134-getting-more-out-of-your-calendar-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 00:22

I'm Augusto Pinaud.

F Francis Wade 00:23

I'm Francis Wade.

A Art Gelwicks 00:24

And I'm Art Gelwicks.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:25

Welcome, gentlemen, and welcome to our listeners to this episode of ProductivityCast. Today, we're gonna be talking about getting more out of your calendar, how to track time in a calendar interface to an agenda style format, so that you can actually be more productive. And so let's get into the topic related to utilizing your calendar for tracking it is something that is probably common to many of us, that is we are used to the calendar format, we we've been raised to see time in either a monthly, weekly, even a day style agenda. And so we're very comfortable with laying things out. It is just another form of list in a, you know, in a matrix or otherwise. And so the idea of a calendar is useful to us. And I'm curious from all of you, how do you use a calendar for tracking? Let's start off with events? Since I think it's probably the most common style and way of or, or data that you would capture into a calendar? It's it's the most common form of data that you would capture into a calendar format, which is what is going to happen in the future? And so how do you how do you use a calendar in that sense, and then we can perhaps, then turn over to the task or in Francis's terms, time demand space to think about how you would capture, forecast budget, and ultimately track the things that are happening in your productivity system.

F Francis Wade 01:57

The way I do it, is to schedule the appointments in and then use an auto scheduler to fill in the gaps, so to speak, to put the flexible tasks in the times that I don't already have committed. But I think what you're alluding to is that that's that's the first part. And it might be even the easy part, the subsequent parts, which we all do, would do to some degree. And I think we all do mentally anyway, is we ask what whole? Well, did I build a schedule? And then how do I improve it in the future? How do I how do I do better? Scheduling in the future, because we've all the planning fallacy is real for all of us. We've all said all this to take an hour and five hours later, we're groaning and struggling. And but does that mean that the next time that we go to plan the activity that we're actually any better? Or do we fall right into the same trap? I think the great thing about using a calendar is that it allows you the opportunity to be accountable to yourself to some degree for the plans that you made. When you have a list, only a list. And no calendar, I think the opportunities for improvement are fewer and more, more difficult to grasp, because you're really just going off of kind of hunches and memory at least for the calendar year you have some possible data to work with. So I think the scheduling is perhaps the easiest part, the harder part is to become a better scheduler, which I think we all all need across the

A Art Gelwicks 03:29

board. I use it poorly. And we'll go from there. Yeah, I use it. I have a basic challenge. And I think a lot of people run into this, I have two calendars that I have to maintain and a minimum one business calendar, one personal calendar, the business calendar is not actually maintained on my own devices, it is maintained on a client machine. So I am actually take that back, I have three calendars because I also have the company calendar. That's part of the challenge I have is that I'm bouncing between calendars. So I have to think about where does this need to go when I'm going to capture something which is rendered my calendar management and usage fairly inefficient. I mean, I'm looking at double and triple work anyway, adding extra stuff to it for processing and learning from it has fallen by the wayside a bit. So there's definitely room for improvement with this mess that

Raymond Sidney-Smith 04:27

I have. And it sounds to me like you are doing that because of company Hall. I'm

Art Gelwicks 04:31

required to do it. It's not trust me, it's not voluntary. I would love everything to be in one place, but it's not.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 04:38

Yeah. So my first suggestion to anyone is that if you are capable of doing so centralized to a singular calendar tool, even if you are utilizing multiple calendars in your world, seeing them and allowing them to overlay really is useful. You know, if you have, say a Google account like a Gmail account and you have a calendar there and you have an apple Will account and so on and so forth. That's pretty simple and easy to do, which is to bring those, you know, items over to one app, and then synchronizing into that singular app. And that allows you to see things that are happening in multiple contexts, multiple areas of your life in one space. And I think that a lot of people can benefit from from doing that. So certainly centralizing is helpful. And I think that what most people get fearful of is that then they'll be overwhelmed by seeing too many things at once. But remember that or if you didn't know, you can actually turn off those calendars just by taking them out of view. In Google Calendar, you literally just click on the calendar, and it will disappear from view, when you want to turn it back on, you can do that. And it'll just overlay and then hide those calendars on command. Same thing with Apple. Same thing with Outlook,

