136-projects-sequencing-productivitycast

📅 Sun, 8/28 5:23PM   🕐 51:08

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

projects, sequencing, learning, sequence, people, outcomes, longer, task, week, understand, problem, takes, fence, deciding, productivity, future, solving, work, important, means

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 host, Ray Sidney-Smith and 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 a good to be no.

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 productivity cast. I'm just going to call it this is going to be a lot of fun. We're going to talk

productivity cast, I'm just going to call it this is going to be a lot of fun. We're going to talk today about really the other side of sequencing. We talked about task sequencing in the last episode. And in this episode in this cast, I wanted us to talk about projects sequencing, why would we benefit from it? what are maybe some of the pros and cons? What are some of the examples of ways in which we use sequencing in our own productivity systems, and potentially some pitfalls, some things that we see folks around us experiencing in terms of troubles and challenges, and then we'll end with maybe just some Quickstart tips, some tips and tricks for you to be able to get started with projects sequencing, if you're not already doing it? Let's start off with why what is the reason for someone to be able to and want to sequence projects, which are different than tasks? Can you give a compare and contrast there for folks, and then we'll go from there,

F Francis Wade 01:32

I think we've all been in that situation where we messed up a project so bad, because we thought it would be a short thing, or it would be a minor, you know, minor commitment, only to realize as opposed to two hours, it took 20. And as a result in crossed into an gotten away of other projects. And in retrospect, we look back and said to ourselves, boy, if I just sequenced it differently, if I had just focused on the one, and then decided to do the other at some point in the future. If I just applied a little bit of insight and maybe a little bit conservative, I could have saved myself a lot of heartache. So I think those who are interested in Project sequencing are those who take on larger projects, those who get asked to join lots of projects. But above all, there are people who've been burned by making mistakes by not sequencing projects correctly. I think that I'm sure that's what brings most of us that are called today.

A Art Gelwicks 02:37

It's one of the reasons why doing retrospectives uncompleted projects is so important, because it's the only way to learn what the sequences should have been that you didn't pick up in the first place. I mean, we assume we can figure those out, because we've done this, but because we've done this provides us the historical data and the insight. That's what those retrospectives provides. So when we start talking about Project sequencing and task sequencing within a project scope, if you're going to do that type of project, again, you need those learnings you need that insight? And if you fail to do it, what's the old saying you're doomed to repeat history?

Raymond Sidney-Smith 03:16

Yeah, what I hear is that there is a finite set of resources in our life, whether that be time and energy and other things. And while we should have an abundance mindset, we should understand that focus is necessary, and that we have to allocate resources. Well, in order to be able to get projects successfully completed. And by sequencing projects, were in essence, postponing certain things or conditioning, certain things, so that the more important things, or at least the more important things right now get done well. And from my perspective, it's a standard of excellence in your personal productivity more than anything that forces projects to be sequenced. And the other side is that sometimes you just don't have the resources to be able to do that project right now, that could be a time resource, that could be a financial resource that can be a labor resource, you need someone in order for something to happen.

And so there becomes a conditioning of when these projects get put on to your current active status than not. So let's talk a little bit about some of the examples in your own world where you benefit from being able to sequence projects in a way that really it helps you. I

F   Francis Wade 04:38

think it helps me to say no, frankly, that's the biggest benefit for me, is that when someone comes along with red shiny object, the thing I've been waiting for all this time, and you know, they paint a picture of how great it will be to have me on the project. And it's not something I had originally planned to do. But you know in that moment Mental of optimism you scan. If you only do a mental scan, you're just back into trouble. But if you do a mental scan of your commitment, I use age, or I should be able to do that. And, and that comes because you haven't done proper sequencing of your own projects ahead of time. So when the request comes, all you're left with is a vague sense of Yeah, I think I'm I should be okay. But you don't really have anything that you're looking at, that's written down, you don't have anything on people, you have actually haven't invested the time to do real sequencing, which you must do. If you're someone who manages lots of projects and lots of tasks, you must have a an accounting, a written accounting of your long term commitments, otherwise, you become that guy. And we've all worked with that guy who says yes to everything. And that guy is a disaster. And if you find out that he says yes to everything halfway through your project, that he's working with you on your big trouble. But that guy, we don't want to become that guy.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 06:09

