132-why-task-lists-fail-productivitycast

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SPEAKERS

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

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V Voiceover Artist 00:00

Are you ready to manage your work and personal world better to live a fulfilling productive life, then you've come to the right place. ProductivityCast the weekly show about all things productivity, here 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.

A Augusto Pinaud 00:23

I'm Augusto Pinaud.

F Francis Wade 00:24

I'm Francis Wade.

A Art Gelwicks 00:25

And I'm Art Gelwicks.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:26

Welcome, gentlemen, and welcome to our listeners to this action packed episode of ProductivityCast. Today, we are going to be talking about Action Lists, actually, we're gonna be

ProductivityCast. Today, we are going to be talking about Action Lists, actually, we're gonna be talking about task lists, and really what they're all about, why do we have them? Why do we use them, and some of the common pitfalls that people experience while they are trying to manifest and utilize their task lists. And this is a perennial topic, but I think it was triggered by an article that we picked up from the I done this.com site. And we thought we would have a discussion around some of the things that people really do get hung up on when it comes to task lists. So let's start the conversation off around the idea of why do we have a task list? What is the purpose of a task list, and let's go from there,

A **Art Gelwicks** 01:10

we start off with the common knowledge of everybody visualizes a task list. And it's a list of items with checkboxes next to it. And that's usually, unfortunately, as far as people will think. But a task list is so much more than that. And it's not just things to do, I think one of the biggest problems we get into and we saw this in the article, we've seen this, in numerous conversations about this topic, is understanding the scope of what a task list can do for us, rather than what we can do for it saying apologies to JFK. So when we think about a task list, we're initially trying to capture all those little things that we have to do on a given day, given week, given month, whatever. And we're trying to get those off of that list. Well, that becomes an action in and of itself, trying to clear that listing. I, I suppose that a task list is probably one of the best tracking and planning tools we have available to us. We use all different kinds of tools. But if you if you take a task list and you soup it up, you start to get into a project management tool. So wait, if it has that level of capability with just some extra features. What can a regular task list do to us do for us? Well, I think that's where we have to go back to our definition, what is a task list. And a task list in my definition, is a tracking and planning tool.

F **Francis Wade** 02:41

For me, it's an external representation of a bunch of psychological commitments. So we make promises to ourselves to do stuff in the future. And we make lots of promises, and some subset of all those promises, it can be captured externally. So that we are able to have some peace of mind because they are not swimming around in our heads. We use it it helps the chances that we'll actually get the task done. And so there's people task lists, there are calendars of different kinds, there are digital task lists, there are Excel spreadsheets. And then there's also having an administrative assistant, having an individual who manages, basically manages all your tasks for you. So that's giving someone the job of you know, once you have a task, you just tell the person and then you stop trying to remember it, and the person is trusted, they can be just as effective or more effective than a list or a piece of paper or a digital tool or anything like that. But the objective is the same psychologically, it's either in your mind swimming around causing trouble waking you up in the middle of the night, and likely to be forgotten, or it's in some trusted external mechanism that allows you have some peace of mind,

Raymond Sidney-Smith 04:09

I would very much agree with Francis in in that definition, I think that I think of a task list as an externalized list of your work. It's just externalizing work. And when we take the work off of our own shoulders, the stress of having to remember it plus the really inefficiency of our mind to remember all the tasks that would could or should be done at any given time. We just aren't