Augusto Pinaud 05:50

I actually use an app called sorted, sorted pool from my calendar into a sheet and create every appointment as a task. And then that allows me to integrate that with Todoist. And then bring the other task into there. So allows me to really look not only to where are those calendars, events, but what I'm going to be doing on those calendar events. On top of that, I try, I don't do a good job in this to report every half an hour, what I plan to do, and what I actually did, and the days that I do that, well, I get much better success as the end of the day than the days that I'm not great at it. But it's something that I'm still working on to make a better job. My Calendars are crazy, mostly because one I do a lot of things, but two, it keeps colors for different parts of the business or different parts of the family and, and thing. So it's a carnival of colors. It's what it's probably in sorted what I use what I use the most. Even more than checking my own calendar,

Raymond Sidney-Smith 07:09

you bring up a really great point, which is the coloring of items, I use two layers of color in my calendar. So each calendar represents a different area of my life. And what I call life category. So each calendar is is a life category. And sometimes they also are programs. So I will have a dedicated program because that calendar is then published for Google Calendar to a website or someplace else where it's automatically updating. So there's a reason for keeping that separate

calendar so that I don't have to double entry into other places. What I do then is each calendar then gets an additional color for the context of work. So for example, if I have to be someplace physically, I will change the native calendar color to another color that tells me that I have to be someplace in person, because right now, that is the rarity, as opposed to the common being in a zoom or, you know, Google meet or something like that. Now, I'm like, Okay, I have to actually buffer in travel time and otherwise. And that means placing additional calendar events into the calendar to show travel time to and from that place. And those are variables that I like to know. So I will color the the calendar event, you know, an additional color. So it is very different from all the other events. And then when I'm planning for the coming week, I can see the little my case dark green events, and then I can say, okay, I can talk to my scheduling assistant and making sure that we are putting in travel time and buffer time between those things. So that I'm able to get to and from places but not just to and from, I need to debrief from those meetings. So I need to make sure that I have enough travel time and then time to sit down and say what happened in those meetings, is are there actions I need to capture into my system, all of that stuff has to happen as well. So those meetings are much more time to then than just the travel time and attendance at the meetings. And I believe that's the case for all meetings, you know, there's time that you need for preparatory work you there's time to be in the meeting itself. And then of course, there's time for debriefing afterward. And many times your calendar doesn't represent that. And so you think you have more time than then than not. And even worse is that you don't do that work. And therefore you go from meeting to meeting from week to week, whereby the work is not getting done, because you're not actually capturing and representing it in your system somewhere. So I really believe that most people are just not putting enough into their calendar or into their task management system. If they're using a task manager to capture. What do you need to do to show up to that meeting for it to be most productive? And then getting out of the meeting? What what did everybody agree to do in that meeting, including yourself and where Is that get actually done before the next meeting. And if you can represent those in the calendar, I think that can be really useful for a lot of people where meetings are the the driver of work for them in their organization. So they, they know that there's going to be a tempo of meetings, so why not put the work that needs to be done in the calendar to represent that,

A Art Gelwicks 10:21

I think you hit a really good point with that something I hadn't thought about, specifically. And that stop thinking about calendar entries as entries and thinking and thinking about them as the event they represent and what's necessary for it to be a successful event. So if it's something like I put on the calendar, that I'm going to do my filing, you know, during a particular time, there's things that have to happen for that to be successful. Normally, I would break that down into tasks and a task list and things like that, but I'm doing all that work anyway. So either I do it in the calendar, or I have to connect that calendar entry to something that's going to represent all the steps necessary to have a successful event that that calendar entry is tied to, but I need to stop thinking about Oh, it's on the calendar and move on. I mean, for some reason, the mental scope I have of most things on my calendar is that of a post it note, it doesn't have a lot of depth behind it. But this is something that actually could be much more useful if I think about it that way. So I'm going to I'm going to flip this around, because apparently I'm terrible at calendars. Let me start asking some questions about this. First thing is, and this is probably a really basic one, what's your preferred format? I mean, everybody thinks about month or day or what do you guys have a preferred layout that you is kind of your go to for managing your calendar,