Who do you give projects to the busiest person in the meeting, right? The reality is, is that many times, when you are the productive person in the room, people start to pile on, because they recognize that you're capable of being efficient and effective with your time. And that becomes a problem for you. So So understand, many of us here have been there, we understand that perspective. And saying no, is a way of potentially probably project sequencing, in the sense that you are, at the very least, pushing back against and setting boundaries against these kinds of, well, since Susan always gets everything done. Let's put more on Susan's plate. That's, you know, both inappropriate, and you know, unhelpful to Susan. But it's something that we have to be mindful of. And so you need to be able to set these boundaries to start, and then project sequencing becomes a little bit more useful. I'll give one particular example where projects sequencing for me is just kicked in. So at any given time, I am doing quite a lot of learning. And I call them journeys. I call them quests, you can call them learning paths, whatever it might be. But in any given year, I decide what it is that I want to learn. And so this year, I have been on a a pretty thoughtful path toward upping my programming and coding skills. And so I've been learning these various coding platforms in order to be able to figure out where I want to go. So my learning journey is sequenced. So that I am taking a particular course at any given time, and I am not taking other courses at that time, because I want to be able to make sure that one happens, then the next happens, then the next happens, so that I'm building upon that knowledge. And so we can see this in academic or educational environments very easily, right, if I don't have this information, then going to this next step is going to be not as useful to me than the next step, which is not going to be as useful to me. So as we advance in our skills, we can sequence the learning associated with those pieces, those stepping stones. And so that's how I develop my learning journeys. I sequence the projects, in this case, the courses or the deliverables in that. So for example, I

started out with, I wanted to learn programming fundamentals. And so just not not getting too far into the into the specifics of any one language. So I started out with fundamentals this year, I've been learning all of the various different types of of programming models. And that's been incredibly useful to me. Because no matter what language I learned in the future, programming language, or coding language in the future, that's going to be useful to me, I then went into it ease, right the the editing environments for me to be able to do the editing that I that I want to or the programming that I wanted to. So I did a whole bunch of research on the various editors, right? And that was its own learning component own project, right. So it wasn't actually learning, coding. But it was a foundational structure, which was a project unto itself that was going to be done before that. And so I'm still in the process of deciding whether or not I want to do a cloud based IDE or a local IDE, and how that's going to all work. And that that will lead me next to the hosting environment, right? How am I going to host my applications? How am I going to produce those applications on the other side, and that really helps me kind of lead the future development on solid ground. So when you're sequencing projects, think through the whole process, and then go go backwards and think okay, well, what are the things I'm going to need in the Future. And therefore, let me let me do that work now, so that the future is smoother ahead. And when you sequence projects, you can really do that. And I think this, the learning journeys example, for me, is probably the best one, that I can explain why I do this level of ordering of outcomes.

A Art Gelwicks 10:21

Yeah, it's, it's interesting that you talk about it, because learning, learning journeys are something that you can kind of get a sense as to how things are going to build. If you're doing that, without that type of a thematic approach would say it's just projects, and what projects are going on, you really have to have a good understanding of the projects themselves, before you can start to look at the relationship between the projects to determine their programmatic sequency. And that's really, we're talking two different levels here within the project. That's traditional project management determine the sequencing of execution determining, and there's certain scripts that you can follow depending on the types of activities when you get to the programmatic level, and how those projects interrelate. And deciding that Project C should really come before project B, because of the following. It requires a very detailed understanding of those projects. But it also requires a willingness from the people involved in the projects to make those compromises to adjust from that perception of well we do A then B then C, then D, why would we change that. And often, that's the key drivers. That's why you change it because of internal factors, external factors, personnel factors. I mean, I look at, I'll use an example, my wife's a project manager. And a lot of the projects that they're working on right now, the projects are getting delayed, because they have delayed shipments in steel. Well, that's a factor that you now have to take into consideration when sequencing the projects is that this component is not going to be available, therefore, we need to jockey these we need or need to rearrange them, it's an in depth understanding you have to have at the project level, and then how they co relate. It's not an easy task. It's something that requires focus. There's a reason why people do this as a career. But at the daily basis, we have the same challenges. If you think about all the things you have to maintain your house, or take care of just your daily life, there are certain things that need to happen before other things. Or if they did, the overall day would go more smoothly. But you have to give yourself time to do that analysis and get that understanding and find out did it work and did it or did it not. And make adjustments accordingly.

