

137-hyper-scheduling-productivitycast

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SPEAKERS

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



Voiceover Artist 00:00

Are you ready to manage your work and personal world better to live a fulfilling productive life, then you've come to the right place. ProductivityCast the weekly show about all things productivity, here are your hosts, Ray Sidney-Smith and Augusto Pinaud with Francis Wade and Art Gelwicks.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:17

Welcome back, everybody to ProductivityCast the weekly show about all things personal productivity. I'm Ray Sidney-Smith.



Augusto Pinaud 00:23

I'm Augusto Pinaud.



Francis Wade 00:24

I'm Francis Wade.



Art Gelwicks 00:25

And I'm Art Gelwicks.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:26

Welcome, gentlemen. And welcome to our listeners to this episode, today, we are going to be talking about the calendar and really how to utilize the calendar to be more effective really

...talking about the calendar and really how to utilize the calendar to be more effective, really related to David Sparks. And some of you may know him as Mac Sparky at macsparky.com and the Mac Power Users podcast, he has been writing about something that he calls hyper-scheduling since 2018. And I thought we would actually tackle this topic in terms of just covering what he is really talking about in his series of articles around this. And so in 2018, he wrote this article that he said he was experimenting over the last month, in essence doing more deliberate scheduling of his time. And so really, what it looks like is a an explanation of what is time blocking the idea of being able to put blocks of time in your schedule. In his particular case, he's calling it hyper-scheduling, I believe, because he is identifying more granular times where he's doing things. So instead of say, large swaths of time for the day, he's putting smaller and smaller blocks of time in the calendar for particular activities. And he defines various blocks. And he gives you the opportunity to be able to think about your own world in terms of what those smaller, more granular blocks could be, for purposes of having a schedule that you can fall in line with, as you make your way through the day. And the idea here, at least as I understand it, is that he's giving himself the leeway to change things around. But it's just a little bit more structure. He does this the night before. So instead of the morning of he does this the night before, and he gives some mechanics and so forth. He's written five or six articles about this over the last three years. And so I thought it'd be helpful for us to walk through through some of these pieces. And he's written some clarifying components of this, you know, some of the feedback he's gotten and his responses to those as well. And so let's just start off with that explanation kind of under our belt, right? This is kind of like a variant, or his his take on time blocking? What do you think about this take on time blocking? And what parts are good? What parts do you feel like, have an opportunity for improvement,

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Francis Wade 02:56

he talks about capturing the schedule, initially on PayPal. And I've noticed, the first thing is that I changed my time blocking depending on how busy I am. So I'm in a hyper busy period this week, because I have a conference coming up that I'm in charge of, or hosting. And every minute of every day is valuable. And you know, I'm swapping things in and swapping things out and pushing things to next week. I'm in that mode where you're trying to conserve as much time as possible before a deadline hits. And I normally would keep my schedule on my calendar, but the ad on my digital calendar. But the idea of going into my calendar and doing it and dragging around and dropping, and then going through all the different steps that it takes. For me to get to the calendar I want seems like a lot of work. So when I'm in this face, I just made a paper calendar, I started to write things down because in a minute, I'm done as opposed to 10 minutes, or 15. And it made me think he's onto something. First thing he talks about the use of a digital PayPal entry and I forget the name you guys can you guys are experts in that area, you can speak to that. But it struck me that the interface and how easy it is to do time blocking has a lot to do with what kind of time blocking you do. Because I'm probably going to go back to using the computer using Google Calendar or schedule an escape path after this week. But interesting, I think there's different approaches depending on how busy you are and how much spare time you have. And he may be hinting at that.

A

Art Gelwicks 04:41

I liked the idea of that level of scheduling. I just don't think it's practical, at least not not in my world. I mean, it's it's nice to be able to go through and say, you know this will take 15 This will take 25 But I just don't think that works in most cases you spent So much time monkeying

around with your schedule, that you almost get to a point where you're not getting anything done. I mean, I like the idea, the bigger idea of time blocking where you say, Okay, I'm going to allocate, you know, two hours to work on this today, and set that in your schedule. But as you dig down more granular, you're getting really to the point of a checklist with times assigned to it in my book. And that's, I think there's a law of diminishing returns, that starts to creep into this fairly quickly.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 05:32

