

Gospel-Driven Productivity

Session 4: Deciding the Day to Day

Or in Josh's words, "How to Waste a Day."

This session is about avoiding some mistakes that will ruin our time maps (from Session 3) and keep up from being effective in our mission, life goal, and roles (from Session 2).

What are some reasons we waste a day? What typically in your mind keeps us from being effective?

3 Ways to Waste a Day and Lose Our Priorities and Routines.

1. Try To Do Too Much.

"...if you find that it is almost impossible to make your structure work, it's likely because of a larger problem. The problem is that you are trying to do too much, and it doesn't fit," (pg. 221).

If you look or think back over your time map, does it feel overwhelming already? Do you think it's realistic to do all the things you have to do in that structure?

Principles to avoid over-scheduling:

THE RINGING EFFECT

"Researchers have found that whenever most systems—such as airports, freeways, and other such things—exceed about 90 percent capacity, efficiency drops *massively*. Not just slightly but massively.

This is called the "ringing effect." The reason is that as a system nears its capacity, the effect of relatively small disturbances is magnified exponentially," (pg. 223-224).

Can you give an example of where you've seen this principle?

OVERCOMING THE RINGING EFFECT

"Here's what this means: In order to get *more* projects done (and do them better and faster), you need to *reduce* the number of projects you are actually working on at once. And for organizations and individuals, the ringing effect comes into play not at 90 percent capacity, but already at about 75 percent of capacity," (pg. 225).

"Our default mode is to think that in order to get as much as possible done, we need to cram as many projects as possible into a given time frame. Resist this temptation. Everything will take longer and you will discover death by the ringing effect. To get more done, do less, not more."

What does reducing your capacity to 75 percent mean for you? How does it change how you approach work, school, home, etc.?

Would you change anything in your time map based on this principle?

2. Do Things You Don't Need to Do

Perman gives four strategies that both manage time and keep us from doing things that we shouldn't do.

Strategy 1: Delegate

"God designed the world so that there will always be more things for us to do than we are able to do. This isn't just so we learn to prioritize; it's so we learn to depend on each other. And that what delegation enables us to do," (pg. 229).

What comes to your mind when you hear the word delegate? Who delegates, to whom do they delegate, and what do they delegate? Describe that situation at your table.

How is what we typically think about in delegation different than what Perman describes in the three statements below?

"Our aim in delegating is not simply to make our own lives better and free up our time. It is also to build up the other person. ...True productivity is about doing good for others and making other productive, not just yourself. And delegation is a key way to build up others and help them be more effective not just you," (pg. 230).

"Stewardship delegation, on the other hand, has the aim of not just getting tasks done, but of building others up through the accomplishment of tasks. It is concerned about tasks, but it is equally concerned about the other person," (pg. 232).

"Stewardship delegation delegates the task—or, more often, and area of responsibility—and allows the individual to determine their own methods for accomplishing the tasks. ...The one delegating hands over true responsibility for the accomplishment of the task to the one being delegated to," (pg. 232).

Five Components of Effective Delegation

1. Desired Results: "...the things that need to be accomplished. It is the what—not the how," (pg. 233).
2. Guidelines: "...parameters that are essential to accomplishing the task effectively," (pg. 233).
3. Resources: "...the budget available, if relevant, and the other people who might be helpful to consult or who are available to help...," (pg. 233).
4. Accountability: "This means everyone knowing what the standards of performance are and when the regular reviews are," (pg. 233).
5. Consequences: "This will include both the good outcomes if the delegated responsibility is fulfilled and what will happen if it isn't," (pg. 233).

Summary: Delegation multiplies effectiveness by using more people to accomplish a task or an area of a task and sharing (some of) the responsibility.

How does this understanding of delegation change how you will delegate or be delegated to? How can it help us be more effective in our roles?

Strategy 2: Eliminate

“Elimination has two components: getting rid of tasks that don’t need to be done and, when doing a task, eliminating the parts of the task that aren’t necessary,” (pg. 236).

“The best strategy for elimination is to use the 80/20 principle together with Parkinson’s Law,” (pg. 236).

80/20 Principle

“...states that 80 percent of your productivity comes from 20 percent of your tasks. Hence, identify the things that fall into the “trivial many” so you can devote more time to the “vital few,” (pg. 236).

Can you identify the 20 percent of things that you do that make you the most productive? Look or think back through your role map, what is most critical in those roles?

Parkinson’s Law

“...states that a task will generally expand to fill the time allotted for it. ...Hence to keep your tasks from taking longer than they need to, reduce the time you allow for doing them,” (pg. 236).

Do you usually give yourself a timeline for completing a task or do your tasks normally dictate your timeline? How could or should that change to make you more productive?

Summary: “Decrease the number of tasks you have to do by eliminating what is not important (the 80/20 Principle), and then force yourself to focus only on the essential parts of those tasks by giving yourself tight deadlines (Parkinson’s Law),” (pg. 236).

Strategy 3: Automate

“Automation means putting your tasks on autopilot so that they happen on their own without your having to even think about them (or, at least, with your having to think about them much),” (pg. 237)

What tasks can you set up right now, perhaps using technology, so you don’t have to think about them...much?

Strategy 4: Defer

“...which simply means putting things aside for later,” (pg. 238).

