

# 140-defining-personal-productivity-productivitycast

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

definition, terms, productivity, people, management, define, talking, productive, agree, personal, defects, conversation, problem, psychological, means, understand, terminology, gtd, objects, melancholy

## SPEAKERS

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

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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.

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**Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:26**

Welcome, gentlemen, and welcome to our listeners to this episode. Today, we are going to be talking about terminology. That is, what are the terms that we use in the personal productivity world, and really, why there is so much confusion around those particular words that we use the importance of them. And then we'll talk about some of the terms that we all have defined over time. Some words, we've created some terms, or phrases we've created, and why. And then, of course, what we can do to make this a little bit more useful for everybody. And so let's start off with why is this important? What's the importance of the productivity terminology, the personal productivity, terminology that we use every day,



**Augusto Pinaud 01:11**

when, when I begin working into personal productivity and researching into practice, personal productivity, one of the things that surprised me was the definition that most people have off time. Mostly because the definition has nothing to do with time and everything to do with scarcity. Actually, if you pull a dictionary, the definition that most people have of time is actually the definition of viscosity. So as you look and begin from the wrong definition, to build personal productivity, the only thing you can do is build a rock model. You know, when you start with wrong assumptions, it's hard to build something that actually works. And that works for you. And that is the problem. And that happened was so many of the definitions plus invented work that some experts for color in some way are so people who study to spend time and study and decide to create to define things that it makes sense on the sale of the book that they're trying to do, but not necessarily on the definitions that people manage. And all that create. Over the long term is confusion.



**Francis Wade 02:28**

I think it's an unavoidable confusion because we are talking about psychological objects, not physical objects. And psychological objects have a history to them. They change over time. And they're they're made up and they are, they're very dependent on Lang on the language that you happen to be speaking in. We had a conversation off air about German language, German, and how words get made up all the time. And that's very easy to do when you're talking about intangible psychological objects. It's harder to do when you're talking about a tree, which you know, a tree today is pretty much the same tree as it was million years ago. But something like insomnia is a pretty recently made up word, because like 100 years old, and the way we use it obviously, is very different than people thought about insomnia 100 years ago. So a word like time when Weinstein came along and led us to think very differently about time. And before clocks were invented in this 12 or 1300s. People thought very differently about time then also. So as we create these words, they allow us to do different things. They help us in some ways, they hold us back and others. But the truth is that the meanings keep changing. And the fact that they keep changing, meaning that we have to pay attention to them, if we want to use them to, for example, make improvements in our individual lives, we don't have a choice. This is like a moving target. Bunch of moving targets.



**Art Gelwicks 04:11**

Yeah, to meet the definition, debate falls into the same realm as in rules for games. If you're not interested in the game, the rules, not interested in the game, but the objectives are not

not playing by the same rules, you're not going to know what the objectives are, you're not going to accomplish or achieve the common goals. So if you use a parallel, say American football, if everybody does not know or agree to what a touchdown means, then anybody can run around saying they scored a touchdown. There's a common definition, there is an agreed upon standard of measure. And that's what so many definitions provide is that standardized concept of measure and unfortunately, within the productivity space, that seems to be one of the sponginess things that we have is getting everybody to agree on And what definitions actually are. And there's two things that I run into all the time. And I've caught myself doing it. And I have to correct when I do it as well. One is I miss identification of definitions, applying the wrong definition for something, because that's what we think it means. But we're not 100%. Sure. The other one, and I almost want to say it's a little bit more insidious is the adaptation of definitions to support a particular model, platform, agenda, whatever you want to say, to put something into place, so that it goes Oh, see, because productivity is x, my stuff is accurate as why? Well, that's assuming that everybody agrees that x is what productivity is, and I don't believe that's the case. And so many, so many situations. So having a common definition for things that is, I don't want to say globally, agreed upon, but as closely commonly agreed upon as possible, really makes this even approachable. When we start to look at improving people's productivity and efficiency.