I think this is highly dependent upon the type of work that you do, and the expectations you have of the other people around you. And so if you are delegating work, if you are managing people, and if you're working in any collaborative environment, many of these things are going to break down if you don't have a lot of control over your own time. And so in my particular world, where I do have a lot of control over my time, like I have almost exclusive control over my work day. And so the idea that I give control, so to speak to others to schedule, time in my calendar, or those kinds of things, you know, I've latitude to reject calendar events, move them around all of those kinds of things. And that does give me the ability to do some variant of time blocking if I wanted to. And so I can see this working for me, if I if I liked the idea of my calendar being filled with things other than meetings. And I think just because as a GTD er, I have a tendency to think about things from a list perspective, and not from a calendar perspective. You know, calendars are for meetings in my world, and then those things that do need to be done in a timeframe. And that means that there's actually more in the calendar than one might think. But at the same time, I do tend to use those calendar anchors for prompting me to look at my lists for what can be done. So in essence, the, the time blocking in my world is actually a context, not a set of tasks. And that sounds to me a little bit about what David Sparks is talking about here, where he has these, there triggers for contexts of things to do, and there's a melange there, have, you know, he's got a little bit of, you know, go do X, go do Y, those kinds of things, you know, routine based items. But for me, I like the idea of saying at this particular time, I'm going to transition and, you know, shift my modality from one to the next. And when I'm doing that, this is the thing I'm going to work on next. So when I look at the calendar, I can see oh, right, in two hours, I'm going to be shifting gears to this chunk of work. And that gives me the ability to start kind of moving myself in that direction, which I think can be helpful.

A

Art Gelwicks 08:00

What's too small, what size time block is too little at work to 15

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Francis Wade 08:06

minute blocks. But again, only in times when you have no discretionary time. Like for example, if I'm in a situation where I have three meetings, which are almost back to back, and I only have a half an hour between each one, then I'm going to not only have the energy, I'm going to schedule the time in between the meetings to do something that takes 15 minutes or half an hour. But on a regular day, like really I have discretion over my time, and I have some discretionary time, I think it's a matter of how much slack time do you have, if you have the slack time, then you don't need to get down to 15 minute increments. But if you're if you're

running on a clock, if you're if you're someone who has commitments and things you have to do, at particular times at five o'clock, that person is going to call at 530 Someone else is going to call if you're in a situation where it's like that, then I think you go into smaller increments.

A

Augusto Pinaud 09:07

So my approach is a little different time obviously play a factor. But also what is my ability to focus because I wish to tell you that I everyday can focus 100% and be hyper focused and that is, at least in my world doesn't happen. There are days that is harder for me to focus harder for me to concentrate harder for me to stay in task. Those days, the time block goes smaller, because I can convince, persuade, or stay on task 10 to 15 minutes that I struggle with that and then change or continue or set another 10 minutes. When my ability to focus is high. I can set larger chunks and I'm able to stay on them. But as my attention is scatter I need those time blocks to be smaller so I can stay on top of them.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 10:04

I'll just note that based on what a Gousto said, is that most people are in the same set of focus times throughout their days, every day. So while some of us have days that are very different than the other, that does not change your biology. So when we have a perception that for somehow somehow we have lower sets of focus, at this moment in time, the likelihood is that that's a feeling not a reality. And so we have to remember that we have a rhythm in which we follow. And your body naturally is more focused. During those times, we've talked about this in past episodes, whether that be the concept of your circadian rhythm and following along with the ultradian rhythm, but you have these focused periods of time where you are naturally inclined to have strong executive function, lean into those times. And if you just do a little bit of analysis, you can find those times. So that means that every day you get a repeat on that same opportunity. So even if there are some days where you may have a meeting that overlaps that, or maybe you have some crazy making that's going on in those periods of time, generally, if you can allot that time, to that high focus work, you're going to be much more likely to get that kind of, of creative or flow work done during those periods of time.