very good at being able to do that algorithm in very complex long term work. And so being able to do that in an external inside of a tool, paper and pen, digital or otherwise, gives us a longer term planning and a lot more complex planning capability than we would otherwise. And I think that's really useful for most of us. You know, I'm not really going to think about what I'm going to Do a year two years from now. But the reality is, is that I have a thought about something that's going to be done at that time, in that timeframe. Or on that timeline, I can go ahead and plant that in my digital system. And it'll show up in one or two years timeframe. And then I can deal with it. And that didn't, that stress didn't have to sit on my shoulders for any of that length of time, until I until I prompted it to give me that stress. And so it becomes a positive stressor, something that I am capable of tackling at that time, versus me every day for the next, you know, 700 odd days, thinking about that thing every day so that I don't forget it in in one or two years time. It's just kind of not necessary. So I think of task lists as being that one external piece. The other part is, for me the prioritization capabilities of a task list. Coming from kind of the GTD perspective, thinking of next actions, as being those physical things that will prompt me to move a project forward or move, move some kind of work forward, I'm thinking about it from the perspective that I'm looking at my action list and identifying what can be done right now have all of the possible opportunities of things that I can do during discretionary time. So there is there is that function, but it also is a prompting function for the things that must be done. Or there are two different pieces there, right, there's the stuff that I need to do, and want to do in my discretionary time. But there's also the things that must be done. And it is not withstanding my discretionary time, it needs to be done today. And I need to be able to do that. And so it to some extent, there is a date time and location function there to a task list that some people actually externalize to a calendar type interface, right. Some people put that into a scheduling system. We'll talk about that in a bit. So we have these two pieces that are that I think are are very similar, but not the same. But things that I can do on a longer horizons, I have a project and there's work that needs to be done. It doesn't have to be done today. But if I have to go get my driver's license renewed and my driver's license is expiring today, then I must do that today, that becomes a must. And it also becomes date, time and location fixed. And I think more of the context that kind of connect there, the more it becomes something that that we have to manage differently in our task lists than otherwise. And so maybe it even becomes a different task list for some people or a calendar or something like that. So I

A **Augusto Pinaud** 07:26

think I agree with that definition that you have, for me, they have three types, the ones that need to happen today. Now, regardless of the ones that should happen soon, because they The thing is getting louder and louder moderator and the things that I want to wish now that that wish list here, I want to read these articles, but but they are there, they're on my task list. But they don't. It's really more if I can get rid of that critical step, that I will be able to go to that to those nice to have. And I think that's where it makes a difference for me.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 08:02

From that point, we can then start to think about what are some of the common pitfalls that folks experience in creating task lists. So I see folks using, you know, task lists for all kinds of things. And sometimes they're doing them effectively. Most times, they are not, and and so then they come into contact with me because they're trying to figure out what the heck is going on with their business or with their world or whatever. And, you know, it's just one of

those things where you you come into contact with a lot of people, especially in my personal life, where they are having these kinds of struggles. And so what are some of those common pitfalls that you see folks experiencing? And why do you think those things occur? What do you think is the genesis for some of these pitfalls?

A   Augusto Pinaud 08:50

The big pitfall that I found is that people don't get as clear steps. So we get into get driver license, well, yeah, good driver license is great after you have the requirements down in a folder and you're ready to drive to the driver license. But there is a lot of things, especially in that example that you need to do before we'll do you know, the requirements, you know, now, you need to have the whatever Five points 10 points, well, did you have those proceeds those who stopped to make those points? Did you even understand those points? So when would you put on your task list is get driver license? What happened is you don't really you may not have all the information you have to actually drive to the DMV. So you are trying to do a project, not a task to get to a project and that is something that I see often on and on and on, where people don't stop and think why this task has and move forward. What is what I need to do or what I'm missing in order to get foreword. And part of the reason of that is the week for review. You know, when I see things on my list that haven't moved, okay, I've seen that same task for a couple of weeks now and have moved that the moment I'm I marked them and okay, let me as I go into the review, let me pay attention to this, what it is. And sometimes there is nothing, sometimes it's just, hey, I'm waiting for sometimes it's, the timing hasn't been right. But other times is that I'm missing information. And you are simply not aware of what is the information you are missing, so you can continue moving forward that task.