### Raymond Sidney-Smith 06:15

I somewhat agree. And I think that what you're talking about there, art is probably why I have so many terms of art that I have created for all kinds of personal productivity situations, except that mine was built out of necessity, not out of building a model, and then choosing to shove a square peg into a round hole, it was, oh, this thing that I'm doing needs for me to define it. So I can explain it to others. And so it became a just a need to be able to create something to contain that new thought, that new method process or whatnot. And so I'm hopefully doing it on the opposite side of what you're talking about, which is I'm not, I'm not creating something and then trying to pigeonhole these pieces into it. But really choosing to embrace the, the term because it helps it's helpful in being able to explain it to others, I also find that my biggest challenge with personal productivity terminology is that we don't know whose term we're using, when we talk about any given term. If someone says to me, something I know like a time demand, I'm very clear, in the sense that I know that that came from a certain Francis Wade. And so if we go ahead and then say to me, Oh, well, a time demand is something else, not the one that I know is the term or the phrase created by Francis that I'm lost. And we don't have that kind of contextual framework. Right now, in the personal productivity community, people will use certain things like task or to do or even personal productivity, but they haven't really given us the foundation for what they mean by that. And when we enter into conversation, we're not in the appropriate context, you're talking about time blocking, or time boxing, or any of those other terms that are kind of loose, they can be defined many different ways. We're talking past each other, because you may think of it as being something very different than I think of it as being frequently, you know, we use the methodology getting things done. If we all were to define what getting things done well is today, we'd all have different definitions. And that is because we take pieces from the methodology. And I find that to also be somewhat confusing for people, when we then take that from the kind of macro level, have a methodology and when we bleed it down to the very individual pieces. Methods are incredibly difficult to, quote unquote, define because they are by nature, instructional. And so when we, when we try to give terms to things, they end up becoming confusing for people, because if I say GTD, or I say weekly review, or if I say next action, those three things are unique. Only one of them, by definition, will be useful to you, right? Because getting things done, or GTD is going to be a

method and instruction, weekly review, same thing. Maybe you can define it in a in a core way. But it's still going to be confusing without giving you step by step instructions. But the next action I can actually define and tell you what it is, I can I can say it is a physical next step I can see you doing that will move a project forward. So it brings something to completion. And so the next action is something that we can define the other things we can describe, in that sense, Francis,

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Francis Wade 09:39

the way you're getting things done as defined, most people define as a time management book. Wikipedia defines that way the author doesn't. Let's that's just as basic as it gets. If he's saying that it's not about this, everybody else say saying it is about this. That's right at the heart of you know what we're about in terms of of improvement in that area.

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Art Gelwicks 10:01

There's also a big difference between defining a thing, or a specific concept. And what we're terming or we often see termed as definitions that are broad concepts and weekly reviews, the one that just jumped to mind for me, because we understand kind of what that is, you can write down a one or two sentence definition, I'm using air quotes. But it doesn't mean that that's an accurate definition, because that's a complex process. A weekly review has multiple steps, multiple ways, engaging it, it is by its very design different for individuals and processes and various platforms. So defining something that that by its very nature is, I don't want to say undefinable, but designed to be malleable. Just clutters the entire conversation. And we have to break it down further. GTD is one of those that you get into a challenge of capital, GTD versus lowercase GTD and just having a conversation, say, Yeah, I want to get things done doesn't mean I'm talking about getting things done. It's the Kleenex effect. So we have to be very careful with our terminology, not necessarily from the standpoint of, do I need everything to be exactly defined? No. But what I do need to recognize is that some terms require more than just a line in a glossary. They're much more complex, and they have to be broken down to be able to get everybody onto the same page.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 11:45

And last on this topic is is the fact that many of the time management, personal productivity, and otherwise used words, they're pulled from different arenas, they're pulled from, sometimes psychology, sometimes project management, they're pulled from different fields of experience. And those fields of study or experience are, they're not the same thing, when we bring them into personal productivity, they become this a different entity. And so what we perceive as being say, a professional activity, in say, the project management space becomes very different in the personal productivity space. And that creates confusion. And then the The worst is when we take psychological terms, and we use them in popular psychological parlance. And so therefore, it becomes this topic or of discussion around things like consciousness, or people talking about, you know, unconscious items and those kinds of things. You know, I tend to be a little bit clinical in that sense, my, you know, in the way in which I speak about those terms. And yet, at the same time, I'm not necessarily working with the psychological definition in those senses, and then does create confusion. And I think that it's one of the things that we have to

walk a tight line with, there's a there's a tightrope walk, as it relates to many of these pseudo psychological terms. I wish that we could just banish the word subconscious from all productivity language altogether, just never that we can all just agree never to use it again. And we would all be better off for it. Because there's just a maligned of the term. And I'm sure that Freud would be rolling over in his grave. If he knew how much we use that term, incorrectly, most of the time,