A

Art Gelwicks 11:24

So I'm gonna go back to the size question, because I still, I'm still struggling with part of it, we talked about the 15 minute interval, which isn't unrealistic matter of fact, many calendar applications, that's the most granular level of interval that they'll provide to you. But is it really 15 minutes, I mean, we've talked about before about giving yourself time to spin up an activity and then spin it down for the next one. So even if you give yourself two minutes to spin it up, do the work and two minutes to spin it down. You're really only talking about 10 minutes of active time. This is how much time are we going to spend breaking things down to little tiny things to do. I mean, I understand filler spaces and things like that. But there's a point where could this even be anxiety inducing? Because now you've got it to such a tight schedule, and now you get a call in erupts? Or something else that happens and throws the entire thing off kilter? Is all that wasted exercise, then I have my doubts.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 12:40

So my, my response would be to that art, which is that, you know, there is a point where too much is too much, right? Where, you know, if you if you create too much structure, you will naturally rebel against that structure, right, there isn't a natural component there. At the same time, if you have no structure, then there is a structure even when you don't believe there's a structure, right, so you're gonna fall into path of least resistance and likely the things that you don't want to do, and the things that you do want to do or the things that won't get done. So we have to balance those things out. And I think that you're right, in knowing thyself, in the sense of choosing the right amount of structure, that's going to be the guardrails to keep you moving toward, like staying on the road requires lines to tell you that you're staying on the road. And, you know, you could you could drive on roads without lines, but I bet you a lot of people would start cracking into each other, and driving off the road more often if the lines didn't, didn't exist. And so it just depends on how many lines do we need on the road, right? And how close to those lines need to be to each other. Francis



Francis Wade 13:45

with analogy, I live in a country where most of the roads don't have lanes. So there is a certain man



Raymond Sidney-Smith 13:54

I'm from New York City where the roads have lines and we still don't abide by them. We have been



Augusto Pinaud 14:00

on those lines and New York is just as a reference is not to be follow. It's a reference thing for the people from



Art Gelwicks 14:08

Pennsylvania, we hide the lines and potholes. So



Francis Wade 14:13

you can never tell. But I was I was thinking also to add what I said before that they when you're on vacation, you obviously well. Most of us on vacation don't need 15 minute increments. So it's not like there's a hard and fast rule about which approach to use. I think it's horses for courses. You just be flexible and adapt and use the amount use the granularity that you need to get life done. And be ready to abandon it not abandon. You're ready to switch gears. When life changes. Something else comes at you like like I for example, I can time block a Saturday fairly effectively, or a Sunday without interruption or I because the people who would interrupt me aren't working. So I say, Okay, well, this is a great opportunity for me to get stuff I want to

get done. Because the chances of being interrupted are really low, very different for Monday or Friday. But the bottom line is to be very aware of the volume of time demands that you're dealing with, and then adjust accordingly. And not get stuck with excellent people doing any one particular way of time blocking versus any other sort of being sensitive to say, Okay, I have this amount of discretionary time, do I need a time block, if I don't, then I could just put one, put nothing in my calendar at all, then just go with it go with the appointments. I found myself moving between the extremes and just using whatever I need to say, whenever it's whatever I need to use whenever it's needed,

A

Art Gelwicks 15:55

I don't want to come across as being negative on this idea of hyper scheduling. And I realized I was doing that a little bit earlier. And I think it's partially because I approach this from a different angle, I use what I often refer to as the Lego methodology, where within your schedule and your time blocks, there's two types of schedules are two types of time blocks, they're the time blocks that absolutely heavy time constraint tied to them, because they have to happen by a particular date and time. So if you've got something that has to happen, by the end of the day, you block out specific time to get that stuff done, then there's time blocks where work can get done. But the work to be done in that time block is unspecified at that point. So let's say you've got a 15 minute interval between meetings, you could block that time. And this is what I often do is a block that type of my calendar as a 15 minute work block. Where that comes in handy is in my task list, I have tags on a large number of my tasks that are not time specific as to the estimated duration of the task to complete. So if it's, you know, cleaned out my inbox for my email that maybe that's a 15 minute task. Well, it's tagged as a 15 minute task. And if I look at my to do list right now, I probably have about 30 or 40 15 minute tasks that are sitting in there that need to be done, but not by a specific date and time that when that 15 minute window hits on my schedule, I can pop over my task list, look down that list of tags for 15 minutes and say, Oh, I'm going to do that one now, and move on to the next one. So that is in my mind, that's a type of hyper scheduling. But it's a flexible one because it allows me to decompose interruptions. So let's say for example, I had a one hour meeting blocked out on my calendar, and it gets cancelled. After doing my happy dance, I realized that I've got an hour of work time available to me, Well, now I can decompose that time. That could be an hour, it could be 230 minute tasks, it could be for 15 minute tasks, it could be, you know, 610 minute tasks, however, I want to decompose that and apply it to the work that needs to be done. I can none of those items are pre scheduled as per se. But it means that that's time that's not lost. And maybe some of those tasks are mindfulness and personal health tasks. You know, maybe it's a coffee break task that I throw in there. Great. That counts too. And I can punch through that on the list. So every day, you know, if I have a calisthenics period, I go grab my 15 minutes for that because that window of opportunity showed up. So when I think about the hyper scheduling idea, I believe that's where I struggle with it is assuming that you have a level of control that you don't, for those of us who don't, and not being able to create a structure that we can flex within whenever we need to. And if I think about the article that we were looking at, there are some examples that kind of resonate with that were he would have a block of time and then subdivide that block of time. Well, it's a similar principle, I may allocate three hours for QA checking on a site I built great. Within that three hour time period, I've got lots of smaller things and I may subdivide those accordingly. odds are pretty good, they have a sequence to them, but they may not. It may just be work that has to be done and move along. That actually fits much closer to an agile methodology than it does anything else.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 19:44