Raymond Sidney-Smith 12:47

Layered on top of that just just to give more flavor to what you're talking about your art. And what I'm what I'm what comes to mind for me is the fact that if if we go back to my whole learning journeys perspective, I'm doing this work, and deferring all kinds of other work down the pipeline, because I can't do it now. I don't have the skills to be able to build in the particular language that I need to. And so not that I haven't, and quite frankly, that you know, a lot of these programming foundations and, you know, whatnot is just refresher for me, which is fine. But the newest IDs that are on the market, I haven't touched them in a while, I'm curious, I want to be able to have the best of breed when I'm doing this right now. And so all of this work now is basically taking other projects I have, and putting them to later, because I know that the work now is going to benefit me in the future in that way. And so think that through, you know, so if you have a, a project you want to do in the future, what's the what are the projects that you can do now that are going to make that project in the future? Better, Faster, you know, in whatever the positive? You know, modifiers are? What are those things that are going to be in the future by virtue of you doing the right project in the present, which goes back to that focus issue for me, which is that if we're not focused on the right project that we should be doing right now, we will typically feel misaligned. Right, you'll feel off and not to be woowoo about it. But we you will, you will you will know in some way shape or form that you're not following the path that you need to because you're coming up against challenges, you might challenges that you don't feel like are internal, their external challenges, you'll you'll start to feel those those things happen. And that will be a good litmus test for you as to whether or not you're doing the right project, right now. What are some of the other examples that you can come up with that? Identify for you? sequencing projects, or like that you use in your own world for sequencing projects, maybe just some concrete examples for listeners?

A **Art Gelwicks** 15:05

Yeah, one of the things that that I get into a lot is, and it's it's from the database world, this idea of a one to many relationship, is there a project that can be executed that's on the docket, that will have an impact on multiple other projects? If that's the case, to me, that gets a much higher prioritization. And so when I look at things, excuse me, when I look at things such as building a database structure, well, ultimately, the prod the project is to produce a bunch of reports. But I know that back in the sequence, I have to build a database structure, I have to build a data dictionary, I have to get to a level of consensus with the client to be able to produce these multiple projects at the end. So the singular projects at the very beginning have to happen in the beginning of that sequence. Even though someone who was asking for a report will look at me funny and say, Why do I have to sit in a meeting about a data dictionary, I don't even use a data. I don't even know what a data dictionary is. And I have to then explain to him, I need this to be able to give you what you want to be able to get to that endpoint in the journey. I need the sequences of pieces. And it's very important when we think about this, as professionals, we understand the different parts of of our job and what we do. But often nobody else does. They don't. They don't get why there has to be step one, step two, step three, step four, they want step four, and they're willing to live with Step three, but they couldn't care less about step two and step one. And it's how that works into the sequence. That's one of the pieces of planning that I'm trying to do all the time, is figuring out well, how do I how do I get you to that end result? And what are the steps to make it realistic. So it's not a concrete example. But it is one of those things that every exercise I do, starts at the end, and then works backwards to figure out what are the things that have to happen before it for it to be able to be successfully executed?

Francis Wade 17:19

I think it makes sense to do what Ray is talking what you're talking about. The one too many is often a skill or a personal capability. But I find that people who I who I work with some reason, they don't think in terms of skills, they don't think in terms of these building blocks that I have a particular capability that allows me to do these 10 Other things, or it allows me to do this thing much faster. I find that curious, because I I find myself be pointing out, pointing them towards skills that they need to pick up, as opposed to them kind of doing what reset, which is starting at the end and working their way back to say, oh, step one is actually getting is actually learning the skill. It's not using the skill over here. But and I don't know if it's because if it's because technology makes things so easy, that when you're actually confronted with something that isn't easy that you'd lose, go to a website and sign up and put in your login. And then you start to use it when there actually is a real learning curve. Like for example in in Google Analytics or, or Google ads or Facebook ads. Those are all complex, complex activities that you don't just pick up and start doing tomorrow. They do require a sequence of learning. But I find that nowadays that that that an audit, that craftsmanship that it takes to get from A to A level of proficiency isn't underestimated, or I hear someone on the website saying in 10 minutes, you can master this. Or people don't get all of us our trick because things seem to be coming to us. In many areas of life. They're coming so easily and so quickly that when something hard is really in front of us. We don't really know what to do. We get a little bit flummoxed.