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Francis Wade 13:34

equals equals the question, why is it so difficult to Why is personal productivity terminology so difficult to understand? I think we're agreeing that there's a lack of common ground, which is what our call it today is about, right? It's about creating common ground, at least between the four of us, the rest of the world may disagree vehemently, but at least we're putting a stake in the ground to see okay, there are lots of definitions floating around makes communication difficult. It makes understanding hard, it makes progress impossible. But by fixing certain terms in certain ways, we're hoping to give everybody a firm foundation upon which the build



Raymond Sidney-Smith 14:13

Absolutely. And so today's episode is about us going a little bit further toward that shared space in terms of what can we all either agree on or show where we do contrast. And that contrasting is not bad. And that's the that's the thing that I want to welcome everyone in the personal productivity community to is that, you know, as we frequently do here on ProductivityCast, we don't agree on everything, but we can come to the boundaries of where those things are gray or are hard lines in terms of agreement and disagreement and find use in that. And it's not that you know, every recommendation I ever give is going to be useful to people and likewise for each of us, but it will resonate Meet with someone who's listening somewhere at some time. And so it's really useful for everybody to be able to hear what helps others in that sense. And so I think defining things is just really helpful in in that way. So let's start with perhaps a few terms, I think time management is probably a really good place to start. And then personal productivity. And I will just make the caveat that no matter what personal productivity is, is, I think the appropriate term for us to use when we use the term productivity, generally, it ends up bleeding into the confusion, confusion realm, again, because productivity is typically an economics term, when we when we talk about labor, and that becomes just very, very difficult for people to understand. So just know that when we're using the term productivity, we're really meeting personal productivity. And for the most part, we should always be using the term personal productivity so that we know that we're talking about the the broader language around time management, and personal performance. So let's start with time management. How would you all define time management,

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Art Gelwicks 16:17

time management is one of those tricky ones. That's, that's one that's a landmine waiting to happen, because you have to deconstruct the the term before you start to define it. And we've already identified that defining time is a hard one. So time management, at least in common parlance, to me is the effective management of what can be accomplished in a fixed resource, which in this case, is time because time is invaluable, you can't add time you can't take it

away, it's just what it is. So managing to time is actually the more accurate definition of it in my mind. And the term time management, I think creates its own problem. Because you're you can't manage something that is inflexible. So it's almost a term that I, you know, this is going to be a problem with this series that we do here, I'm going to want to throw out a bunch of terms that I use, I'm not going to want to use them anymore. And the more I think about time management, time management is one of those terms, I'm thinking that I want to throw out. Because there's no way to easily say, time management means anything useful. Because by its definition, you are asking someone to do the impossible.

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Francis Wade 17:45

The same problem is recognized by academics, at least in the psychology world, where most of the time management research has been done. And there are a few, like a few papers that basically say there is no common definition. But it hasn't stopped people from writing about the same or different academics writing about it without defining it. So it's a it's a mega problem, I think. And I wrote a wrote a paper on it after studying the problem for a year trying to figure out okay, what does time mean? And what does management mean? We put the two together, what do you get, and I was trying to solve the problem for, you know, the common manager and subordinate, that a manager says to his or her subordinate that isn't used to improve your time management. The subordinate really should ask, Which definition are you using? That should be the next question. Because you really, you really don't know what school of thought what what symptom he or she really has in mind, that makes him or her think that oh, you need your time management issues. I've also talked to lots of people potential clients, who are potentially perennially late, they can't get to their email, they or they don't have time for exercise or family and they say, Oh, time management issues and they say, oh, no, no, I'm really good at time management. And I, you know, whatever definition they're using, includes includes their skill, whatever their skin happens to me, it doesn't cover all the defects in their day to day living that i From the outside looking in a scrape the time management issues. So it's a it's a core problem, you can't have conversations unless you have a you can't do we can't really do research, unless you have a definition to begin with. And I think what you're seeing there art is that the deeper you go to define time and define management, it actually takes you into the world have more psychological objects, and more and more and behind those there are more and behind those are more. And like I said before, psychological objects, the meaning of them changes over time. So by For Einstein, time management may have meant something and after Einstein, it definitely means something different. So for even for us to have a conversation about it, we'd have to agree on a working definition and then say, Okay, well, that's our starting point. That's our building block. No, we can talk about it. But that's a necessary step,