I think we have to remember that everybody is unique in the way in which they respond to things and something you said earlier art about the idea that this might be anxiety producing. For some people, the amount of structure will be comfort thing that is that it provides a guide rail for them that is helpful and gives them direction that they unfortunately don't want to have to create or provide for themselves in the moment. So it's just like, if I was taking off as an astronaut, while I'm in the Shuttle, I want very clear instructions that are granular, press the red button, press the green button, press the blue button, right, I don't want to have to think Wait, you know, yesterday, we kind of turned the dial some little bit to the left, I want to know exactly where I should do and what I should do it at that time in those critical moments. But there are other times where I probably don't want as much structure and control because I want to be able to be a little bit more say, let's use the word creative or intuitive. In those moments, I'm going to then, you know, lean into, you know, less of my executive function and a little bit more of some other part of my brain. And that gives me that level of kind of balance. And I think everybody's a little bit different. And I think not only are we different, generally, we can be different in these very specific cases, to the point Francis was making earlier about being in a in a hyperactive mode, right, where you have this very clear set of activities that need to be done toward an important purpose right this moment. And therefore, the time is a little bit more structured, because every moment counts. And I think that that's an important kind of piece to this whole puzzle. I will note that you know, something that David Sparks hints at here in the articles that we're talking about, is that again, well, let me start back with with it, if we make the premise is hyper scheduling nothing more than time blocking with a different name, I think I can get on board with that. I think that there are so many different types of of time blocking and time chunking, we've already had episodes on those topics. The reality is, is that he's just using a different term for what I think is the same thing. And I think I agree with Francis in that sense. What he blends in here and makes a good argument about is that, for the most part, time blocking works for a lot of people for many people. And it's important to recognize that component, it may not work for everybody. And for those people, they need to find other methodologies that do support their working capabilities. They're working trends. And I think that's also a good component to having a good productivity system is to kick the tires until you find the thing that does support you. One of the things that he found to be one of the criticisms that he wrote about and I thought this was really interesting, was, you know, for those people that was basically, you know, this is just basically a controlled type of procrastination, or that hyper scheduling is unrealistic. My question for you all is for the person who always has something that they want to do, where does this process breakdown? Because if the reality is, is that anytime something is not in the calendar, but I still have things that I want to accomplish, the idea of having all of this time blocked, so to speak, I'm always going to fill it with something that I want to be don't doing. So where does the system break down in terms of taking time off? Or maybe having open spaces? Where do you find that the system is not particularly the idea of time blocking will ultimately fail, you wear those failure points for the person who finds themselves looking at a time blocking scenario and thinking, well, even if I block time off or a break, I'm still going to feel that sense that something needs to be done.

A

Art Gelwicks 23:48

That compelling notion of always feeling like something has to be done, I don't know is necessarily driven by time blocking and hyper scheduling. But it's facilitated. It's certainly enabled by it. Because you feel like if you if you dig into this deep and you you buy into this deep and then you look at an open calendar. Your first reaction is I need to fill that calendar.