Art Gelwicks 19:23

And we see this a lot. I mean, everybody looks for the app that will do it for you. And it does a specific thing. I mean, where people really get hung up on they get an app or an application that build that does all kinds of things and then they don't know where to start because it's not pushing a button solving a specific problem pushing another button solving another specific problem. And you're right, you're not developing skill sets necessary to solve multiple problems. You're not developing that rational type of thinking and critical thinking necessary to be able to say How can I tackle this particular issue? It's a parallel. That's something that we've talked about in the past about learning an application. If you take something like something as simple as Excel, or you know, one of the other big applications like, you know, notion or Coda or something like that, learning that application as a platform inside and out, means that you have taken the time to develop a skill set as a project, that you can now apply those to other projects. But you have to do that. You can't just arbitrarily say, I'm going to learn it on the fly, you can, but you're only going to get about 30 to 40% of it, maybe. So, it really, if you've decided that that's the tool you're going to use. That's a project sequence, that is a task sequence, I'm going to learn how to use this part of it, to do the following. And embrace case, learning it just to be able to learn it and add that into your toolbox of available options. Is that much more important? I think it's it's fascinating how we don't do that. It's, it's rare that I find somebody who takes great pride in continuous learning. They'll often call it other things. Oh, I read all the time, or I, you know, yeah, that's fine. It's called continuous learning. It means you're exploring, and you're expanding your toolset that you have available to you to be able to make the decisions on sequencing these projects, because you have a deeper understanding. When if you take something simple, like sawing a piece of wood, okay, I have a piece of wood, I have a saw, I'm going to saw it. If you've done it more than once, you know, I also need a vise, I need something to hold it. I need a ruler, I need a pencil. Those are only things that you you

discover having done it. Well, that's the type of thing where that becomes part of your sequence. Often we learn it just by not having those things. But the next time you do it. Now, you know as part of that project sequence is the prep is the setup to get toward an end result, where you're not wasting a lot of time undoing that work. And I think that's where so many people don't dedicate the quality time to this process. They are so worried about getting to that end deadline. That, yeah, you'll get to that deadline, that's fine. But are you doing good work. And as part of the process, there's a term in the in the technology space or in development space, I'm sure Ray, you've heard of technical debt, where you'll make decisions as part of a development exercise to get you to an end result, knowing that in the future, you're going to have to fix and or change them. You're you're actually making conscious mistakes, are accepting conscious mistakes, rather, knowing that later on, you'll have to fix it. And many corporations live within that space of technical debt of they have literally years of technical debt, that they have to go back and resolve multimillion dollar projects around just solving all the mistakes we've made over the years. That kind of planning and forethought when you start to think about larger programs and you say okay, not only are we going to execute this exercise, but as part of this, can we bring down the technical debt? Can we solve some problems that are going to solve problems for other things later on? That's sequencing, that's relationship within that program level management.

Augusto Pinaud 23:47

But I think you make a great point that applies not only to technologists, technical depth, is the same thing on learning. Are you reading? Because that is what you do to relax to growth? Or are you learning are you reading to learn it is different? It is not the same? Even if you read exactly the same book, it is not the same thing when you have that second intention on this project. And I think that's one of the things that are key into this task sequencing or project sequencing is what is the goal? Why are you doing this project and that is something that even that it sounds for this discussion of us to do is not obvious to happen. Okay, how many projects do you go on your professional life? Okay, that it seems like nobody has to spend a second thinking why are we going to do this? No, no, we're in right now trying to solve this fire. I get it. But solving this fire is going to affect some snails is going to affect other things is going to can we extinguish the fire here, but then now we're going to turn fire somewhere else. And it's that thinking that is required to produce the appropriate sample sequences. You know if I said right, okay, fine. I need a fence in my backyard. Okay. Okay, so I need a fence so that I can open the door and the dog can go out and play and don't run to the street. That sounds fine. Okay, so I can fix that problem from a chicken wire, fence, okay, to a really fancy, white acrylic fence. Okay, but if you don't think if you only think on solving the problem, oh, you can put the chicken wire but then when I went to sell the house later on, okay, the people who's going to come and say, Who put that fence, so ugly fencing there? Okay, we'll give that guy. But that's part of the issue is none of the other thinking happened. If that thinking may have happened, okay, well, I may want to sell this house in the future. So, okay, well, why don't explore the options, okay, what is there any kind of fence that may increase the value over time? How much that will cost is worth investment or not. But all that thinking requires to understand the problem on hand, but also disconnect from the problem in hand and see what other things this problem affects. And I think that second element is one of the things that I see missing on many of this, there is a reason they start sequencing fail so bad. Okay, because he's okay, no, no, we are we're doing this fine. But what is going to affect? I don't know, when we get there. We will get there. When we go there. I'm going to read this 20 books, great. You're reading 70 books a year? How many of them are you applying? Or don't know I'm I'm reading, then you're not consciously learning is two different present, there is nothing against reading. Okay. But

there is a difference between grabbing a book and reading and grabbing a book and reading to see if you can implement anything that concious on the second case, it's what it makes the sequencing other that is the book to the next book to the next book, the project to the or the task to the next task and doesn't matter. In order to make the sequencing you need to understand where are you going? And what can you envision, that can be affected. And that effect could be positive is not all negative. But you need to slow down for a moment. And think, what are the things that are going to be affected by this,