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Art Gelwicks 20:17

take the term and reverse it. And I think all of a sudden, we've got a different structure, instead of talking about time management, if we talk about managing time, well, we've all agreed at the beginning that we can't change time, the only thing you know, if you try to manage time, it's assuming that something's broken there, the only thing that can be broken there as your clock doesn't work, right. But with the types of things you just described, its workload issues, its throughput issues, its efficiency issues, none of those have to do with actually time, it's a matter of what can be accomplished. And defining the period that you feel that you can

accomplish those in but that period is well without your well outside your realm of control. So the exercise of going through and defining terminology, I think we're seeing this as an excellent case of it, the terminology has to be deconstructed to understand exactly does it even apply to the concepts that are there, I can't think of a case where you are, you would truly be able to manage time. Therefore it makes it no erroneous statement. You can manage your workload, you can manage all those other things, but I can't make time take longer or shorter. Therefore, it doesn't help anyone, myself included, to try to measure things and evaluate the effectiveness of platform changes and methodologies. Based on time management as a concept,



Raymond Sidney-Smith 21:55

what I want to do is give a few definitions. And then we can go from there, which is to say that Wikipedia, definition of time management, I think, to be confusing, and interesting, all wrapped up in a bubble. And so Wikipedia defines time management, as quoting here, the process of planning and exercising conscious control of the time spent on specific activities, especially to increase effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity, and quote, I'll just leave it there, as to how you create confused confusion among people. I will note for myself, I like to take things and parse them apart, so I can understand them. And I generally think of time as a relative experience of past, present, and future and knowing what those three things are, and the measurement thereof. So time itself is something that we know and can measure as being happened before now or later. And we can we have this relative experience of that. And then of course management is for me, I tend to think of the practice of applying control or influence on people and objects. And as Francis noted, you know, you can have psychological objects, and you can have physical objects. And soon we'll have virtual objects. But at the present moment, we, we know how to apply some level of control or influence on people and things generally in our worlds. And once it becomes a practice something that we actually do over and over again, that is management. So we take those two words, together, time management becomes the practice of those two things. And it becomes less about the actual time and more about what we're doing inside of that time. And so that's where the the two words coming together, as art noted becomes somewhat contradictory, because you're not capable of actually controlling the time. So when we take the two words together, then becomes an means something different, which is then the practice of applying or controlling, you know, applying control or influence on people and objects becomes the issue toward greater effectiveness, greater efficiency within your present, right or your future presumably. So it's applying that kind of work to how do I control or influence both myself because I'm a people right on people and objects in the the present or the near future. So that I can actually whatever it is, be more efficient, be more effective in that course of time. So that for me is what time management is. Agree, disagree. Do you have other thoughts that percolate from that,

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Francis Wade 24:50

I think is a workable definition. The challenge I have with it is that it for the same same actions that you take you could also call them personal productivity. And it could be just as useful. So if I decide to time block my calendar, I could say I'm using a time management technique, someone else could say I'm using a personal productivity technique. And they're both right. So they're both, to me, they're both photo handles on the problem, which are useful, you know, it's like a point of entry, or a suitcase has a handle on it so that you can carry it, it's a level that you to accomplish something bigger. So I think the time management as you define it is one handle



on the suitcase. personal productivity could be another handle on the suitcase. Task Management could be another handle on the suitcase. But getting things done is which is kind of task management is another handle on the suitcase. I think all the different handles are, you know, they have their place. There are not exclusive definitions. And they are very culturally, you know, for those of us who are productivity geeks, we use particular language because it allows us to put a handle on the suitcase and then carry it. So nothing wrong with it. It's just that it's not a psychological object, you've got to be aware that you're in this zone in which these definitions can change. And they have usefulness. And they're probably useful for a time. And then after a while is that being useful? They I wrote an article on the word melancholy. So melancholy was like a big thing over 100 years ago. So people talked about that was like, you have a melancholy melancholy today. What we don't know what the heck that is. But back then it was a useful level on a particular kind of intervention, you probably went and did exercise to get rid of the melancholy you travel to the Caribbean to get rid of the minute. And we're still doing those things today. We just don't use the handle of melancholy today. So I think it's fine. I don't think it's a it's not like an obstacle. It's just that when we're using when we're using these terms as think we need to be cognizant that what's the word there, they've lived their limited usefulness there. And if they kept tempted to get the job done, then by all means use it. But people go a step further, and then turn these things into religions. And that's where problems start. Because then they want to lock into one definition, and then insist that everybody else use that definition and not use whatever handle you want to use, because your handle is inferior to mine. And then you get into a different whole different kind of problem. But that problem infects every, I think affects every school of thought. And I think part of what we're trying to do is to at least say, Let's agree on the common school of thought. And then let's try and make improvements based on what our agreement looks like.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 27:57