Why? Why do I have such big open time blocks, I can put stuff in there, I can be doing things. It's not giving you the permission to say, No, I'm not going to do anything right now. Not going to go down that path. So it creates a reinforced herbal structure. And this is where I brought up my anxiety point earlier. For people who struggle with executive functions for people who struggle with focus challenges. It can be very difficult because you look at that artificially generated schedule that's staring at you. And all of a sudden, a small changes now put it off the rails. There's your anxiety right there. How do I get it back on the rails? You know, am I not doing the right thing? Am I not Good at what I'm doing, because I can't follow this basic schedule. That's what makes this difficult. So where I see something like a hyper schedule could be useful, is in that same context that when it doesn't, I know I sound like I'm saying both things. But for people who really struggle with trying to keep things on track, it can provide those guardrails. But there has to be a limit, there has to be a balancing point. Or else you wind up again, just working your schedule, not actually working,

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Francis Wade 25:35

you asked about mistakes, I think there's a technique that you could that people can use in all situations, and that is to schedule in unscheduled time. And that's not the same as a black calendar, a black Canada, a blank calendar says, my priorities are reflected in this tool. It doesn't mean that you have any flexibility at all, or it doesn't mean that you're not working, it doesn't mean that you don't have a lot to do, it just means that in this tool, my priorities are not being captured. I think the next step sort of to go along with the artists thing is that if you do plan to take time off, or if you do plan to be extremely flexible, or if you do plan to be on vacation, and to schedule, nothing, it's better to schedule nothing, rather than to leave nothing scheduled. In other words, you block out the whole day, and you just say, vacation starts at 6am. And it ends up 10pm. And you put a big little block in there. And you don't think about it again after that. That's better than having a blank calendar. So if you take that extreme and pass it into the regular every day, each day, I have a an on a scheduled block of unscheduled activity, I could use it to rest, I could use it as a buffer in case anything crazy comes in. On some days, lots of crazy comes in. So if I'm smart at putting in more buffer time than less, on some days, there is no buffer time whatsoever, because everything is scheduled. But the the idea of putting in a buffer zone, put I'm gonna be putting in I don't mean, and this is I think a mistake that people make when they talk about time blocking. They say, in their mind, they instantly translate unscheduled time into buffer time. Which is not the same as scheduled in scheduling in buffer time. buffer time is a tool from as industrial engineer it for us. Buffer is not just stuff you're not thinking about, but for something that you actively manage. And I think the same is true for us a calendar, the time you're not scheduling, if you actively manage it, you get a different result than if you just start from MTN just keep filling until it's full. That's a very different mindset than seeing and putting aside extra unscheduled time in this very deliberate way. I think the two are very different.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 28:19

I definitely agree. And I think it's important. I know we referenced this in the episode on getting more out of your calendar. But you know, I adhere to the Unschedule, which is the Dr. Neil Fiore concept. And I'll link to that again in this as well, in the show notes just for everybody's edification. But the idea here is that knowing what you're doing, even when what you're doing is not what you think as being highly productive energy. expending work is still important. I

liked the way in which you phrased it, Francis, which is that, you know, controlling your time is as important being aware of the time that you're not going to be controlling you get some better benefit out of it.



29:03

So I think is important, what Francis is saying, in many cases, you know, and I, I'm a big fan of color, so I have things on. On my calendar, there is a white calendar. Okay, that is what I called things to know. Okay, cool to know. And there are things that I want to have on the calendar, FYI, that I have not committed yet, but I want them there and I want them to block the time, or at least to have the time and consider but there is other things as



Augusto Pinaud 29:35

Francis was saying that are on my calendar on different colors. There is a black calendar in there, okay, for things that should have that, hey, I need to make sure that my email gets clean and process due that time is respected every day. No, but it's good to know it is there. Okay. Do I have a scheduled meeting so that times yes, I have. But again, it is important to have that time in there. So that way, you can recalibrate and recalibrate appropriately. So I think that's one thing where the calendar can be used much better into, which is not necessarily time you have committed or you're rigid, but it's the only way it's going to happen as maybe a meeting, but it's things that are going to make your day flow much better. You know, I blogged a Friday, once a month, for an afternoon over Friday, because the third Friday of the month, I tried to block that afternoon. Do that means I don't work that afternoon. That's so I can catch up on what has happened on the week prior. So do I work most of those Fridays I end up working? Okay. But what it is, is there is no meetings, no surprise, I call and then I know I can program so I can work into a much more calm state.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 30:57