![A] **Art Gelwicks** 27:39

one of the things that often we get hung up with when we talk about this kind of sequencing to is we think it's a single point in time event. During the initial project planning, program, planning whatever, we're going to figure out the sequence. And that's what we're going to do. Well, this is a dynamic thing, it it changes, no plan ever survives first contact with a project manager. It gets modified, it gets changed, it gets altered based on reality. And when we start to think about project and program sequencing, we have to incorporate into it opportunities to rework that sequencing. There's a concept within these, we've often heard of them called governance meetings and things like that. Those don't do it. Because often what happens is a governance meeting is deteriorated down into the what didn't you do, right? And who can I yell at to get things moving forward faster, has nothing to do with learning from what's going on and adjusting accordingly. has everything to do with blame and pointing fingers? But that's the opportunity to say, hey, let's look at the sequencing here. Is there something that needs to be changed? Is there something that we can alter to have a better positive impact? And this has to be that that constant evaluation, I'm a big fan of creating dashboards to look at key metrics, as things go through. And if you follow anything like Agile methodology, you'll hear of terms like burndown Charts, where you have certain number of items, and as you work through those, that chart continues to burn down to zero. Well, unfortunately, those charts don't reflect sequencing. They reflect quantity. So all they're doing is showing we've got 100 tasks to do and now we're at 78. Yay, we're making progress. Doesn't say that that 13 tasks that you just did, are even the right ones to be doing right now. Had nothing to do with it whatsoever. They're looking at it from the perspective of the numbers going down, we're doing good things, and that's not necessarily the case at all. So the sequencing and the relationship, carrying over from the last show the relationship between the tasks I think is is critical, scale it up to the project level scale it up to the program level, you start to look at things at the strategic level, the vision of the organization does all this tie together. Often it doesn't. You wind up with these engagements that are way off track from what they're supposed to be doing.

![R] **Raymond Sidney-Smith** 30:19

Something comes to mind when we when I was hearing what you were all talking about, and it relates to getting things done, or the GTD methodology. And as a GTD practitioner, I'm always thinking about the fact that in GTD let's call projects outcomes here so that we're not conflating the two of them. So, you know, many times we can have single action outcomes. That is, it just takes one action or to complete that outcome. It could be something that has just a few actions, that completes an outcome. And those seem trivial in nature. They're small, they're short, they're brief. But they're still considered projects, by terminology in getting things done terminology, but they're just call them outcomes, then we step up a level to kind of projects and that concept of, of planning out something that has a longer horizon, say, more than a day,

maybe even more than a week, more than a month. And so projects are the thing that I think about when it comes to GTD in being difficult in the sense of outcomes, because you have to sequence the smaller things within the course of a week or even a day, when are you going to do these different outcomes, and in what sequence. And it's not about having something in the distant future be better. It's about the almost immediate future, the near term of the next day or to be productive for you. And you can't be if you don't order those things in the right timeframes. So what comes to mind, for example, is that you need to really understand your biological primetime so that if you're going to do something at a particular time of day, you're going to sequence those projects, those outcomes in my usage of the term here, for GTD projects, I want to I want to sequence those outcomes in the times of the days when I'm likely is to do them well. So I'm not going to go for a run at 11am. Because that's my, you know, time to sit down and do some thoughtful work, right, that's what I'm going to do my flow work, as I call it, right, so I'm going to sit down and I'm going to do whatever that is generative work that's going to that's going to take me deep into a flow state, I'm not going to go for a run at that time, it's just a misalignment of my time, I want to be able to do the right outcomes at the right time. And those happen much more on the shorter timescale than they do on the longer timescale. And I'm willing to be argued against that point. But, you know, we, the impacts are lesser on the long term scale, when we sequence tasks that are sequence outcomes that are really there in our day or week. And I'm just curious how you think about the concept of doing shorter term projects, within the course of say, a week, two weeks or even a day? How do you how do you perceive organizing those things in your own productivity system?