F   Francis Wade 10:36

The big pitfall is that people don't see the management of their tasks as an evolving target, that they, there's a, you know, we productivity types are guilty of sort of promoting one size fits all solutions, regardless of task volume. But someone who starts off as a teenager writing stuff on post it notes, probably shouldn't be using writing stuff and post it notes as their go to technique when their CEO, they're no 55, they have three kids, two grandkids, they have financial investments, or where they have a very, very full life. And writing stuff or post it notes is probably okay for a 13 year old. And it probably is not appropriate for someone at that level. But that concept that that this is an evolution, and you're looking to gain more capacity as you go along. Just because if you're someone who is really ambitious, the chances are you're going to use up whatever new capacity you get all the way from post it notes, to whatever fancy task management system you use, you're always going to be looking to add more tasks, more tasks, more tasks, it's kind of a, for me, it's kind of a psychological push to use up whatever, whatever capacity you have an add more. So if that idea were taught to a 13 year old, it would be like Okay, at this level, you can second like writing, when you're writing as a 13 year old, you're able to write at a particular level. When you get to way beyond that level, you need to be writing and using tools and assistance that you didn't need when you were 13. And that's it's very similar. So if that picture were taught, then I think it would solve a lot of problems for people who gets get stuck or don't understand why the system they have isn't working. They don't look for something new, they don't look for new capacity. But this is a an in and out kind of thing. It's like a factory, you gotta have an engine that can handle the number of tasks that

you have in mind, or you're going to be pushed back to what we talked about before, which is managing more than in your head, which is just the back to back to having the original problem just at a different level. I agree

A Art Gelwicks 12:59

with Gousto significantly on the the idea of people not having their tasks broken down well enough. So often that you'll get what I call fat tasks in your listing, where you're not really sure where to start, you don't necessarily have all the pieces in place to be able to make progress with it. So when you start it all of a sudden, you can't finish that task. I'm a fan of having very granular tasks, I like to be able to knock things out. And if it's something extremely detailed, fine. But it's just another step along the process. And I think that's where it goes back to this fear that is ingrained in people. And it has been reinforced into people that, oh, you can't have all these tasks sitting on your task list. You can't have all the you can't have 87 tasks to accomplish one thing. Sure you can. There's nobody who says you can't, if they tell you that they're selling you something, you have the ability to define whatever your system is, that is going to be most useful for you. I would not recommend anybody set up their task list the way I set up mine. However, everybody can benefit from basic structures within their system. And what I think is most interesting is task lists can be the best educational tool about how you work as compared to anything else. Because it forces you to think about how are you going to successfully get through something like this, it gives you a historical record to be able to go back and say how did I do this before? And did it work and be able to carry that forward and apply it so if people have one thing to take away from how to be more effective with their task lists, it's stop listening to what other people say as to how they should use their task lists, and start using them just from the get go. Put stuff on it, take stuff off, work with it, play with it, try it out. This is one of the I could task lists and Note taking in the same class of just the amount of unique definition an individual can have as to how this should work.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 15:09

Yeah, I think I agree in large part to what you're saying there, I think that one of the things people should do is to look at all of the various ways in which people are using task lists as a as a creative idea generating mechanism, because by looking at the way in which say, art manages, and does his tasks, very granularly, that may not work for some other people, some people might want to have a task list that is much more high level. And that is more motivating to them in that in that sense. And that kind of takes me to my point here, which is that so many people try to do emotional management in their task list. And that is a very common pitfall tasks 10 can be emotionally charged. And what we need to do is to be able to separate our objectivity about the the items, the time demands, as Francis would call them, as being just that they are, they are commitments of us to do something with our time, and with our energy and otherwise. And so we need to manage those in a consistent, clear way. And that's why I'm a GTD, right? I think of this as a consistent, cohesive system, in which I am managing all of the various actions that I need to take to move projects forward. I am not trying to manage my emotions within that system as well. That's what journaling is for. That's what seeking out a mental health professional, and talking to, you know, a therapist or a psychologist are about and those kinds of things. There are ways in which you can use a support network. But so many times I see people trying to not just motivate themselves on their task list, but actually manage and deal with this is actually one of my fundamental issues with the bullet journal is because