So I wanted to do as we as we come to the latter part of the episode is to talk about how you would manifest if you were to do this kind of hyper scheduling, which is more granular scheduling than, say, the traditional time blocking concept in let's just take it as time blocking as well. So if you were going to do that, how would you do this level of? Let me restate that. If we were going to take the the notion that David Sparks is talking about here and do hyper scheduling, which is more granular scheduling into your system? How would you do that? What would be the method or mechanisms and tools you would use to make that happen? Would you use paper and pen? Would you use a calendar application? Would you use a spreadsheet, I'm curious what the what the functional makeup of your tools would be? If you were to do this,



Francis Wade 31:53

I want someone to invent. I don't even know what I'm talking about what I'm actually imagining. But there's a space beside my laptop, right? An A, it has my phone, it has some papers that I catch, I write things on when I'm moving quickly. I want my calendar to be in that space, I want to press a button, and I want it to appear. And I want to take a stylus or a pen and

I just want to write on it. And then I want to hit a button and have it disappear. I don't want to tablet tablet, I don't want to the screen, I don't have to type I don't have to click, I just want to be able to get in and out of it as fast as possible. So an interface that is instantly available that doesn't require a keyboard doesn't require most, and just gets gets me in and out in two or three minutes. And if I could just move things around at will. I don't want I don't want the force of another device. But the current devices are difficult.

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Art Gelwicks 32:58

Do you want it to be a device? You don't want it to be a device? No. So another device? Okay, so you got a yellow legal pad and a pen at this point. That's the only other option you got there. Francis, where else do you want that to go, I want better than that. You can't have both It either has batteries or it doesn't.

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Francis Wade 33:17

You know, I saw I saw I saw I saw

A

Art Gelwicks 33:21

you want a boogie board. You want one of the dry erase boards. Because that's basically what you're describing. Okay.

F

Francis Wade 33:30

Now I want it to be right beside my laptop.

A

Art Gelwicks 33:33

I'm confused. I want it

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Francis Wade 33:35

represent my laptop. But I saw I saw I saw an app, a device. So device but it's an invisible device that projects onto your desk. So if I could get something that could project my schedule onto my desk, and I could manipulate it right there and then without having to open anything pick up a physical object, but I could just do it on the fly and then dismiss it.

A

Augusto Pinaud 33:59

Or you were watching the Marvel Universe this weekend. That sounds something Tony Stark will have built but I haven't seen it in any store that I can buy.

F

Francis Wade 34:08

I need one of those

A

Art Gelwicks 34:10

first piece of junk mail you get covers up your calendar as soon as you throw it on your desk. So are your coffee mug is sitting on top of it.

F

Francis Wade 34:18

I want to press a button and have it go away. So I want it there when I want it. I want to press a button then have the regular desk just

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Art Gelwicks 34:24

Okay, so aside from the sound effects and the non-existent technology I'm looking at the setup that I have right here I have a tablet to my left, that has my calendar displayed on it, that I can just interact with the stylus and I can just tap and open things and close things and see what's going on at any given time. But how is that any different than just keeping your calendar in a window on your desktop? It all comes down to accessibility doesn't it? Yeah,

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Francis Wade 34:59

that's it. So that's, I would use a tablet too. But there's, there's no space beside my laptop, or, or it's limited or a full tablet, I don't want it there. Just to manage my calendar, it's too much device for a single applicant doesn't

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Art Gelwicks 35:15

have to be. I mean, like I said, the tablet that I've got set up here, and I'm not advocating just a tablet, I'm just saying, because it's another screen, and it's a little screen. In this case, it's a 10 inch screen. I can do all kinds of stuff on it, I can pull my notes up, I can access everything else, because it's all synchronized in the cloud. But for the purposes of what we're discussing, it's very useful for that kind of calendar display. And if I was going to operate digitally, for this hyper scheduling, that would probably be the way I would do it. And the reason why I say that is because the calendar that I have on that tablet, I can also access from my desktop. So if I'm sitting in Outlook, and I add something to the calendar there, it appears on this magical little display to my left. So I know that stuff's being tracked and being taken care of. I've seen it where you thought about it, I mean, it, it works fairly well, I mean, especially if you're in a setup where you have dual monitors or something like that, again, we're talking about opportunities to have, you know, again, an expanded amount of tech. But you could flip it around just as easy. You can have just take your you know, your legal pad and write down your schedule for

the day and just lay it off to the side, the only hang up I have is everything has to be on the right side, because I'm so right handed, my left sides useless. But that that kind of thing, makes it easy to at least track if I