Noting that I do see time management and personal productivity as uniquely distinct to things. And the reason for that is that management, that practice of applying controller influence on people and objects, the thing on which we're trying to apply that control or influence becomes different, it becomes more granular when we talk about, say, project management, or when we talk about performance management, because we're talking about these kinds of things like fitness is a type of management. And we have many different types of fitnesses. So I do see personal productivity as being an umbrella term. And we'll get to that shortly. But it becomes an umbrella term for the other types of things in which we, in which we manage, we have task management, time management, product, project management, and so on, so forth. Those are all things that fall underneath the umbrella in just in my view. And again, I could be I could be convinced otherwise, but that's just how I've constructed my own latticework of terminology so that I can control the the view of where all of these various terms fall into my own world.



Art Gelwicks 29:05

Yeah, not too badly paraphrase the movie Dune, but if you can define a thing, you can control a thing. And that's when we look at these terms. I'm not an English major by far, but the terms that we're throwing out here are a composite of a noun and a verb. Task Management, note management, time management, it's our the thing at the beginning is the noun, but the verb is the action that we're going to apply to that. And if you look at these terms, we understand what notes are, but do we notes are different for people, we understand what tasks are but doing



tasks are different. And then to apply this generic amorphous concept of management to those things. Makes the definition harder to understand rather than clarifying it. And that's where I think we have to be very careful as well. As people who operate within this space and as professionals in this space, we have to be careful that we do not misconstrue to people. A term as a definition, as not a fixed point of measure. This is not an indicator on a ruler. This is a larger concept. This is something that requires understanding, interpretation and evaluation. And we have to be clear with that do not go through and say, Yeah, this is what that means. If you can't say exactly what that is, and show it and define it in such a way that there is no debate between multiple people, then it's not a definition. It's a concept. And we have to look at things from that perspective,

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### Augusto Pinaud 30:46

is difficult because as we were discussing, every definition, it's not a definition, if I build a dictionary right now, and any work that we consider, okay, that's a definition. The problem here is personal productivity, time management, we start with a definition, good or bad, deep or not deep doesn't matter. And then we start adding our own salsa to to those tacos, you know, it's, we are making tacos, but then each one of us are going to add their own salsa, and that is a real taco. And that is the reason as in tacos is so hard to find a good one. Okay, because it's only good one, you know, when have your own friends were saying when it's your own handle, that that's the only handle that work. So the problem is how we standardize something that has been completely honest, standarized, number one, and number two, where every industry comes with their own terms, and then we try to grasp them up and really apply the one that will benefit us the most. So when I talk to clients, one of the things that is fun, and we talk about personal productivity and time management, well, it depends. The definition in general is what is going to make them look good, not what necessarily, the definition will help them to move forward.

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### Art Gelwicks 32:24

That's another one that we haven't really dug into. But and I don't want to dig into it right now. But there's a lot of terminology that has been created just to support marketable concepts. And we have to be very, some of them, some of whom are very good. Some of the terminology works. Bullet Journal is, as an example, the terminology works, it kind of describes the thing, but it has become this def this generic term. This is bullet journaling. Well, what is it? It's still too broad still to open. And I even take a little bit issue with personal productivity as a as a term because we can't really define it because it's a counter term to something else. If it's personal productivity, what's the alternative? Because there has to be something else otherwise, you wouldn't have had to define it in the first place. And that would be non personal. Is that work productivity? Is corporate productivity as a business? Where what is the counterpoint to that definition to be able to provide us the perspective and relevance to understand what these are? And if we don't go through and look at those counter positions and say, oh, okay, it's not that. So it's this, I can understand why people get so confused. When they look at various tools, they look at methodologies, and they say, Oh, they're all using the same term. They're all using the same reference language, but they're using it in totally different ways. And that lack of standardization, I think, really drags down a lot of what we're talking about here, it makes it harder, to be more quote, productive. And we still haven't even gotten back to the definition of what the heck is productive.