the bullet journal actually uses journaling within inline within the system itself. So your tasks are actually bled together into your calendar and into your emotional management, which is what's going on internally in my internal world right now, I don't see a task list as being that thing. Your task list is a list of things that you can be doing at any given moment. And then you can decide on one list or many lists, for example, I've chosen to have one master task list. And then I use smart lists, which are saved searches, to pare them down to the exact things that I can do right now, or that I want to do right now. This is very different than me saying, oh, gosh, you know what, I'm really anxious right now. And I want to be able to manage my anxiety. So let me look at my task list and put some things in there that are going to manage my anxiety. That is not, that's not what the task was there for, necessarily, right. Now you can place actions in there, like self care actions, you can do all kinds of things that do belong on the task list. But to be able to use it for that purpose tends to be a kind of misguided in that sense, because then what you get is more emotional landmines in your system than otherwise. And I feel like those two bleed together way too often. So just a common pitfall. And I think just a recognition that that happens. And it's not like you're wrong or bad, or anything else like that. But it is an opportunity here, I really call you to the idea of finding a tool like a journaling application. We've talked about journaling apps before, or even just using your voice recorder and talking into it, that will really help you understand that some of that prognostication that comes out of you that verbal, emotional stuff that's happening. That's not necessarily actionable. It's just you trying to verbalize what's going on in your head. And then once you're done, you know, voice memo in your thoughts, then you can say, Okay, well, based on what I've just felt, what is the thing that needs to actually be done. That's the thing that goes on your task list, not the 15 paragraphs of stuff before it. Which I know because I've written those 15 paragraphs of stuff, and recognize that through that processing, you know, through that, that that those machinations of thought, and emotion comes the actual actions that will actually be useful to you.

Francis Wade 19:13

I was just Googling the the number of tasks it takes to make a Polaris nuclear submarine. And what you're seeing sort of reminds me on that because there are X number of tasks in the project to create a nuclear submarine. And how you feel about them is maybe interesting. However, it requires every single person who needs to finish their tasks to finish the task, regardless of how they feel. And I think the task what you're seeing is that the task list is that connection between thought and action. It's not really intended to be the connection between thought and emotion. That that's a different kind of tool. It's its success is not measured by hope. How happy you are at the end of it, Percy. It's whether or not you frickin tighten the bolt on, some sort of thing doesn't blow up, but it gets to the bottom of the ocean. So there's something plain and ordinary, that I think you're, you're emphasizing about using the task list and making sure that the action results from it. And, you know, we, you're arguing for focusing on that solid connection, and not allowing anything to interfere with that connection. Because that the purpose is action, the purpose is to get so to work, not have a good night's sleep, per se. I think that those that is one of the pitfalls,

Raymond Sidney-Smith 20:41

right, and I mean, more to that point, which is the fact that I don't believe that task lists can solve that problem for you, right, if you have, if you're going to have a bad night's sleep, the task list by virtue of having the action embedded on it right, tomorrow, I need to tighten that

bolt. So the submarine works properly, is very different than, you know, whatever else you might be going on in your head emotionally about anything else. That is the solution to you having a good night's sleep. But it's not the it's not the emotional management component of all of this. And I just see, so often, people bleeding those two pieces together,