F

Francis Wade 36:45

could get if I could get an arm from my tablet with my calendar on it, that's similar to what so it's not laying on my desk and taking up precious real estate,

A

Augusto Pinaud 36:54

I have two layers. So there is a layer on the top where the camera that we're going to talk talking right now. Yeah. And I have an arm that that has the devices. So I have a device where during the work day when I'm sitting in here, my iPad Mini basically works as a calendar. And it says a screen split calendar and a half and to do is on the other half or not the team's depending what I'm working on. But that's the only function of that device during the day where if I'm not in a conference call, it's that if the only moment it changes when I'm doing a video call, because that's where I'm doing the vehicles, I'm happy to present. But it's a tablet, it's an iPad, in my case, it's an app inside iPad,

F

Francis Wade 37:39

I send you my address.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 37:42

My concern with any of these types of technologies is that for me, particularly if it's out of sight, out of mind, and so I am very fixed on the activity that I'm doing. And we're as some people think about the the problems with multitasking, I am a single Tasker to a fault. And so you know, like if there are other things going on, I'm I am, I am processing a single thread at any given time. And I don't like to be interrupted in that thread. Even when other people come to me with other issues, I have to stop them because the thread that I'm on needs to be completed before I will convert to that next thread. And not only do I do that purposefully, but I just am predisposed to that. And so what I try to do as much as possible is to give myself cues, that shifting needs to happen at some point, so that I can start to decelerate and do the acceleration on the other side. And so having multiple screens have those things available to me is really helpful. So to your challenge, Francis, akin to what I think art is talking about here is that I have this second device here with the calendar, and task managers and project managers to the side here. So my primary work is being done in front of me. But I always have off to the side, this particular machine that is just running calendars, tasks, projects, and otherwise, it's always a fingertip away, and I have it so that the screen just turns off after a few minutes. And then if I ever wanted I just tap the screen it activates again and all those things are there and available. So it's a useful premise to have that there. Just so that you're capable of like, okay, what's the next thing that needs to happen? Great. I can check that off. And I also am a big fan of this is why I continue to use Remember The Milk I have Remember The Milk take over the entire screen for the singular task I'm working on so that I cannot see any of the

other tasks. And so I actually have But just do that one thing in front of me. So I have it just take over the whole screen. That's the only thing appearing on the screen. I don't want any other distractions. And that also allows me to annotate that task as I'm working. So as I'm working on something, I can just reach over and type a few words as to what is going on with this particular tasks such that if I do get interrupted, then I can switch gears quickly. But I know where I left, left off, because the task was open and available to me to annotate as I was making my way through. So that really allows for that switching, that is for me necessary. It's just not my natural skill set. It's not something that I lean into, in terms of of things. And I know that a lot of people are natural multitaskers, so to speak, I am not one of those people. And I don't like doing it. And I feel like it makes me less productive on top of all these things. So it's not only a principled approach, but it also happens to be my natural way of being. And this gives me at least some modicum of control in that space.

 Art Gelwicks 41:04


My phone is set up now on my right hand side, and the only thing that's displaying is my calendar. And I have that the Calendar block shown up and I have it just in the day view that I can see exactly what's coming up on my calendar just on my phone, and it's out of the way

 Francis Wade 41:18

in that in that candle stand up.

 41:20


Exactly. It's just a desk doc.

 Francis Wade 41:22

On the desk. Yeah, just little desktop desktop. Okay. Here's the other thing. I'd love to have Hamada voice interface for the calendar. It's called Google Assistant appointment to four o'clock Google will do that.

 Raymond Sidney-Smith 41:34

Yeah, Google's Google definitely has your back there. Yeah, Google can do all of that. Today. It was to me, can I

 Francis Wade 41:39

take a current status? Here, you can see a schedule scheduled time to work on the paper at four



Raymond Sidney-Smith 41:44

o'clock? Yes.