**Raymond Sidney-Smith 34:13**

I hear what you're saying aren't. And I do understand that there is a piece here which is potentially reductive, or at least derivative, from the perspective that if we say the word productivity, or productive, we're really utilizing terms from other fields. Again, productivity already came from from a space, which when we think about economics, or or in the professional sphere, it's really a business term utilized for calculating output. All right, what effort required was required to create output. So we do have a definition for productivity, which is why I avoid it. When I talk a talk about personal productivity. I modify productivity to be personal so that it is in right relationship with what we're really discussing, which is Have the practices that we utilize in our own world. And so I'll just throw this out here, which is that I always define personal productivity in some combination of saying, it's about doing the right things in the right amount to get the right results. And it is a an umbrella term, to explain that we have all of these pieces that come together. And I guess I'm just less concerned about the amorphousness of it, that it's kind of a it's like a black hole, it sucks everything in, you know, once you hit the event horizon, you're in and you're not coming back out. And so personal productivity ends up being that that omnibus term for me, as opposed to being something that needs to have a a clear cut. So precise definition that anyone touching, it is going to know exactly what it is because what what's productive for you is not productive for me necessarily, and vice versa. And, and that is why that term ends up being more useful to me than not because it is more encompassing than not, it's inclusive.

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**Art Gelwicks 36:10**

I very much use the same definition. I use that all the time you do the right things in the right ways at the right times. But this, the more again, the more we kick this around. It's a fascinating thought exercise to me, because when we talk about being productive, there's a countermeasure to it, how do I know I'm not what is then the definition of being unproductive, or unproductivity, or lack of what however, badly, I want to mangle the English language that counterpoint really becomes the more critical because to meet the definition, you have to successfully stop being the other thing. So looking at the Merriam Webster Dictionary, definition of the word productive, just the first one here, having the quality or power of producing, especially in abundance. Well, right away, I'm going to take that tissue. I don't agree with that definition. But in certain circumstances, in certain cases, yeah, I get that you are producing an output, you have a volume of production. But how often when we think about the things that we do, and the people we interact with, how many of those people are, quote, producing things in volume. If that, if that were truly the definition, commonly accepted of being productive, we would all be cranking widgets, we would all be doing piece work and generating as much stuff as we could. Regardless of quality, there's no definite, there's no indication of crew producing quality output. It's the quality or power of producing of generation, it's turning ribs on an engine. So this is where, again, I really struggle. And I know all of all four of us do this, when we coach people understand what that term means to you first, and then between the coach and the individual say, Okay, we're going to work with that definition. And we're going to find ways to apply that as your consistent measure,

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**Francis Wade 38:27**

for example. the working approach I use is to sort of bring in the human element. So are you

right, that those kinds of production definitions are that's what I was trained in as a as an operations research industrial engineer? At school, that's those were the you know, we were we were primarily focused on machines. And the idea was that you would get the machine going and keep it as busy as for as long as possible. And, you know, it was, the idea was that you're working with inanimate objects that produced something. So when, when, when that language got translated into the human world, the idea transferred, which is that yeah, sure, a human being wants to produce as much as possible. Of course, that doesn't really work. Because human machine is a physical object and a human being is a psychological object. Or there's aspects of our psychology that are so important that we can't leave them behind. So I picked up a different I picked up a different approach. And I said, Okay, maybe productivity, and this is what I use with my clients pretty much productivity means accomplishing what you intend to accomplish without defects. No defects in this context is not the defects of producing widgets, but it's stress. Having a life balance, managing All your email, all the things that people complain about, I pretty much made a list of them. And I said, Okay, these are all the defects or unwanted symptoms that people were trying to be productive are trying to rid themselves of. And some of them are very soft, some of them are harder, like missing a deadline is a pretty hard defect. But being free of time, stress or having peace of mind, is in a way a soft defect. But it doesn't really matter. Because we as human beings want to be free of all the defects. So when I'm working with someone, the question is, well, which unwanted symptoms are top of mind for you? Which ones are you in particular, experiencing? That have had you call me in the first place? So we have a conversation about, I don't use the word defects. But that's what that's really where my thinking is coming from? I'll say What are you trying to get rid of? What do you what do you wish you never had, in terms of your experience. And so that's, that's my approach to sort of bringing in the fact that this is a human being struggling with psychological aspect of what looks like a production production process from a particular from industrial engineering point of view, it looks like a cycle a physical process. But it's not



Raymond Sidney-Smith 41:29

just in furtherance of your, your point at the beginning, Frances which is that many of these terms like business terminology came from military terminology. And that becomes even more difficult. Most of business terms really did come from a military hierarchical structure. And so those then have bled into no pun intended, the the world of, of productivity, personal productivity, and that has made it even more for me a little bit discomforting. To your other point about defects. I usually coined that as pain, people tend to know what what physical or emotional pain they're experiencing. And so what you say as defect, I'm usually asking people for what challenges they're facing. And I usually use the terminology pain, and and it helps to trigger for people something that they can relate to.