A   Art Gelwicks   21:18

I think you bring up a really good point with that, because that's one of the areas that I've always struggled with. And it's actually been a very recent real revelation for me, I've often thought about my task list as the place to capture all the things so that they're not rattling around in my head. And that's always been the biggest priority, oh, I got to put it down there, I got to put it down there, I realized that the more important thing for me is not so much to get it out of my head. It's to know what the starting place is and what the next step is, when I finished that one, that it's an old project management thing I want to use, like Microsoft projects, or a PERT chart mentioning the Polaris example. I wouldn't use that before. But a task list works the same way structurally as long as you set it up. But I realized recently, that's way more important to me. And it makes much more of an impact. Even though I've been doing this for so long. I'm like, oh, yeah, I'll just capture it all, and then it's there. And then I can work on the stuff. No, it's that sequencing. It's the the ability to deal with that wiring thing in my brain that says, Okay, you're done. Now, what's next? I don't know if this other people run into this, I've been digging, you know, trying to do as much research as possible with this. But this seems to be a common thing. It's this spiderweb effect, you finish one step, and all of a sudden, you have this realm of different opportunities and possibilities. And in many cases, your brain goes, whoa, I don't want to do any of those, I'm gonna go do this one. Even though you know that the next one is over on the left hand side, your brain goes running to the right. Well, this is the way you can provide at least a little bit of structure, those guide rails to be able to say, okay, you know, what, this is the next thing to do, go ahead, just follow these steps in advance. But to your point, Ray, this is the emotional reaction, the emotional support mechanism that this type of a tool can be, is you realize that it can almost be your advocate, you are pre advocating for yourself. These situations, like, you know, what this is going to happen, your brain is going to go run in that rabbit hole, how do you help it back out? And, uh, Gousto, I think you were absolutely on target with this with with your comments earlier, this is the type of thing that I cannot recommend enough to people to try. Unfortunately, I would say, you know, common knowledge is oh, you know, put all the stuff in, create your structure, and then it will work doesn't mean that's going to work for everybody. Everybody has to tune it. But like I said, for me, this is making all kinds of crazy difference. I've been finding a big shift in how I feel about my task list, not necessarily that my productivity has jumped through the roof. That would be fictional, at best. But what I have found is I am much more comfortable with the level of productivity I'm executing. And I'm okay with, I don't feel the stress of oh, what's next?

Raymond Sidney-Smith   24:15

Another pitfall that I wanted to talk about was the idea of putting all of your tasks mixed in with those things that are not things that you're actually going to accomplish. So call them wishlist items, call them goals, call them projects on in the in the GTD perspective, but tasks for me are things that are concrete action steps. And a lot of people put things that are not tasks on their task lists. So they will put things like broccoli and and that's just like, it'll just sit on the task list. And you know, that belongs on a grocery list in my perspective, right? You would do that

context based. Put broccoli Put zucchini, what are some other greens, cucumber, whatever, put some leafy greens and some other green vegetables all together, put them on a grocery list, that's where you, that's where you going to get them at the grocery store that doesn't belong on your task list. And so what belongs in your task list is scheduled time to go to the grocery store, or go directly to your calendar and put a time where you are actually going to go to the grocery store, and buffer for travel time. And, and so, from my perspective, that pitfall is that people think that your task list is supposed to consume all of these things that you would could and should do, when in reality, those are all not reality. And what we need to do is to identify on the task list that which is reality, not not only the things that you you can be doing, but the things that you will be doing. And I think this really hurts a lot of people's self efficacy, because they put things on their task list, and they wish that they can be done. And so I call those wish lists, not task lists. And so what I want people to do is to put fewer things on the task list, because those things will get done, absolutely, positively will get done. And that reestablishes self efficacy for people, as opposed to putting a whole bunch of things that they again, want to do, could do should do, maybe we'll get to, and then they accomplish maybe five of those things on the list. And then they ultimately feel bad about themselves, because they didn't complete everything on the list. And we could talk about you know, whether a task list should be all encompassing. For example, I said before, I have a task list that basically is ad infinitum. I mean, there are things on there that stretch many, many years out into the future. But because of my search listing, my my saved searching capabilities of my tool, I'm capable of shrinking my listing completing that list on any given timeframe, because I know how to manage my list. And I know I will accomplish those items, I have that level of self efficacy that's different than others because of my practice. So don't misunderstand the idea that you can't have a list that has many things on it. But you have to understand that if you are are struggling with productivity, if you're struggling with actually getting things done than you are, then you are creating lists most likely. I mean, one of the number one things I look at when I when I see people systems is okay, how many items are on your list and how many are accomplishing every day and week? And that one good way to do it is actually make a weekly checklist as opposed to a daily checklist. We'll get to that in a bit. But what do you what do you guys think about the notion of managing tasks on a singular list? Or and or multiple lists? How do you think about those in terms of that?

