Stress-Free Productivity – Elusive Goal or Real Possibility?

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BC Library Conference, Burnaby, BC
April 17, 2009

What we’re going to do today

• GTD philosophy
• The basic process
• Practical exercise
• Personal reflections
• If you’re interested, buy the book

Basics of the Philosophy

• You can’t manage time, you can’t manage information overload, you can’t manage priorities
• You can manage your actions

The Five Keys

• Capture your commitments
• Clarify exactly what you need to do.
• Organize your lists, information, and materials
• Keep reminders in a system you review regularly
• Engage, take action

The basic process: Emptying your in-baskets

The scenario: You arrive at work to find...

Process each item

• Look at it. What is it? Is it actionable?
• If it’s not actionable:
  • Trash it
  • File it for reference
  • Store in a Maybe/Someday file
What is the Next Action?

- If actionable, clarify exactly what you need to do
- What is the next physical action which will move this towards completion?

Action!

- If takes less than two minutes, DO IT.
- Should someone else do it? DELEGATE.
- Otherwise, ADD to your "next action" list or calendar.

Capturing: What Has Your Attention?

"Mind Sweep"
- Fold a lined page in half to make 2 columns
- Write one item per line
- Write fast, no order, no analysis
- Go for quantity!

Triggers?

- Professional and personal activities
- Big and small stuff
- Concrete and abstract ideas/actions
- Things you have to do
- Things you want to do

Elaine’s Sample List

- Repaint deck
- Update will
- Send PARs and JDs to HR
- Update SLC consultation rooms
- Claim medical receipts
- Plan summer vacation
- Organize orientation activities
- Read student retention report

Clarifying: “Stuff” → Action

Divide another piece of paper into three categories and make these headings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stuff</th>
<th>Next Action(s)</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Stuff” → Action

- Write a few items from your list under Stuff
- Beside each item write the next action to:
  - Complete the task or
  - Accomplish the goal or
  - Move the project forward

First Cut

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stuff</th>
<th>Next Actions</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repaint deck</td>
<td>Buy paint</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update will</td>
<td>Call lawyer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send PARs and JDs to HR</td>
<td>Complete PAR details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim medical receipts</td>
<td>Gather receipts and complete form</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update consultation rooms</td>
<td>Get input from staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Really? Questions to Ponder

- Are these really the *most* specific next actions?
- Do you really need to do something else first?
- E.g. any unresolved issues or questions to deal with? Any information to gather?

More Specific

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stuff</th>
<th>Next Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repaint deck</td>
<td>Find paint chip and colour code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update will</td>
<td>Decide details with spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send PARs and JDs to HR</td>
<td>Talk to HR advisor re dates and codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim medical receipts</td>
<td>Set aside time on Saturday morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update consultation rooms</td>
<td>Send email query to staff with background info and response date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Getting Beyond Details

- Is GTD just a bunch of lists?
- How do “next actions” tie into big picture stuff like values, projects or goals?

“Nags” → Projects/Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stuff</th>
<th>Next Action(s)</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repaint deck</td>
<td>Find colour chip</td>
<td>Enjoyable back yard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update will</td>
<td>Talk to spouse</td>
<td>Organized personal affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send PARs and JDs to HR</td>
<td>Phone HR advisor</td>
<td>Staff in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim medical receipts</td>
<td>Schedule time</td>
<td>Money back!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update consultation rooms</td>
<td>Email staff for input</td>
<td>Effective / attractive service space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Personal Reflections

• Effective systems are personal & personalized
• Effective systems can’t be mandated or imposed

Most useful elements of the system?

Aka “life hacks”
• Trusted containers
• Someday/maybe list
• Agendas for people/meetings
• Waiting for...
• Next action discipline
• Email folder organization (e.g. @action)
• Technology agnostic

Most challenging elements?

• Getting started
• Regular review
• Getting in-basket to empty
  • Most “2 minute” tasks take 5 minutes
• Thinking is hard
• Deciding is hard
• Commitment is hard

GTD gaps?

• Privileges process/actions over people/relationships?
• Emphasizes happiness through work?
• Trees not forest? Seduction of detail/system (“productivity pr0n”)
• Prioritizing?
• Getting from “next action” to “horizon”?

Final Thoughts

• No magic bullet
• Effective processing takes time and commitment
• Not keen to commit to the “system”? Even small GTD ideas are very useful
• Ready to commit? dabble?

Getting Started with GTD

• Read the book
• Check out the “getting started” section of the Resource list (handout)
• Connect with a friend or two and commit to discussing experience in 2-3 months
• Get your hands dirty
Resources: Getting Started


Resources: Comparisons


(Getting Things Done/Never Check Email in the Morning/The 4-hour Work Week)


Resources: Critiques


...and More


43 Folders. http://www.43folders.com/