Raymond Sidney-Smith 11:47

I know I do. So. So I switch between. So in the Google Calendar interface, you are capable of switching between different calendar timeframes by keyboard shortcut, and so W's for weak axis for your custom, and you know, and so on, so forth, T is for today, for the kind of agenda mode, I have gone between, basically the two week timeframe. And the week timeframe as my preferred because they show the most amount of data for the timeframes that are going to be most important to me. from week to week, I have a Google workspace business. So I have all Google workspace for everything. And Gmail allows for the calendar view directly embedded within the Gmail interface. So that shows the day view. And so I actually get all those three views ended up being the majority of the way in which I, I see events. So if I'm in my email, I'm seeing things on a day by day perspective, I'm just seeing the day view. And then in my calendar, when I go to the either Calendar tab, or if I'm looking inside of an application that has pulled in my Google data, I'm usually looking at it in the seven day format. When I'm planning, then I turn on to week view. And then I'm looking at an a two week timeframe. So I'm capable of seeing forward or backwards two weeks at a time, so that I can I can do that level of thinking. It's like it's drawing it out a little bit, right, the the one week view is going to give me more detail, more more of each item. But I don't need to see that when I'm planning, I just want to see the the it's not the Gestalt. But it's it's more of a pullback view, it's a little higher level,

Francis Wade 13:34

I like to use the 3d view when I'm doing my sort of day to day activity. When I do the start of the week, I'll do the week view. And then I usually don't go back to it. But a 3d view is where I do most of my and I use, I use mostly Google Calendar, on my phone for sort of the daily planning. And each day or each, depending on what the what what's happening in my life. I use the calendar and skateboard. It's tied into the one in in Google Calendar. So I'm really just going there to do my auto scheduling. So I just basically open it, click and then move on. But it does give similar views as well. I just don't need to pay much attention to them. I can basically just go back to Google Calendar after hitting the Schedule button. But the 3d view is my default. I leave

Augusto Pinaud 14:26

on the week on the week view that's where I spend most and I was thinking about it as during Art and Francis were talking about their views and but it's really for me, it's it's the week calendar I unless I am on the iPhone, where the screen will not allow me to do other than the day really is too small for me to be worth it. Everything else I look into into the View format and the week format allows me to see how much blank if any There is a still in my week, or how much do I need to block to be saved, safely able to do what I'm planning to do on the week,

Raymond Sidney-Smith 15:09

if you are utilizing Google Calendar, when you use use it on the desktop, and you use schedule as your option for format, it shows it in a list view. And when you do that, in the mobile versions of Google Calendar, it actually shows it in a card view. So they're stacked events. And I really,

really liked that view. And so for those who just from an aesthetic perspective, it just provides what I feel like is just a more readable environment on Google Calendar on mobile versus Google Calendar, the schedule option in the full desktop view,

A Art Gelwicks 15:44

that's that's exactly what I was going to bring up because you guys are talking about, you know, three day layout, day layout, things like that, that really lend themselves to a full screen. I'm a big fan of I use agenda view in Outlook. But I also use that scheduled layout, that vertical layout and that that anchor incremented block structure is visually very clear to me. But just sitting here, as we're talking playing with my calendar, I realize it does create an issue because it doesn't show you overlaps clearly. For example, I have a couple of items on my calendar right now that are overlapping. And it doesn't show that they're overlapping, it just stacks them in sequence. So you don't really have that perspective. So I think one of the things that I'm going to change right away, I may manipulate my calendar, using the schedule view. But I need to pop into a day view, just before I'm done to make sure that I haven't stacked like four things at the same time. Because it's not, it's not painfully clear when I have things overlapping on my calendar. So it's just another view that we're going to have to get used to.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 16:51

Yeah, and I have to frequently also make everyone aware that sometimes events will overlap. But I plan to end the meeting early. And so I can get to the next meeting on time. So I have to tell folks, okay, yes, we can schedule in this timeframe, even though there's an event that may be overlapping here. This is because a client sent the event and they think it's going to take longer than it really is going to I know it's not going to. And so we're going to, we're going to still be able to keep on schedule not withstanding. And so seeing that overlap is actually helpful. But you also have to know internally, how much time really do you need, you know, for a particular meeting and making sure that if someone else is scheduling on your behalf, or sending you the invite, and so you don't have control over that, that you still have an internal knowledge of what's going to happen. So you can calendar effectively, because you don't want to have a gap, whereby now you're losing time, because there's nothing happening happening in that space. At least for me, we're I'm very meeting heavy in my week, I want to be able to have efficiency, as much as I do effectiveness in terms of having meetings collected together, I want to have those meetings, have them done, and then be able to go on to other work where I have open space for focused action and and really flow work. And so there was a value to thinking algorithmically about getting your events into as few blocks as possible in your week, so you can meet with the people you need to, but then go back to having discretionary time to actually get work done.