A Art Gelwicks 27:43

It's tough because the idea of singular versus multiple lists, I think, causes confusion when you're using an application, because most applications have the ability to support multiple lists with inside them, but they're not really multiple lists, it's all still within the same app, you're just giving it a different header and then subsections around it. So to me, it's it's almost a misnomer. Do you want to have one master list of all the different things you you have going on? Or do you want to have separate projects and things like that? Well, you kind of have to have the second one, you have to have some sort of categorization, because you literally just can't dump it all together, because there's no organization to it. So it'd be like taking all your notes and all your notebooks and having no sections, no labels, nothing like that. Just throwing it writing it all down in one spot, it would be like using a regular journal to manage your life, it would be nuts. So being able to have quote, smaller lists, I think is a good way to think about it. I think one of the best ways and we see this in so many of the tools is the ability to use labels in conjunction with lists, to be able to subdivide and divide things around the ways you're going to address them. I'll give a perfect example of this. I was just working with it this morning, I have a list of all my shopping that I need to go out and do I have to go run some errands. So I have a shopping list of things to get that all comes from one spot. But every one of the items in it gets

labeled with the store that I'm most likely to get it from. That way when I go to the store, I can pull open the app, I can tap the label for that store. And then I have those items. Well, if I have items that are in multiple projects, you know, if it's a big multipurpose store, let's say like a home center, well, I may have stuff that's plumbing, some hardware, some whatever, I could get those other places, but the labels give me that flexibility of context. So I agree with you, right, this is kind of kind of like a sub list. Kind of like a smaller list. I like multiple lists. But it's confusing, because when people look at that they go, but it's all in one big list. Well, kinda sorta not. It's hard to describe

F   Francis Wade 29:57

the idea of lists at all. is really rooted in the paper world. And in the world that I was describing, which is a task management app world. In a database, it's it's a matter of, as he said, Actually labeling the tasks and getting the right views. And in that context, you can throw anything in there that is of future nature that you need to complete at any any scale. The problematic you're pointing out is when you access a particular view of your tasks, you need to know which one you're accessing, make sure that you're effectively looking at the ones that if you want to look at what you can do, then focus on those and don't get polluted with other things from your wish list, for example. So some software, most modern pest management software allows for continued Franssen most modern tasks, most modern task management software allows for that. And again, it's a matter of capacity, because this is very hard to do, if not impossible to do with post it notes on the one extreme, but with modern software, it's it's essential.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 31:13

Yeah, I think I think it makes a lot of sense for folks to think about their task lists from a number of different perspectives. And one is, of course, as we were discussing multiple lists. The other thing that I tend to think about in terms of pitfalls is that when people are writing out their actions, they tend to not think about, they tend not to think through what is going to actually propel work forward. And so they they don't think through they don't envision the successful outcome of that thing that's going to be accomplished. And so what ends up happening as especially when when maybe the outcome is opaque, or you want something to happen, but you don't quite know how you're going to get there. That can be sometimes difficult. But you should at least try to envision yourself doing the things that are going to help you get to that point. And your mind's eye will then play out what will be the logical next step. And I've differentiated those logical next steps into two different buckets. So I actually have two different types of actions that fit onto my list. One action is the very next step that I'm going to take it's concrete. And it is complete, in the sense of or discrete in that sense, I will do it and then I will be done with that step. And then I will anchor the next step. The other kind of action, or let's call those next actions in the GTD lingo. In the other type, I call these inciting actions, inciting actions are for the type of work in which I'm going to do a series of next actions together, I typically know all of the actions that are going to be done, although there's some times when I don't know what they're going to be, but I'm going to do them all. And I'm going to come to some next series of completion steps, next actions together, compiled, I call those inciting actions. So an inciting action is where I'm going to do x, then y, then Zed, then A, then B, then C. And then I'm going to get to a point. And I'm going to then be able to note a series of progress. And then maybe there's a next action beyond that, or maybe there's another inciting action beyond that. And this comes to checklists. And the idea that there are sometimes places

