

Stress-Free Productivity – Elusive Goal or Real Possibility?

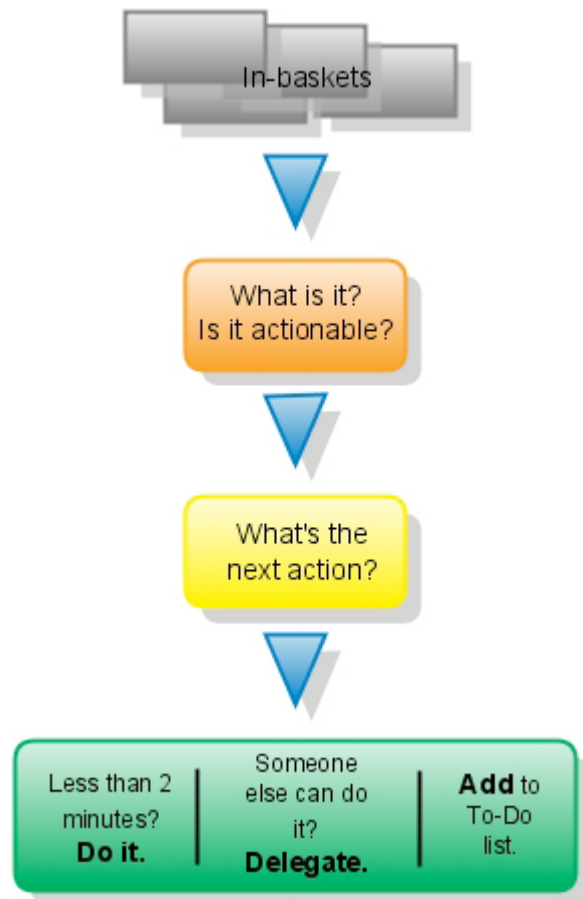
Developed by productivity consultant David Allen, Getting Things Done (GTD) can be understood and applied at many levels - and there are books, articles, newsletters, web sites and consulting firms to help you discover almost more than you may want to know. Just google "gtd" and sample from the firehose!

Gordon Coleman and Elaine Fairey have been applying the GTD "action management" approach in their personal and professional lives – with positive and intriguing results. In this session, they introduce the philosophy behind GTD, the basic steps for applying it in your home and work lives, and the challenges of customizing and committing to the system. They can't promise you'll achieve "mind like water," but you will learn self-organizing tips and techniques both large and small – and discover new ways to think about your life and work.

The diagram to the right illustrates the most basic GTD cycle: the process of capturing items in an in-basket, clarifying what needs to be done, organizing the tasks, and then beginning to engage in them. Whether applied to your email in-box first thing in the morning, or to the backlog of "stuff" in your garage, this is an amazingly powerful process for understanding your work and then doing it.

While there is power and insight in following a systematic GTD approach, there are also surprising productivity and stress-reduction pay offs in seemingly small GTD applications or "life hacks", to use the term coined by British technology journalist Danny O'Brien. Here are a few of our favourites:

1. Figure out a very concrete "next action" for everything you need to do to set projects big and small into smooth action.
2. Don't let the backlog of emails in your in-box be the reminder of things you need to do. Create an @ACTION email folder (the @ will force it to sort to the top of your email list). Move email you can't act on immediately here, also with a next-action on your to-do list.
3. Conduct a "mind sweep" to capture every nagging email, slip of paper, phone message, idea, and thought.



4. Don't rely on your mind to store your to-do list. Get all of your worries out of your brain and down on sheets of paper or onto online lists. Otherwise you'll continue to worry about them.
5. Conduct a mind sweep or better yet, an actual review, as a seamless way to get back on track with all your obligations after the end of a project requiring single-minded focus, after a period of crisis - or after returning from vacation. Review your complete inventory regularly to visit a reduced stress "happy place" more often!
6. Set up Agenda folders for all the people or groups you meet with regularly to capture topics and questions that come up between meetings. The Task feature in your online organizer works well as a place to set up these folders.
7. Keep a Someday/Maybe list. Store to-do's and projects there if they represent future ambitions or work you know you cannot start immediately.
8. Don't put any item on your calendar unless it truly HAS to be done that day. Think time-specific meetings and appointments, not "I hope to finish X by this date."

Detailed handouts and worksheets will be distributed to session attendees.

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