F Francis Wade 33:25

Yeah, I think I think it's, it's a challenge, because you're, you're, you're combining short and long term activities. And, you know, if you're, if all you're focused on is a short and midterm, you will never pick up, the kind of skills I was talking about. You you investment will never end there'll be the right time to make the investment. because there'll always be something more pressing to do at the moment. So that there's a, the sitting down each day and deciding what the day is going to look like or the week, however often you do, it is all important. Because you're you're basically deciding whether you're going to achieve those long term outcomes, because those are the ones that are going to get pushed aside because of something urgent. But if you create space for them, like you're implying, then you could actually fulfill them. But again, back to kind of what I was saying before. They're also very few people who time luck. There are very few people who sit down for a half an hour or whatever, at the beginning of a day, and say, here's what I want my day to look like based on my short, medium long term priorities. They just kind of react to the first email that comes in and by the time they finish reacting, It's six o'clock and it's time to go home. That's it's unfortunate, but they're not. They're not leading a life in which they are fulfilling their own outcomes. They're leading a life driven by other people's priorities. It is not it is not easy. And if you have a boss who is not cooperative It could be almost impossible, I think,

A Art Gelwicks 35:02

No, I couldn't agree with you more on that it is definitely a situation where so many people have gotten used to being dictated to, when it comes to their workload, and not having control over their workload, and not even knowing how to take control over it. And to push back to go all the way back to the beginning of our conversation here, that ability to say, I'm full, I'm full

up, there's not much more I can do. Because nobody wants to say I can't do something, we've gotten it into our mindset that that is such a terrible thing, that we're not able to do something that means we're letting people down and we're not team players. It's, it's this. It's just a thing that we've had beaten into our heads for so long that we need to get over. But we need to understand that there are limitations to the amount of work that can be done. There are limitations to the to that work being quality, and quantity. And they are a balancing act, and you can't What's the old saying, you can have a cheap, fast and good pick two. Because that's really what it comes down to. And we have to have the wherewithal of our own limitations to say, You know what, I, there's nothing else I can do to help you right now. I'd love to, I really would, if there were things that you want me to drop, so I can do that. That's fine. I had this, I have this conversation with direct reports all the time, they'll come to me and they'll say, You know what, I have too much. Like, okay, so what's too much explained to me why it's too much. And often it is a sequencing problem. Often it's they just don't have it worked out in a way that optimize it. But many times they have taken on too much work. They have said yes, too many times. I said, Okay, so what you're doing is you're diminishing the quality of everything you're doing, trying to make people happy by saying yes, this is where you have to develop that sequence, you have to understand that, you know, to do these reports that you've committed to where you feel, it may only take an hour to do each week, it's really eight hours of work each week, to do X, Y and Z beforehand. And to do A, B and C afterwards to make sure that they're complete. Give me that scale, you need that scope and perspective. And managers fail to do that managers will happily drop a task on somebody and say, oh, yeah, great, you can take care of that, with no comprehension whatsoever as to what's actually involved in doing the task. I'm a big fan, no manager ever does this. But I'm a big fan of saying, Look, if you've got a task that you are going to delegate, I say that you have done it at least once first before you delegate it. So you at least have the the tiniest sliver of understanding as to what it actually takes to do that task. And if it's something that you absolutely can't do, you know, programming, perfect example, there's a lot of coding things I can't do. I'm so old school, we don't have interpreter basic anymore. So I'm really kind of out of the mix of 10, go to 20. But I'll go to the program developer and say, Look, I need you to do this. And I need you to show me how complicated it is. Is it easy? Is it hard? Is it? Is it difficult? Is it something that you can do without much effort, I need to understand the scale. So that when somebody comes to me and tries to get me to drop something else in your lap, I can turn around and say no, sorry, he's got X to do or she's got Y to do. And it's really complicated. It takes time. They don't have the bandwidth available to do that. So when we think about sequencing, and I just use the term bandwidth, which is one of those corporate things that anymore. When we think about sequencing, it's not just a, b and c, it's how big is a? How big a C? And how big is the pipe you're trying to shove them through? And how long will it take them to get through? Perfect example of that it's if you take a balloon, and you fill it up with water, so it's really squishy. That's let's say that's a project. If you get a pipe, and it's just a little smaller than the balloon, you can squish that balloon down to fit in that pipe. But what happens when you do that is the balloon gets longer. it squishes down in the middle, and it gets longer on the ends. So it takes more time to go through the pipe. Well the smaller the pipe, the longer the balloon has to be the less bandwidth that's available to actually get the work done. Now try and put two balloons through at the same time. Three, four, what do you wind up getting wet? If nothing gets done. So