where I have 45, things that I need to do in order to complete this particular project, for example, publishing ProductivityCast. Each week, requires a very extensive checklist, and involves me collaborating, and so on, so forth. So that checklist is produced, I only need the inciting action on my task list, because the checklist is independent and lives elsewhere. So my inciting action is published ProductivityCast, episode xx, I'm not going to write out all 45 items in my task list, because that's going to overwhelm my system, I don't need to see all those things in there. That's a typical example. But there are other items where I just know what I'm going to do in the in the process of getting things done. But what I end up doing is representing in the inciting action all of the time, because I do like to time estimate, estimate, right? So I like to put in that time budget of how much time something's going to take. And if I put in a next action of go get the folder, but really, once I get the folder, I'm going to do 15 or 45 other tasks related to that thing, I really should in the inciting action identify that I'm going to take an hour and 15 minutes, even though the action is the inciting action to go get the folder to publish ProductivityCast Right, I'm going to get all the files together and put them in and consult consolidate them to the folder. Sure that's going to be my next step right getting all the source files. But really, I'm going to I'm going to take an hour and a half now of time, and I need to make that represented in my tasks. Just so that when I look at my task list, it calculates how much time I'm going to be spending for that particular timeframe. I can't look at it and say, Oh, that only says 15 minutes great, because what it really represents is an hour and a half of work. And so inciting actions can be one way that people really get over this hump, the written action needs to represent all of the work, not just what you wrote on the page, in front of you,

A Augusto Pinaud 35:23

I think is, you know, it's all that we have said, it's important to, to remember that what may work to you know, as, as is true, that task is not meant to keep your emotional data, it's also true that your emotional states will play a game. So you need to understand these to understand when did you need a lot more directions than other times, there are moments that I can look at the list in and see the 300 task and pick the most important, no issues. There are other moments that I need to use those sub tasks list or so search filters or tags, or categories or context. So I can really help me focus because they do have 100 a task will, I may not be on the best minds style may be tired. So I can, it's harder for me to make a decision. So you need to be able to plan for those ahead of time, you need to be able to plan for those. When you are in the good state of mind you. I always say to people, you should have what I call a Plan B list. One, how many meetings do I have today? Okay, I have five minutes, great, then what is what I'm going to do if those meetings start late, okay, because if I can take with me three to five tasks that are short and easy, and I can do from anywhere, and those meetings start late, I can get those three to five things happen. But if I wait until I get to that meeting, they will never happen. Unlike that happen. What are what is the how should I act when I am mentally done? What are the things that I should look at? What are the contexts that I should look at? What are those lists created for you, so you can get them done? And I think that really helped moving things forward.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 37:12

So with that, what's one thing folks can do? Just very quickly, let's go round robin, what's one thing people can do to level up their task list before we close out?

A Art Gelwicks 37:23

If you're using a tool that has the ability to create templates, do it, learn how to use them? Dig into that? If you're not using a tool that has templates, change your tool? Actually, no, I won't go that far. But templates, as Ray was mentioning earlier, templates can be incredibly invaluable when it comes to one repeating things effectively, but to making sure you don't miss things, especially in things that you have to do frequently. So I highly recommend that, again, to do us, which is the tool I use, has a great templating capability. I suggest you look into it. There are other ones I know remember, the milk has a great temper templating capability. Dig into it, it will save you tons of time and stress.