A Art Gelwicks 18:23

Yeah, that was going to be my next question for you guys is, and this, I'll talk about my own experience first. And then you guys can tell me something similar for you. Your favorite calendar trick or hack, one of the things that I did a couple years ago, within Outlook, as I wrote a macro based on another one I had found on the web, that every time you would have a meeting, you could then go run the macro and 15 minutes before the meeting and 15 minutes

after it would add in additional meetings that were private meetings that people couldn't grab, giving me a buffer time around whatever that was, the challenge I was having is I had to physically relocate between meeting rooms. And I needed time to be able to get from point A to point B, it's like getting across campus at school. So same idea for me, I ran that macro, boom, those pieces were in nobody could then grab the block on top of it. It worked fairly well. I mean, some people just flat out ignored it. But that was one of my preferred tricks. So I'm curious. So I'm curious what you guys do, what do you do within your calendar? What's your favorite little hack that makes your calendar management easier?

A Augusto Pinaud 19:26

There's a couple of things one I want to mention before you mentioned something important because as much as I love the Apple Watch the calendar and the Apple Watch is completely useless for me exactly for what you refer before art. That is study do not give me Do not allow me to know if there is any overlap because what it showed me Scotch so I can see the cards or at the same time or not. So it doesn't do anything for me on tricks. I'm going to mention two things. One is I use a service called acuity you can use Calendly doesn't matter which one that has eliminate this the email discussion of When can we meet, When can we meet and I forwarded you a link. Now you can spend all the time that you need, looking at when it's available or what is available on my calendar and what is not available in my calendar. And that has really say, hours in my schedule, because I don't need now to to be into this back and forwards to find three find four find that is never give me an answer on. The other thing is I look at my calendar every every night, I try at least, to look the next three days. Because even that I'm looking at that weekly, you know, consistent enough, there is a stuff that hides in that calendar that you don't consider, oh, this is going to require or even this is going to require more time or even that you thought that it's not going to require now as the deadline is coming for that meeting or for that event, you say this may require a lot more time than than what I had, or, or things happen, you know, my wife got hit in the car. Yesterday, not a big deal wasn't a lot. But now I need to solve that I need that now need to take priority get into the calendar, and all this. So I that helped me to see okay, what can I move or not move to be able to solve that issue and that problem.

F Francis Wade 21:35

I think one of my I wouldn't call it a trick, but it's a process I would say is to become a better better scheduler, by by trying to reconcile my plans versus my usage. It's it's clumsy, I it takes a long time to put the data in. I don't really analyze it using any fancy tools. But I at least have the loop closing every sometimes it's like a month later. But at least it closes at some point where I look at my schedule on this, well, I capture the time that I spent doing whatever I'm doing in there, I don't literally sit down and compare. But I have a sense about how long something takes by seeing how it was passively captured. And I use manictime How long the task actually took. So you know, it's not it's not strong, it's not good. It's not timely, but every hour does get accounted for eventually. And by doing that I could see like, for example, I added on a task to my weekly bi weekly newspaper column. And that task started off taking like eight hours. This was really a suggestion, by the way to add in the clips, video clips of the video and audio, video, audio and visual clips from the article works great. The time it took me the first day was probably took me two days. Got that down to a day. Got that down to half a day. But now I'm gonna backlog because I had other things that I needed to do. I put out three articles,

and I have three of them pending. And of course, it's looking like heck, but I finally scheduled the item in my calendar. And in the future, my scheduling of this activity will get better and better and better. As i The time will be reduced because I become more effective. But I know it'll automatically right now it's automatically scheduling to follow the publication of the newspaper article. So it's at least accounted for in my calendar. But again, I need to become a better schedule of that activity. So that's just one example of many examples like that. As I, the better I get, the more peace of mind I give myself the less fewer times I get over scheduled and overcommitted,