What do you think the key to getting back to something you defer is?

“All four of these strategies—delegating, eliminating, automating, and deferring—will help to ‘kill’ the tasks and projects that threaten to overwhelm and defeat you...,” (pg. 238).

3. Misunderstand and Misuse “Distractions”

“The second component of reducing is overcoming and eliminating the things that eat up our time and get in our way,” (pg. 241).

What are some ways you get distracted that keep you from finishing tasks? How do you normally deal with them?

“However, when we do this we encounter an immediate problem: a lot of the things that get in our way and might be classified as distractions are also highly beneficial in some ways. Getting rid of everything in our lives that seems counterproductive may, in fact, be counterproductive,” (pg. 241).

Harnessing 4 Big Time Killers

“So we are going to look not simply at how to eliminate some of the most common time wasters but also at how to harness those time wasters and turn them into productivity machines,” (pg. 241).

1. MULTITASKING: KILLING IT (BUT UTILIZING SWITCHTASKING)

What is multitasking? Is it actually possible?

“To multitask is to do two or more things at once that require mental focus. Multitasking seems like a way to save time but actually costs more time and is, in fact, impossible,” (pg. 241).

“The human brain simply cannot focus on two things at once. God is the only multitasker,” (pg. 242).

Recognize and Utilize Switchtasking

“So what are we actually doing when we think we are multitasking? We are actually switchtasking. That is, we are switching back and forth between tasks,” (pg. 242).

The Cost of Switchtasking

“Some studies indicate it takes about five minutes to get back into things after being interrupted. And, you are less likely to gain momentum and get in the zone—which multiplies the cost,” (pg. 242).

Summary: Stopping and restarting tasks is not very efficient and sometimes not effective. But...sometimes it is.

“...if an interruption comes, quickly assess whether the value of the interruption will be greater than the time and focus you will lose on your current task. If it’s significantly greater, go ahead,” (pg. 242).

2 Related Concepts:

Background tasking—“...only one of the tasks (or neither!) requires mental focus,” (pg. 243).

Rapid Refocusing—“...a series of small tasks in rapid succession,” (pg. 243)

Summary: “Both background tasking and doing a series of small tasks in rapid succession have their place and should be utilized to increase your productivity. You just need to know which tasks are not compatible with switchtasking,” (pg. 243).

How would you change how you “multitask” based on Perman’s understanding of switchtasking?

2. PROCRASTINATION: HARNESSING IT

What leads you to procrastinate? Are there certain things you always put off for “later?”

Perman’s Big Response to Procrastination: Love Your Work

“I think that if you are doing a lot of work that you have to force yourself to get done, you are probably in the wrong job.

...The best way to overcome procrastination, then, is to love what you do,” (pg. 243).

“The best type of motivation is to *want* to do the things you have to do—to be *pulled* toward them by a desire to do them and make a difference and serve others—rather than to be pushed toward them through carrots and sticks (rewards and punishments),” (pg. 244).

What can motivate us to do our work and do it well even when we’re not doing our dream job?

Tactics to Deal with Procrastination (even in work we love)

1. Ask, “Are you ready for the task?”

“We might need more information or there might be some precedent tasks we need to do first that we haven’t identified. ...identify that information or the precedent tasks and start there,” (pg. 245).

2. Break it Down

“Second, if the task seems overwhelming or highly unpleasant, break it down into small chunks,” (pg. 245).

3. Procrastinate Positively

“Third, in cases in which you are most significantly tempted to procrastinate, the best thing to do is procrastinate positively: do nothing. ...This will help you avoid ‘procrastinating in disguise,’ which is when you do other things that are less important and less necessary,” (pg. 245).

4. Use it well...sometimes...maybe...when the stakes aren’t high.

Procrastination can provide an energy of coming face to face with a deadline.

“...procrastination can be a form of Parkinson’s Law,” (pg. 245)

“...sometimes what seems like procrastination is actually the incubation stage,” (pg. 245).

3. INTERRUPTIONS: MAKING THEM BENEFICIAL

“Interruption take the form of phone calls, unplanned stop-ins, emails, conversations and so forth,” (pg. 246).

Dealing with Interruptions

1. Assess whether the interruption is related to your present work or not.
2. Give yourself uninterrupted work zones.
3. Embrace them as opportunities to do good.

"We need to both carve out time for focused work and then also weave into our days the flexibility to be freely available so that we can recognize interruptions as opportunities for productive interactions," (pg. 248).

4. "WASTING" TIME ON FACEBOOK AND SOCIAL NETWORKING

A Different Perspective

1. Trust people who are motivated

"...when people are self-motivated...you don't have to worry about their wasting time. They love what they do and are driven to do it," (pg. 249).

2. Recognize some benefits

"For self-motivated people, time spent on Facebook is actually productive," (pg. 249).

"Facebook and other online networks and interactions help us refine, spread, and gain ideas," (pg. 250).

Summary: "Eliminate time killers such as multitasking, procrastination, perfectionism, and interruptions not simply by eliminating them but by harnessing them for good," (pg. 251).

Homework/Further Discussion

Which of the three ways to waste a day is most significant for you right now and why?

What changes do you need to make as a result?

Do you need to make any changes to your role maps or time maps?