F Francis Wade 38:10

My advice, pay attention to your next upgrade. So what's what's the next? What's the next piece of habit or piece of habit? What's the next piece of technology, or the next habit? Or the next tool or app? Or what's the next thing for you, that's going to take your capacity to the next level if you're someone who is who find just, you know, your propensity is to add more tasks, take on bigger commitments, or even define more level of detail. So post it notes won't work, then define the next level before you actually need it. So that you don't have to run into the big problems before actually thinking through what you're going to implement and how

A Augusto Pinaud 38:57

understand it's going to change. And you need to be able to adapt for those changes.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 39:03

I will say this that one of the things about working with say, a productivity coach, or working with other folks when you are in that space of feeling like your tasks are not working for you is that coaches are outside of your world. So they're looking at your items with fresh eyes. And so as best as you can, I was thinking about the idea that a therapist once told me talk to yourself, like a friend would talk to you would they would they think this was reasonable the way in which you were talking to yourself. And I find that same practice to be very useful that if I go to my task list, if you go to your task list and look at it with a fresh set of eyes, that is if you knew nothing about this individual's interior life, and you looked at that task list, would you know what to do? Would you really understand what it was that needed to be done on that day? First, and if you didn't, then what would be needed to make it more actionable to make it make sense to you, that sense of dissociating yourself just ever so slightly, so that you can step outside of yourself and look at it from with fresh eyes can be really, really useful for being able to understand that if someone doesn't know anything about you, and they can still do the things on your list, at least understanding what should be done, then when you look at your list in the heat of your day, right, everything's going on, you've got lots of distractions going on, potentially, the world is in its in its movement, you can look at your list and immediately know, that's the thing that needs to get done. And this is how I'm going to get it done. And that's really going to help your future self. So really take that time to make your tasks actionable in that sense, so that you are able to be more productive in the in the throes of any given circumstance. And that's a complete issue. It's not just in the list you make today. But in the

lists that you make all the time, if you can do that level of consistent control of the actions, then you're really able to be more productive on an ongoing basis. And that's what really helps you to compound your productivity over time you get more productive, the more you are capable of understanding all of the various pieces that go into an effective task list. So I hope this was helpful to you all. And we have reached the end of our time today. But of course, the conversation doesn't have to stop here, you can go ahead over to our episode page. And on each episode page, at the bottom, there is a commenting section, you can leave questions or comments there on the podcast website. So feel free to do so. And of course, you can get to the episode page by just putting in the episode number. So if you go to productivitycast.net, forward slash 001, that'll be episode 1002 is episode two, and so on and so forth. So go ahead and hop on over to the episode page and feel free to leave a comment or question there. This is your first time with us. Feel free to follow the podcast. If you're just found us some way us followers subscribe one of those terms in your podcast app. And you'd go ahead and get new episodes either notified or downloaded whenever we put out new episodes. And that really helps you to get access to us without having to worry about you know, finding the next episode when it does come out. So find your favorite podcast app. Also feel free to consider giving us a podcast rating. So if you go into Apple podcasts or Stitcher those are really the two primary that give a rating and review system in them. So feel free to leave us a rating and review. We really appreciate those that really does help us expand our listenership and expose us to more listeners. So thank you very much for doing that. For those of you who have if you have a topic about personal productivity you'd like us to discuss on a future cast, feel free to visit productivity cast dotnet forward slash contact there you can leave a voice recorded message or you can type a message into the contact form and send that along to us and maybe we'll feature that in a future episode. I want to express my thanks to Augusto Pinaud Francis Wade, and art Gelwicks for joining me this every week on ProductivityCast. You can learn more about them and their work by visiting productivitycast.net and clicking on the about page. I'm Ray Sidney-Smith and on behalf of all of us here at ProductivityCast Here's your productive life.

V Voiceover Artist 43:15

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