eventually. And if you ever helped someone or yourself done donor, a complete clean out of a garage, you know that you can get to the end of it and be very satisfied that everything is in a sense of order, and you have a sense of personal inner peace. So I would pick an area where you're really having a problem and then think about, okay, where do I want to end up and how will tagging help me to get there as quickly as possible,



Raymond Sidney-Smith 40:54

the way in which I see it is that if you have that garage that's kind of disorganized and cluttered, and you want to be able to declutter it, the, you might decide to use storage containers. And then with those storage containers, identify what is in each of those storage containers. For me, the tagging is identifying the objects that are like kind inside of the larger storage containers. So all of the Christmas lights, and, and so on, so forth, go into the Christmas storage containers, but I'm going to label now the storage container that holds all of the Christmas lights as Christmas lights. And that may also then have different lights for different other seasons or different other applications, you know, maybe I have the work light that I use for you know, putting in the in the garage, when I need to work on the car, that work light is now going to also be put into a storage container and tagged with work lights. And now I have a separating structure for Okay, anything that's like flashlights and you know, things that are for, you know, doing that kind of work is going to go into that work lights container, and these things that are for decorative purposes go into the decorative lights container. And so now, I've corrected myself as I've made my way through the thought process, like, Okay, I've got different buckets of items that are all going into these storage containers, the storage containers of a larger ecosystem, how do I now apply information so that I always say this, like,

if my eight year old self, or if I had to give someone the job of finding something for me? How would I direct them to find that stuff, both in my physical world, but also in my digital world? If I to actually say to you, you know what? I need you to be able to look at this data and get some answer from it. How would I? How would I direct you to go find that. And first, it's going to be a bucket and organizing structure, go here, do this thing, I give you my physical address, my home address, you come to my home address, you get into the front door. But then there's all of the minutiae, right, like, make sure that when you walk in, the dog is going to start barking. So you probably want to give him a treat. So that he shuts up, and then you can go ahead to the next step, right? These little fundamental smaller components are not just instructional, they're also then capable of organizing where things are the drawers, the the cubby holes, the labels, on particular items are the helping portion forward, right. So giving instructions forward, it's like, okay, if you go to my desk, then open up the drawer, you're going to see the file folder, the hanging file folders, this is the file folder structure. And this is how you're going to find the data inside of it. Those are the ways in which we can really help ourselves that if we're trying to give someone else instructions on how to find things, whether that be in a physical or digital space, we are now capable of saying, Okay, well, if I were trying to find this thing, consistently, every time directing someone to finding it consistently every time, this is how I would direct them to go find that, and then think, okay, if I can't do that, well, how can I apply some structure here to be able to give those instructions? And then that's where tags tend to take over? Because it's like, you know what, actually, if I just tagged everything that was associated with this project, then I could say to them, yes, there's this larger notebook that I have or larger folder with all of this data. But if you just look for this tag, you will definitely find that tax year 20, you know, 21, or tax year 2020. Item, and you'll be able to find that document I'm looking for, in a sense. And that's the kind of helpful mechanism that I use, which is like you're instructing someone else to find this. Now, how do you apply the structure to help them find it as opposed to yourself because many times, we're more inclined to do something when we know we're going to help others than when we're going to help ourselves, but then ultimately, actually helps us to, which is the whole point.

A

Art Gelwicks 44:41

That's a great context, Ray. I mean, being able to set something not so much for the help, I've been thinking about it. How do I provide people access to my information, if I'm not able to do it, you know, that something happens. mortalities a thing right now. So how does my wife get out? access to all the information that I have and all the things that I've been, she counts on me to take care of, organizationally for the house and for our kids and for our life. But if I can't explain it to her how I've got this structure and where it is, and she'll never get into it, and I have to remember that context, and you're right tagging can be that bridge, she doesn't have to think like, I have to think she just has to be able to hit the right tags to get to that end result in the structure. So that's a great example.

A

Augusto Pinaud 45:30

And I think one of the problems is unconsciously most people tag everything, miscellaneous, you know, and they don't necessarily take the time to look what is that tag, therefore, for default, everything is tagged as miscellaneous. So, again, there is no alien, this is we have noticed, stop, slow down to to identify things like what you are describing. So right now for, for example, artists putting for his wife, everything for her looks on your system as miscellaneous.

So it is awful, she is not going to even try to touch it with a tiempo on that she has no other option, in which case, now she need to deal with that massive tag. And that is where that tag gets so



Raymond Sidney-Smith 46:23

critical. Thank you, gentlemen, this has been a really fun conversation. I always enjoy talking about tags. It's funny, because so few people use tags. And I really feel like the more we can bring this to people's attention, the more productive they can be, because it just takes a little bit of effort. And then you have all of this, you know, post growth that happens from being able to implement tags across many different areas of your life. And so while we are at the end of our discussion this week, the conversation of course, continues on in many places. One, if you have a question or a comment, you can head over to this particular casts episode page on ProductivityCast dotnet. And if you just type in the three digit episode number after productivitycast.net, forward slash, you'll be taken there and you can leave a comment there. We also have a community inside of personal productivity club. If you go to [www dot personal productivity club](http://www.dot.personalproductivity.club) and join us there, you can then find the ProductivityCast channel. And we have conversation going on there as well. You can feel free to ask questions and post your thoughts about different shows there. If you've enjoyed spending time and listening with us today, it'd be great if you can help us out by leaving a rating a review on Apple podcasts or Stitcher or whatever podcast app you have that allows a rating and review aspect. Of course, your compliments are welcome. And they're useful and helpful to us and motivating us. But it also helped us grow our personal productivity listening community by letting the podcast gods know that we're putting out quality content. So thank you for doing that. Thank you. For those who have left her reviews, they've been wonderful and really helpful for us to know how to adapt and grow and all those other fun things. And we appreciate the feedback. So keep it coming. If you have a topic about personal productivity that you'd like us to discuss on a future cast, you can also visit [productivity cast dotnet](http://productivitycast.net), forward slash contact, and you can leave us a voice recorded message or you can type us a message. And I've actually recently implemented a form that you can complete if you just scroll down below the Contact Form page, there's a there's a forum embedded and you can complete your question there. And maybe we'll use that as a topic for a future episode or we'll do it in our mailbag episodes that we do sometimes throughout the year in the Ask ProductivityCast shows. So I want to express my thanks to Augusto Pinaud, Francis Wade, and art Gelwicks for joining me here on ProductivityCast. This week, and every week, you can learn more about them and their work by visiting productivitycast.net and just click on their names in the show or you can click on the about page and you'll find links to their work out there. I'm Ray Sidney-Smith and on behalf of all of us here at ProductivityCast Here's to your productive life.



Voiceover Artist 49:00

That's it for this productivity cast, the weekly show about all things productivity with your hosts, Ray Sidney-Smith and a Gousto pinout with Francis Wade and art Gelwicks