Francis Wade 41:45

I've tried. I've tried Google. Is it a system on my on my Android phone? Yes. Well, that's all that this takes me to a whole new realm of opportunity and possibility. Thanks, guys.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 41:57

So that folks kind of have an idea when when you ask the assistant to do certain things, you are asking them on kind of three levels. One is you can enter something into the calendar. And so you can just say, you know, you know, schedule this particular thing, then you can ask it to remind you to do something, and that, you know, remind me to is a trigger for it to create a task to remind you to do something at that particular time. And then of course, there's the setting of timers, you can name those timers. So that you can say I want to be done with something by X amount of time, or I need to shift gears and leave for my next meeting by X amount of time. And so you can tell it, you know, set a timer called, and then whatever you want to call it, I find that to be really useful. Because it's not about starting something at some point, it's about ending something at some point. And that helps you shift. So I can have something end and trigger me and then I know Okay, now I 15 or 20 minutes to get to the next place. So I need to wrap up what I'm doing right now and make that transition. And then that next calendar event is there waiting for me. So you can you have all three of those things all done by voice from within the assistant.



Francis Wade 43:10

Or I welcome I work on an article on this because I've never I would love to.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 43:15

I will put links to all of the support articles for Google into the show notes for everybody. Yeah, it's very, very hard tried



Francis Wade 43:21

Google assistant in a while, because when I tried to do the things I'm talking about a few years ago, I was like, got it. It was I couldn't figure out how to do it. And I gave up and I said this is only good for running, opening an app and doing basic stuff. And I quit.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 43:36

It has come it has come a long way. All right. Any final thoughts for folks about hyper

scheduling and tools associated with hyper scheduling?



43:44

Yes, I, I wanted to, I think you make a great point that this kitchen is key. But also part of that hyper scheduling and time blocking is people tend to think and this is when I need to work. And one of the things that are key is how you're going to manage those transition points that we had just discussed the end, it is really important. Okay, when is the next transition point and how I'm transitioning from this point to the next one. And I think there is not enough time on in most people have not spent enough time really perfecting that transition point. So they come and work the blogs but then the blocks doesn't work because they get stuck into the process or the process prior gets a little bit longer. So it is really important to make sure that you work into both the transition points how they should end and how the next one should start.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 44:47

I will close out with just a little bit of conversation on the idea of perseverance when it comes to any level of time blocking or hyper scheduling or otherwise. It's very easy to create a schedule and then And, as David Sparks talks about, you know, change, things change, and therefore you move them around. But if you move them around too much, then there comes a sense of, Well, nothing is really fixed, fixed. So I can just do anything whenever, and therefore you start to procrastinate or just play Tetris with your calendar for the sake of it, it becomes a game for it becomes illusory. And that is not necessarily useful to you. So if you do feel the sense of something appears in your calendar, and you feel that level of resistance to doing it, lean into the resistance, be uncomfortable for a little while and work through it, your brain is a very good energy saving device, and it likes to save energy. And so it will just say, Okay, let's do nothing as opposed to doing that thing. But if you if you just stay with it long enough, give it a few minutes. And you will see that if you just take action, you will inevitably find momentum with regard to those blocks of time. And that's very, very powerful to just overcoming that inertia, so to speak, when it comes to being productive. And that will make your time blocking more effective over time. And that, of course, will then reinforce you overcoming any levels of procrastination in the moment that you might find. And so good luck with that. And so this brings us to the end of our conversation, but certainly not the end of the discussion. So if any of you would like, you can head over to the Podcast, episode page@productivitycast.net. There on the podcast website at the bottom of the page, you can leave a comment or question. And of course, we read all of your questions and comments. And if there's a response necessary, we will go ahead and do that. You can always find every episode by the three digit number. So if you go to productivitycast.net, forward slash 001, you will get to Episode One, Episode 2002, and so on and so forth. So feel free to find those on each episode page, you'll find our show notes, you'll find links to any of the things that we discussed. And also text transcripts the both in a readable format that you could just expand and read on the page, as well as one that you can download as a PDF. I want to express my thanks to Augusto Pinaud, Francis Wade and Art Gelwicks for joining me here on ProductivityCast Each week, you can learn more about them and their work by visiting productivitycast.net too. I'm Ray Sidney-Smith on behalf of all of us here at ProductivityCast Here's to your productive life.



Voiceover Artist 47:36

That's it for this productivity cast, the weekly show about all things productivity with your hosts, Ray Sidney-Smith and Augusto Pinaud with Francis Wade and Art Gelwicks.