Raymond Sidney-Smith 24:06

I'll just give one commentary on the idea of of schedulers and using scheduling applications, as Augusto was talking about, I have come up against a little bit of pushback. And maybe it's just because of my world and the and the people that I'm working with. But you know, some folks will either not understand what a calendar scheduler will do. They will also feel uncomfortable with going into your calendar and being like, am I going to see your calendar and I have to explain to them, you're not going to see my calendar events, you're just going to see times that are not available to you and or otherwise. And I've had to encourage a lot of my clients to use a calendar scheduler because the back and forth is just too much hassle. It's too much time and so encouraging people to use them themselves. As I've always said to folks, I don't care if you send me your scheduling link or you, I send you mine. Let's just use one. So that we don't have to go back and forth over and over again. And I think as soon as people start to see the value of being able to say, Okay, I see my calendar, I can look at my calendar, I can look at your calendar and see the open times. Great. Now I can plug in a time in your calendar that works for both of us that value without having to, for me to write out in an email, Okay, how about Tuesday at 10am and Wednesday at 3pm and Friday at 11am? And then send an email back and say, Okay, that didn't work. How about some other days? And then you send a few more, it's like, why would you put yourself through this when technology, this is exactly what technology was built for. And so using those scheduling Apps has been really, really helpful once you overcome some of the minor potential human issues of feeling like I'm not a voyeur, you know, those kinds of things, because people can feel that way. Like, I don't want to see your calendar, I actually had a client say that she was very uncomfortable, because she was just like, I don't want to see your calendar. I don't, you know, and she just didn't realize that it was not actually showing her my data, it was just showing her open time. I also block out times when I do not take meetings at all. And this is really helpful when you're using a calendar scheduler, because you need to protect your time for the times when you when you say your biological prime time, your focus or flow work times, like those times need to be blocked in the calendar. And you need to be doing that on a semi regular basis, something that I've found that is more effective for me is to not always have that time blocked out forever. But doing that on a rolling basis. So you know, every three months for not the next three months, but skip a month, and then the three months from that so that you're basically every three months, you're looking four months out for the next three months. And that allows you to then block out the times. And that gives you a little bit better of a sense of what's going to happen. Because if you try to block out time forever, for some particular type of work, that you don't know is going to happen, your ability to forecast that is just too limited. And so your the time horizon is too far out for you to be able to figure out really what time is going to need to be blocked out. So I try to start blocking within that quarter for how much time needs to be blocked out. And that gives me a better sense, you know, like, Okay, I'm going to have, I don't know, you know, 30 hours of work for this particular project for the next three months, per week. And I'm going to need to block that time in the calendar so that people cannot take that time, even if it seems

aggressive. I'm still happy to open up time, week by week, so that people can schedule into my calendar. But it will give me a much better option of being able to get actual work done and to make good on my client projects than if I were to allow people to schedule all that time on my calendar, and then to feel the conflict.

A Art Gelwicks 28:01

So you raise an interesting point there with planning part of it. I'm curious, when you put an entry in your calendar that's not coming from someone else. So they haven't said we're gonna meet from like, three to four today. But it's you putting that time in? How much of a fudge factor are you putting in on your schedule items it, do you if you think something's going to take an hour? Do you put it into your calendar as an hour? Do you put it in as an hour and a half? Do you put it in, you know, what's the plus or minus on, on how you're figuring out what goes where and how big it should be.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 28:36