A Art Gelwicks 40:04

understanding that scope and scale, even as the person who's not doing the work is critical, if you're helping someone work through that, to understand the challenges involved,

Raymond Sidney-Smith 40:17

I think that triggered in my mind when you were talking about that art is the fact that when you are doing any level of projects, sequencing, you do have to take into account the work of others, and how that impacts projects. And I know I alluded to that when I talked about the fact that your resource allocating and those kinds of things, but it's really important for what you're talking about here, which is to just even getting a ballpark estimate from someone of how long something's going to take them to do, especially if they are the expert, or the technician in that particular regard. They're the ones who are going to be able to tell you, Hey, this is gonna take me three weeks, which means that you now have three weeks where if you've done everything you can do and now you've passed it along to someone, before you're going to get it back kind of a hot potato, you know that that projects not going to land back in your lap to do anything, you now have three weeks where you can actually align other projects. And so you do have to be somewhat dynamic in Project sequencing when it comes to those kinds of circumstances. And that can actually be really productive. Because you can say, Okay, well over three weeks, now I can I can move something that was in the future closer in time. And it's also something that I am just frequently having to repeat to people, which is that my goal for everyone is to have a task list, that is not a wish list, right? That is you're going to do the things that are actually on the list. And if you are creating lists, and you're not completing the things on those lists, then those are wish lists, right, you want to get them done, but you're not getting them done. That means that the wish lists are becoming things that you're kind of cherry picking from and you're not being the best, you you're not choosing the best and most priority items from those lists. But that also means that if you do the effective creation of a task list, right, I'm gonna complete these three things today. And then you complete those three things today. It's not like you can't go to your other lists you if you have effectively externalize them, you can bring more stuff to today and and speed up the process. But if you put six on the list and get none of them done, or put three on the list and get four of them done by pulling one of the future items to today, you're that much further forward than you were if you did none, and I just I consistently see people doing that, right, they're robbing Peter to pay Paul, by virtue of this concept of, I'm going to I'm going to do all of this work today. Because because, you know, for these items are overdue, oh my gosh, oh my gosh, right, when in reality, in two days, you could have them all done, if you just focused today on those items. And to some great extent, projects sequencing is is really where the rubber meets the road here in terms of planning for those kinds of outcomes to say, You know what, I'm not going to be able to do these three projects in the next month. But that also means that I'm going to do this one project. And then lo and behold, you find out that project only takes a week to do and then you move everything forward because of that. So don't think that you can't get these things done faster. But you do have to focus. And that does mean that you have to sometimes delay one thing for the other. And that leads me to, as we come to the close of the conversation, a discussion on where people can get started in Project sequencing. And I'll just outline very briefly a tool, I'm not sure if I've explained this before on ProductivityCast. But I'll give it just a minute or two. And I call it the major projects queue. And the idea here is to identify what you call a major project, right. So you get to be the definer here in terms of that. But for me, a major project is something that I consider to be a a substantive outcome, right? Something that's, that's a big chunk of work that's going to be done. And so major projects can be hosting a conference, it could be publishing a book, it could be any number of those big deliverables in my own world. So I decide on those major projects upfront, and I limit them to one to two per life category in any particular period of time, usually half a year to a year timeframe. And I make that list and they become the major projects and they become sequenced. So until that next project reaches a

state of maintenance, that is I'm not having to do more work to create momentum, then nothing else starts and that allows me to to create some level of boundaries around the amount of work that I take on so that I don't get overwhelmed. And I've just recognized over time that if you give me the opportunity, I will just keep piling on Because I want to do more, I have a full head of ideas. And I want to keep producing those those things. And so I have to create some level of friction from doing that. So it's not about not doing it, it's about not doing it right now, that means it just needs to be postponed or deferred until later timeframe. And the major projects queue for me has been a really great way to be able to do that. Any any other quick tips, tricks, thoughts for folks who are getting started or having struggles with projects, sequencing?

F   **Francis Wade**   45:33

What tool? Do you use the major project sequencing sequences, I've tried using basically Excel, I'm not very happy with it.

