



Episode 190: How To Be REALLY Productive Without Losing the Plot

with Graham Allcott

Everyone wants to have a productive day and check off all their tasks on their to-do lists. However, for many high-stress professionals being productive and efficient can be difficult to achieve. Too often we can get caught up in smaller tasks such as an inbox full of e-mails or get lost in everything we're thinking about.

The truth is we have so many things we deem important and often feel like we don't have enough time to do it all. So how can we regain our clarity and control around productivity?

Graham Allcott, author of *How To Be a Productivity Ninja*, joins us today to share his tips and insights about this matter. We talk about what you can do to overcome that feeling of stress and overwhelm when you're buried under piles of unread e-mails and mundane tasks. Learn more about productivity and how you can reframe your mindset and movements around it and be more productive.

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Guest links

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Quote to remember:

“[Productivity is about] making space for what matters.”

What You Will Learn

Being productive throughout the day can be challenging especially when there’s an overwhelming number of things you know you have to get done. Professionals deal with inboxes full of e-mails, endless meetings, and small and big tasks that you need to make progress with each day. With all these things cluttering up your mind, it can be difficult to find clarity and control of your work.

One great way to deal with the feeling of stress and overwhelm that comes with a huge workload is making to-do lists. In this activity, you’ll learn how you can use these lists to be clear on the actions you need to take. It can work as your second brain to give your actual brain more time and space to think, plan, and reflect.

These lists also help you manage your attention and adjust your work schedule and structure so that you can give the right amount of attention to the right tasks. You’ll also learn to have a weekly review you can use so that you’re less anxious about the next week and prepared for what’s to come.

You can keep making these lists to help with productivity, stress, and overwhelm with the tool that works best for you. But it’s important to remember that you don’t have to tick off everything on the list. It’s normal to not finish everything. You can have a productive day without completely clearing this to-do list.

This activity also helps you improve your team’s productivity by gaining clarity around your work’s email etiquette. This can help reduce miscommunication and save time and effort. Encourage a psychologically safe space in your workplace so that you and your colleagues can have open and productive conversations!



Activity: How To Have a Productive Day

The best way to have productivity is to make space for what matters. Make time and space for one of the most important parts of work, thinking, planning, and reflecting.

Review your work at the end of your week and take 30 minutes to have a checklist.

Ask yourself these questions:

What's next on your calendar, especially in the next few weeks?

What's left on your to-do list for the start of the next work week?

What projects are you currently working on?

What new projects have yet to be started?

You can't always give 100% of your attention to everything and every hour. Manage your attention as well as your feelings of stress and overwhelm by making your to-do lists. As a bonus, this can act as your second brain to allow you more space to think.

Get the stuff inside of your head out of it by making a to-do list in the space below.

As you write your list, determine which ones really demand a lot of your energy and attention and which ones demand the least.



To-Do List		
Done?	Task	Attention Demand

Look at the to-do list you've written down. What structural changes you can make to your day so that you can give the right amount of attention to each task? For example, schedule your demanding activities during the time you have a lot of energy.

Create a Mindless To-Do List as well. Write down the small things that don't need too much attention but take up your mind space. Check these small, quick tasks off in between the bigger, more demanding activities.

Mindless To-Do List	
Done?	Quick and Small Tasks



When you're feeling stuck about what you should do next, ask yourself what's your next physical action.

Imagine that you're a fly on the wall watching yourself start moving. What is the physical thing that you need to do at that moment?

Go back to your to-do list and rewrite it in a way that you can give a clear physical action on each task.

However, if your answer is I don't know what to physically do, take a moment to pretend that you do. This means that your physical action doesn't have to be the perfect answer. Allow yourself not to be perfect as you're still looking for the right action.

It's time to have a team conversation about emails. One important part of this conversation is creating a safe space so that people can be honest and really talk about their struggles.

In your team meeting, ask this very important question: Where are you stuck? Where do you observe that many of them are stuck?

Bring clarity about email etiquette with your team. Talk and collaborate with everyone on your team, including those in senior and junior roles, so that everyone knows the rules. Here are some important things to consider in clarifying these rules:



When should people expect a reply?

Who and when should certain people be CCed or BCCed?

How can you be clear in your email?

Struggling with productivity? While these activities can help you improve, Graham also said there is always a way to improve. One good way to learn something is to find a teacher who also struggled with the same problem. Research and list people who can be your teacher. They can be your colleagues, family, friends, or coaches who can help you.

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