A

Art Gelwicks 42:21

The thing that occurred to me just as we're talking about this is often the challenges people get into is they are trying to achieve someone else's definition of the term. So for example, let's let's take a manager direct report conversation, its annual review time, and the manager goes, you need to be more productive to get that raise. If you stop there, you have a problem, you have a problem on both sides of the equation, because you have not set the rules, you have not set the definition, I guarantee there is no common understanding as to what that is to achieve that standard. And yet, that's a conversation that happens all the time. Not only do you

have it within organizations, we have it within just individual conversations, you have a conversation with your significant other, I wish you would get more done. It's the same thing I wish you would be more productive. If define it, tell me what that standard is do you want is your definition of productivity, generating 14 TPS work reports by the end of day Friday. If that's it, then okay, now I have something that I can go towards, because it's a defined term in this context. And I think that's the one thing that we keep skirting around a little bit is that these definitions are highly contextually sensitive, they will adapt, depending on the conversation, the work environment, the rule environment, even the people involved, we need to apply that as part of our understanding. And honestly, there's nothing wrong with writing these things down and sharing them for common group people who are for common groups who are working towards an objective and saying, This is what it means when we say we're being productive. This is what the measure is. And you have to be able to do that. I don't know how many times I've gone through and defined systems for people. And the first thing we do is we have a glossary meeting, we put together a terminology list. And I'll ask because I get to play that dumb consultant card and said, I don't know what this stuff means, tell me what every one of these terms are. And we start talking through them like so this is what that term means. And guaranteed if it's 10 people in the room, four of them are gonna look at each other and go, Well, that's not what it means to me. And that becomes in this entire open discussion about the fact that they've never been playing by the same set of rules. So when we talk about things and the talking heads and on videos and on podcasts, you know, often will We'll throw terms out saying, oh, yeah, everybody understands that. No, it is worth the effort to say, in this context, in this conversation, this is what this term means.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 45:12

We'll actually tackle the terms side in the next episode, I think will be will be plenty of discussion for the next episode. But don't leave any final thoughts we want to leave folks with before we close out today's episode,



Art Gelwicks 45:22

my my only thing is this is conversation you need to have not not us. But each person needs to have this conversation with themselves and the other people around them, and understand what those common measures are. And I think start with yourself, write these terms down and see how many of those you can actually put something next to, I'm willing to bet half of them, you'll look at it and go, I don't know what that actually means.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 45:49

I would encourage people to go out there and think of the terms that they have been reading, none of you listening have not come across many of the terms we have talked about today. And certainly many more. And you may have been floating along, thinking that you knew the definition, and are reading materials that actually also include those definitions. And I invite you to go look at the various blog articles you've read and see how the author, the how they define when they write the material. And whether that context makes sense to you now, just do a little bit of reflection on that. Because I think that it would it's going to be illuminating to you to realize that many times the context is out of context, in terms of the term and you need to

you need to yourself, find out what that person means, you know, just make a comment on the blog and say, Hey, you used time management in this article. What do you mean by time management, and just hearing the author comment back with their definition can sometimes be incredibly insightful, and useful to you understanding what they really meant in that article. And it's not that their definition is wrong or right. As you can see, we all have different differing opinions, it's that knowing what they mean, when they write about these topics, then helps to inform and if they don't have a good definition for it, then you can apply your own and that will be useful as well. But I just really find it to be helpful to go out there and look at what you're reading and question it be inquisitive as to what these terms are, what these phrases are that are being utilized, and whether or not the authors of these articles have a way of explaining them that can be useful to you. We're gonna plant a flag in the sand. And we're gonna come back next episode. And when we do, we're going to talk about many of the terms that we have ourselves either come across and found issue with umbrage with their definitions, or that we have found lacking or avoid and we've created our own terms over the years and and explain the process by which we created those definitions. And so with that, thank you, gentlemen, for this conversation. We will leave it there and we will come back in our next episode to talk about the various personal productivity terms that we've created.



#### Voiceover Artist 48:12

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.