So I am notorious for creating multiple events in the same timeframe that I share with others that I that are also then purely personal calendar events that show how much time something's really going to take. So for example, a client might have an event where I might share with them a link to the meeting and the time. And that's it. But then I will create an additional calendar event that will have myself and my staff and anyone else that's needed to have personal and private information around that event. That's not information that we want to or need to share with a client, right, we overwhelming to them, for them to have a bunch of links and a bunch of documents attached to a calendar event. That stuff then gets baked into the background. And then we can provide buffer time. And we can do all of those things. And it's just helpful for me to be able to say, Okay, this is everything I need to be able to get there. For example, host control links in some of our conferencing software. We don't want to share those host codes and so forth in the event with the with the attendees of the meeting, we want to have those only in the one that's internal. So that stuff will go into that calendar event and then they just overlay each other right and one might be bigger, so it looks you know it just basically consumes the other event, but we know the controlling event is the one behind this Scenes, that is the larger event that has buffer time and otherwise included within it. So there are times when we do do that, and it becomes incredibly useful because we can place commentary in essence, you know, so and so is really picky about, you know this, and so and so would really like for us to be able to handle that. And so we can actually annotate what's going on with the event directly inside of that calendar event that is our controlling kind of project around that particular event. So those have been helpful in the past, especially with large scale events, or very high level events where we are hosting executives, and we want to make sure that they're not being pulled into the minutia. But we are, we're making sure we still have all the event information captured in a place where we know everybody will have it and have access to it on the go.

F Francis Wade 30:53

In terms of fudge factor, I have a macro forge factor in Google Calendar, that all my meetings are 10 minutes short of an hour. So it allows you to automatically do that. But that's, that's actually of little consequence, the bigger consequences, the three hour activity that I thought it

was going to take on all those big items that are really a problem. And I in terms of fudge factor, what do I do, I tell myself that I should spend put more time when it's the first time activity, when I don't know how long is really going to take. And I've never done it before. So I try to schedule more time. Sometimes I remember to try to schedule more time. Most of the time, I think I'm Superman, and it should be easy. And I fool myself and I make a mistake. So that happens more often than I wish. But in general, if I were more aware, the principle would be to probably double the time for a brand new activity, I think it might take in the best case, and then use that estimate until I've done it the first time. And that would save me so many so much heartache. For regular activities that I do on a weekly or bi weekly basis. I know how long they're going to take, I can be more accurate and more precise. So I I would put less forward. And the ones that I've done before,

A Art Gelwicks 32:17

I find that I use an old waterfall technique from project management. I don't use it consistently in my calendar, but I use it with tasks and it could easily carry over. And that's a concept called lag and lead time. So if you have tasks that have have a relationship, you have to finish this task. Before before you can start the next one. In a lot of project management software, you can say that there has to be a lag of 1.2 or 1.5. And it creates a buffer gap between those two items that then can be consumed by the first one without pushing the second one off schedule. Well, I've done similar things in my calendar, not consistently, but when I knew that I would need them. For example, if I'm working on troubleshooting a problem, and I'm gonna block out an hour in my calendar to troubleshoot a problem. We all know troubleshooting doesn't operate on its own schedule, or on our schedule, it operates on its own. So what I'll often do is I'll block out that troubleshooting time. And then for an hour after that, I'll create a block of overflow time, if I solve the problem in the first hour, great, I have a free hour that has come up after that. But if I don't, I can then burn into that second hour and then know that I'm not going to throw everything else off schedule. For for specific instances, that works pretty well. But I don't think there would be any way I could do that for everything on my calendar, it's just one I'd get half of my usable time. Second, I would spend so much time putting in these overflow areas, that it would be impractical. So that's that's kind of the way I approach it. But your mileage may vary.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 33:57

I like the notion of being able to put work block time into the calendar view. And this is I think, something that a lot of people don't potentially think about, in the sense that dissimilar to Francis, I don't want each individual task that I'm going to do. In my calendar view. I don't want that in the actual time slot. But what I do want to do is I want to be able to understand that that is a work modality and what type of work modality I want to do in that sense. So I am time blocking in one sense, because I'm saying work is going to get done in this timeframe. I just don't know what work is going to be done until I sit down and look at my context lists and determine what kind of work I'm going to do. But what I do know is my biological primetime, I know when I'm best able to get certain work done. And I also know when I'm more likely to do certain types of work, even if it's not my biological primetime. And so I've identified what I call basically focus action session. In this and flow work sessions, and so focus work and flow work are two different types of work in my view, focus work is when I take a set of actions that can be disparate actions, right it'd be a phone, call an email, write a document, review of a buyer

