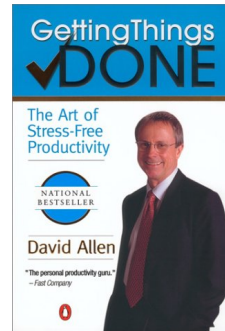


Stress-Free Productivity for Librarians: The Getting Things Done (GTD) System



Gordon Coleman -- gordonc@eln.bc.ca

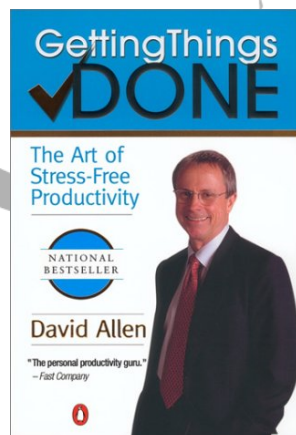
BC Electronic Library Network

PNLA/WLA Conference, Victoria, B.C.

August 12, 2010

(With thanks to Elaine Fairey of Simon Fraser University Library for some of the slides in this presentation.)

What we're going to do today



- GTD philosophy
- The basic process: empty your in-box
- Practical exercise
- Personal reflections
- If you're interested, buy the book

The Basic GTD Worldview

- Bottom up; details first; trees, not forest
- You can't "manage" time, information overload, or priorities -- but you *can* manage your actions



spike55151, "My Newest Microscope, Purchased Just today", 2007.
<<http://www.flickr.com/photos/spike55151/417096716/>>
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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



German Chocolate Ladies, "GTD 11/14/06 Inbox Processing", 2006.
<<http://www.flickr.com/photos/germanchocolateladies/298466198/>>
Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic.

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?

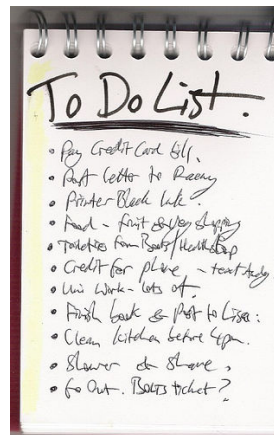
irfy, "Sign on an autobody shop", 2008.
<<http://www.flickr.com/photos/irfy/2336119073/>>
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Favorite GTD Quote

“Most of the to-do lists I’ve seen over the years are merely listings of ‘stuff’, not inventories of the real work that needed to be done. ... The vast majority of people have been trying to get organized by rearranging incomplete lists of unclear things”

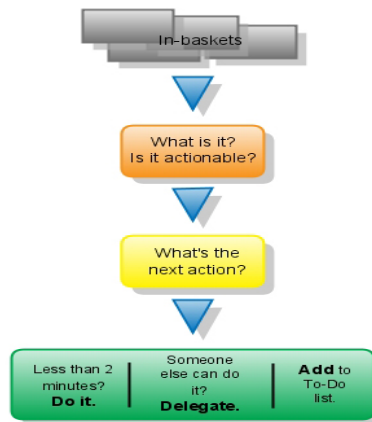
Action!

- If takes less than two minutes, DO IT.
- Should someone else do it? DELEGATE.
- Otherwise, ADD to your “next action” list or calendar -- *and then move it out of the in-basket.*



ebby, "to do list", 2005.
<<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ebby/11409154/>>
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Emptying your In-box: Flowchart



The Five Keys of GTD

1. Capture your commitments *in a limited number of in-baskets.*
2. Empty and process them regularly, clarifying exactly what you need to do.
3. Organize a *single trusted* Next Action list.
4. Keep reminders in a system you review regularly.
5. Engage, take action.



practicalowl, "Old keys", 2006.
<<http://www.flickr.com/photos/practicalowl/248282683/>>
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Capturing: The “Mind Sweep” - What Has Your Attention?

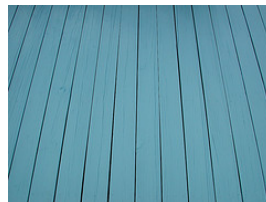


Schnittke, "broom", 2005.
<<http://www.flickr.com/photos/anspach/10489310/>>
Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic.