Raymond Sidney-Smith   45:40

Yeah, so I'm actually using Tom's planner, which is just a Gantt charting software, it's a web based Gantt chart, and it's just, it's very simple. And so again, you know, one is conditioned on the other. So as you move one forward or backwards, and you can make them, you know, connected to one another. And it's the most simple Gantt chart, and it just helps me really see things in that perspective. At one time, I was doing it all in mind maps. And I just decided to move it to Tom's planner quite recently. And it's been really, really useful for me, because then I can just, it's high level, right? So these are big deliverables. So it's, there's not many of them. And it just gives me an ability to see, okay, this, these are the things that I want to be completing this is the timeframe, where I feel like they will become sustainable or in maintenance mode in my world. And, and sometimes that means just reaching the first milestone, right, because once I've reached that first milestone, then I know that we'll really know are, we're up the mountain. Now, it'll all be downhill from that point, right. And so I'll be able to pick up momentum, but I just can't do that when I may be learning about a whole bunch of new things on the way up the hill. And therefore, that takes more time than once I've gotten to the top, and I can start to catch the momentum from gravity on the other side. And so I'm just trying to understand how much bandwidth to go back to arts corporate speak, you know, I'm going to need to be able to get to that point. And sometimes I'm really good at estimating it, sometimes I'm not. And so then you make adjustments, right. And that's, that's what the Gantt chart allows me to do is just, you can just stretch or shrink those pieces. And then I can see, oh, okay, I was planning on doing this big project. Now, well, it gets stretched out longer. And so now it's not going to be for another three months. And that's okay, I just saw how life happens

A   **Augusto Pinaud**   47:36

for me. So mind map and Mind Maps has short with all those things, and I just moved them out of different arms, those are the arms are waiting, those are the arms that are active, and we are right now moving. And that's what keeps me moving between one thing and the other.

A   Art Gelwicks   47:53

Yeah, I agree mind mapping, aside from the date level, relationships, being able to create those higher level one to many types of relationships and identify them in times when you're not, they're not painfully visible. I find mine mappings change in approach instead of thinking about things along the number line in a sequence. But their relationship to each other is really powerful within that kind of structure. Just don't get upset when this is hard. Because this is not an easy process. First time you do it, it's going to be wrong. Guaranteed. Second, third, fourth, you'll build up to this. So this is something that requires patience to develop the skill. Going back to what we were talking about.

Raymond Sidney-Smith   48:37

Thank you art. Thank you, gentlemen, we are at the end of our discussion today. But of course, the conversation doesn't have to stop here. If you head over to productivitycast.net to the episode page, you can go ahead and join the conversation with us, you can also join our digital community. If you go to productivitycast.net and click on community, you will be taking over to personal productivity club and inside personal productivity club, we have an entire group dedicated to ProductivityCast. And so you can then join in the conversation there we post the episodes and you can comment along with other listeners of the podcast. Of course, if you go to productivitycast.net You will also find there on the episode page, our show notes. Those show notes include any of the links to the two topics we discussed. So for example, in this episode, I put a link to lifelong learning Institute's since our noted lifelong learning, and continuous learning those kinds of things. And so those things are all there in the show notes. And so they're links to them. And we also have a text transcript. So the text transcript is really useful. You can click on the Read More link, it'll expand the machine generated text transcript right there on the page, so you can read along while you listen to the episode. You can also download it by clicking on the PDF download link below the Read More link so there's a sentence that says you can download it, click on that and we'll go ahead and download that. Feel free to subscribe to the podcast if you're listening or watching this any Where else, if you go to your favorite podcast app, I am a fan of podcast apps that are actually podcast apps. So so if you go to overcast or Pocket Casts, and go ahead and subscribe there, that really makes sure that you get the new episodes downloaded for free every week when a new one comes out. Of course, we enjoy your ratings and reviews and whatever podcast apps allow those ratings and reviews and those, of course help us grow our personal productivity listening community. And so thank you for doing that. Thank you for the reviews, we always enjoy them. And so with that, I want to express my thanks to acoustic pinout Francis Wade, and art Gelwicks for joining me here on ProductivityCast. Each week, you can learn more about them and their work again on productivitycast.net. Just go ahead and click on that about page and you can find all of their links to them, and their socials and so on, so forth. So, enjoy learning more about them. I'm Ray Sidney-Smith and on behalf of all of us here at ProductivityCast Here's to your productive life.

V   Voiceover Artist   50:56

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