persona, or customer journey from from a client, or business plan doesn't matter. Those are things that require my focus requires my attention. But it does not require flow. And so those are things that will show up on a task list, because they are fungible, and I'm able to understand their context and move them around. So flow work, though, is going to be something that is going to be a larger block of time, whereby I'm going to hopefully get into a state of flow, right. So I know that there's an immediately a checklist of things that I do for myself, to get me into that state of flow, right? The type of music, environmental cues, all of those things to make sure that I'm I'm in that space. And calendaring focused action sessions are what I call phases, which is the same thing as focused action work, it's just what I call one of those sessions, it's going to be a timeframe where I know I'm going to be able to get enough of that work done, whereby I need to sit down and get these things done. These are things that I wanted to get done this week, or today, that kind of thing, I'm going to block that time out. So I know I have the time set aside to get those things done. And then I might say, You know what, I really want to write the next chapter of this particular book, well, I'm going to put in flow work time, so that I have that time on my calendar, and putting enough of them because flow work is generative, it's creative. And sometimes you don't get into flow. So you can, you can sit there for two hours and really feel like I wrote three sentences that I feel are worth my time, fine. But you need to be able to have that sense of understanding when it comes to flow work, you may not always have the generative output at scale that you would with focused, focused work, right focus work gives you a checklist of things that you know, you can complete and check off and check off and check off flow work is variable and its output. And once you get that sense of it, then you get a better sense of accomplishment. And I think so many people feel that lack of accomplishment, accomplishment when they sat down to do flow work. And then they sit back and go, Oh, gosh, you know, I put this time in the calendar, and I didn't do what I said I was going to do. But if you showed up and you tried, it gets better, each time you show up and you try, it's it's an the output will still not necessarily always be equal. And so I just feel like a lot of people think that if they just show up, then all of a sudden the work is gonna get done. And that's not how it works. When it comes to flow work. Creative work does sometimes, you know, it's different, maybe with physical modalities where you might be painting or working with clay or those kinds of physical matter. I don't know, you know, as I'm not I'm not a physical matter, artists or anything like that. But when it comes to those things that are writing, or creative in mental nature, I think that we sometimes think that all of a sudden, we're gonna have a book sitting on our screen after we sit down for six hours. And I can attest to the fact that that is not how that works.

A   **Art Gelwicks**   38:14

Yeah. And that's very disappointing, because I have hoped for that book to show up. And it hasn't shown up yet. I don't understand why this is not working. So let me jump sideways on this a little bit. Because we've talked a lot about the work part of it. How much of your personal stuff goes into your calendar? Is there a maximum minimum thing that you put in there? Do you put everything in there so you can manage a little bit, I'm curious,

F   **Francis Wade**   38:38

I put everything I stopped, I stopped there first. But in fact, and I use the new fury on on schedule method. Basically, I used it before I knew there was a name for it, but he he talks about it in his books, you create like a scaffold for the week, you take the 168 and you basically

design all of the all of the time, I don't, I don't put sleep time any longer I used to, but I don't need to do that anymore. But from the time that I wake up to the time that I go to bed, everything is an add you know generous, generous dollops of of free time, discretionary time, watching Netflix time, have generous, generous, big chunks of time that are either just thought of I want to do or leisure or exercise exercise I do. I take seriously so I scheduled all of that I scheduled my meals but not I don't schedule breakfast, but I schedule lunch and dinner. And it keeps me in sync with my wife, my wife sort of expectation. So take away all those hours. And what's left is available for work. But I start by taking away what I don't want to put into work unless there's a there's an emergency or some kind of deadline or what On a regular week by week basis, I take out or a block away those that are not going to be used for work. And then the others are available for work. So that's kind of how I start. I go the other direction.

A Art Gelwicks 40:14

Okay, so we got to whose schedule heavily? I'm curious Gousto since you, I've been through your territory of having wee ones at home,