- Grab a piece of paper
- Write down projects, problems, challenges which are on your mind
- One per line
- Professional, personal, big, small, abstract, “stuck projects” ...
- Write fast, no order, no analysis

Elaine's Sample List

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



Editor B, "Blue Deck", 2009.
<<http://www.flickr.com/photos/editor/3385854393/>>
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Clarifying: “Stuff” → Next Actions

Stuff	Next Action(s)	

- Get a new piece of paper and fold it to make three columns
- Write a few items from your list under Stuff
- Beside each item write the Next Action

First Cut

Stuff	Next Actions	
Repaint deck	Buy paint	
Update will	Call lawyer	
Send PARs and JDs to HR	Complete PAR details	
Claim medical receipts	Gather receipts and complete form	
Update consultation rooms	Get input from staff	

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

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

Getting Beyond Details

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



tochis, "Achieving Goals", 2008.
<<http://www.flickr.com/photos/tochis/2512323454/>>
Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 2.0 Generic.

“Nags” → Projects/Goals

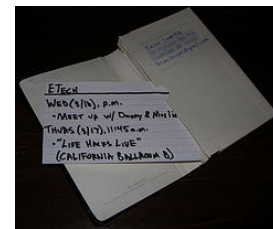
Stuff	Next Action(s)	Outcome
Repaint deck	Find colour chip	Enjoyable back yard
Update will	Talk to spouse	Organized personal affairs
Send PARs and JDs to HR	Phone HR advisor	Staff in place
Claim medical receipts	Schedule time	Money back!
Update consultation rooms	Email staff for input	Effective / attractive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

Personal Reflections

- Effective systems are personal & personalized
- Effective systems can't be mandated or imposed

Most useful elements of the system?

- Trusted containers
 - Someday/maybe list
 - Agendas for people/meetings
 - Waiting for..
- Weekly reviews
- Email folder organization (e.g. @action)
- Technology agnostic



Brian Sawyer, "Hipster PDA To-Do Item:
'Life Hacks Live'", 2005.
<<http://www.flickr.com/photos/olivepress/63667441/>>
Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic

Most challenging elements?

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



mikep, "Climbing the Coxcomb", 2005. <<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mikep/32085521/>>
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GTD gaps?

- Privileges actions over people and relationships?
- Trees not forest?
- Seduction of the system vs. getting down to work
- Prioritizing?
- Finite projects vs. behaviour changes

Final Thoughts



Velo Steve, "Lap 3 - Commitment", 2005.
<<http://www.flickr.com/photos/juniorvelo/18349425/>>
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- No magic bullet
- Effective processing takes time and commitment
- Not keen to commit to the "system"? Even small GTD ideas are very useful
- So ... what are your next actions?

Getting Started with GTD

- Try out 2-3 ideas heard today
- Read articles about GTD (see resource list)
- Get the book
- Connect with a friend and commit to exploring GTD together
- Get your hands dirty!



Ohm17, "Dirty hands", 2006.
<<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ohm17/162622755/>>
Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 2.0 Generic.

Resources: Getting Started

Allen, D. (2001). *Getting things done: The art of stress-free productivity*. Penguin Books.

Fallows, J. (2004, July/August). Organize your life. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved March 18, 2009 from <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200407/fallows2>

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Mann, M. (2004, September 8). Getting started with getting things done. *43 Folders*. Retrieved March 18, 2009 from <http://www.43folders.com/2004/09/08/getting-started-with-getting-things-done>

Wolf, G. (2007, September). Getting things done: guru David Allen and his cult of hyperefficiency. *Wired Magazine*, 15(10). Retrieved March 18, 2009 from http://www.wired.com/techbiz/people/magazine/15-10/ff_allen?currentPage=all

Resources: Comparisons

Hardwick, C. (2008, December). Diary of a self-help dropout: flirting with the 4-hour workweek. *Wired Magazine*, 17(1). Retrieved March 18, 2009 from http://www.wired.com/culture/lifestyle/magazine/17-01/mf_self_help?currentPage=all
(Getting Things Done/Never Check Email in the Morning/The 4-hour Work Week)

Keegan, P. (2008, September). Get a life! *Fortune Magazine*, 158 (4), 114-120. (Getting Things Done/The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People/The Power of Full Engagement)

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(Getting Things Done/ Do It Tomorrow)

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...and More

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Allen, D. (2008). *Making it All Work*. Viking Books.

David Allen & Co. <http://www.davidco.com/>

Stepcase Lifehack. <http://www.lifehack.org/>

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