A Augusto Pinaud 40:24

mine is a schedule heavy, I am the primary caregiver so that my schedule is dictated by client kids and not in that order is dictated by the kids, then the client. And then sometimes I get some saying into what is left, sometimes most of the time, that doesn't happen either. But so mine, it's really, especially last year was really an exception for me, because kids were homeschooling. So I earn, or I got so much time on my calendar to get some stuff done. But as the school is coming back, I have blocked times for lunch, I have blocked times for dinner, I have blocked time for the time that I need to pick the kids at school, because I learned that that time when you pick them up, they will talk for the next 2520 2025 30 minutes. And after that they shut down again. So it is important for me to block that time. So I'm available in the car for when they are going to share if they're going to share anything so that hour, or that half an hour tend to be blocked. You know, from the moment I supposed to pick them up to half an hour after. Usually, that's also the time that is enough for me to get back to the office and an old day. So yes, mine is pretty heavy schedule i i also blogged in different colors, I use white, for things that are that I call cool to know. So things like for example, Hey, there is a great event in this weekend on someplace in New Jersey, well, I will put it in white on the calendar, I have not made any commitment. But it's good for me to know that he's in there and asset data approach, I will then come in or not come in. And I also use black for my activities that are self care activities. So my meditation is in black, my Mealtimes are in black. So I understand it's not a meeting, it is something that I'm blocking the calendar so I can have the time for those health care activities.

A Art Gelwicks 42:35

It's interesting, because the one thing I haven't heard, and maybe because I didn't ask the question, right, the saving grace in my calendar over the years has been what we call the family calendar. And it's the joint calendar that my wife and I have access to within Google. Because without that I would be even more clueless as to what's going on in our house than I am already. When she's got activities. And when our kids were younger, this was even more

important, because we'd have you know, sports practices and everything else like that. But even now, when you know being empty nesters when she has an activity going on or I have an activity going on, we make sure we put it into that family calendar. So it's visible to each other. It does bubble up and all the different displays and all but that shared view really became critical for us. And literally it's become a habit now she'll, she'll say, hey, you know, we're going to do this with some friends on Thursday, like great, put it on the family calendar. Because if you don't do that, I'm not going to remember to do it and I guarantee it's going to get lost by the wayside. So it's interesting when we talk about that personal piece, I don't put everything in my personal life on my calendar. I should probably put more on there. Listening to the things that you guys have laid out here have given me some great ideas as to things to start putting on my calendar.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 43:58

I'm definitely in the Frances camp with regard to starting with personal and making my way forward. I think that those who don't know Dr. Fiore's work, it's certainly well worth checking out. And I've done a tutorial on this. So I'll put a link to that in the show notes on the Unschedule. But really, for purposes of keeping you motivated, you should have something that you should be looking forward to. And many times in your work week. If it's all work and no play, then you are feeling the the impact of not feeling like you're getting what you're here on this planet for right you just you're not placing those things that you're passionate about the things that you're excited about. I really liked the idea of putting, you know, whatever you believe are rejuvenative activities into your calendar first so that you are mindful of that and that you're going to do those things. You know the thing that recharges me is reading and if I'm not going to read in my week, then why live But it's just like that is that is my reason, my iki guy, that's my reason for being, you know, I just really love reading, I love being immersed in a book, it's, it's something that is not only useful to me in my business and personal life, you know, I, I'm going to use that information because I'm primarily a nonfiction reader. But even if I did not need that, for my work, I would still be reading, it's just my nature. And so by putting that into the calendar, I have something to look forward to. Right. And so this has been incredibly helpful in the face of things like the pandemic and other things, because it's like, I know what I have to look forward to. And it's not, it's not amorphous, because it's kind of physical. It's there. It's it's represented and intangible in the calendar. And so just keep that in mind as well. We are at the end of our recording, but of course, the conversation doesn't have to stop here. If you have a question or a comment about something we've discussed during the cat cast, feel free to visit our episode page on productivitycast.net. And you can go ahead and leave a comment or a question. And we will be happy to read and potentially respond to those comments or questions if necessary. If you are trying to access any of the items we talked about today, they're on productivitycast.net. On the episode page, you will find our show notes that includes links to anything we've discussed. So you'll see the items there if there's something we missed, also, let us know and we'll put it into the show notes. It also contains a text transcript that you can just click the Read More link, it will open up you can read it along with the audio, then you can also click the PDF download link below that and click on download and it will go ahead and download a PDF to your system. They are machine generated transcripts, but they should be good enough for you to be able to know what we are talking about and all that good stuff. So with that, I want to express my thanks to Augusto Pinaud Francis Wade and art Gelwicks for joining me here on productivity cast this every week you can learn more about them and their work by visiting productivitycast.net I'm Ray Sidney-Smith and on behalf of all of us here at ProductivityCast Here's to your productive life.

Voiceover Artist 47:02

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