

ep 16 Melanie Recording #1 - Motion

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SPEAKERS

Francis Wade, Melanie Wilson



Francis Wade 00:00

It's the Task Management and Time Blocking podcast episode 16. If you're interested in using online calendars, you may have seen ads for the auto scheduler called Motion. You probably wondered what it might be like to use it for yourself, but you don't have the time or the bandwidth for a proper test. In this episode with Dr. Melanie Wilson, we share the results of our actual firsthand tests with you. We both spent years using auto schedulers...we were kind of like early adopters. So we have a few insights you won't hear elsewhere. Tune in to find out what we discovered. And you could save a little bit of time, stress and even money. Welcome to the Task Management and Time Blocking Podcast



Francis Wade 00:54



Francis Wade 01:18

Okay. So welcome back. And as you see, I have brought up Dr. Melanie Wilson. And in a moment I'm going to introduce her. But before I do that, let me just make sure that you if you have never visited the task management and time blocking podcast before you know what you're in for. So very quickly, we have a three part format, we're in the first part, we describe a problem, sort of talk about how awful it is basically, then we go into solutions. The better the analysis that we do up front, the better the solutions we find in the second part. And third part we focus on implementation. And if we discover something brand new that we've never found before or never seen before, then we have a bell. And I'll bring up the bell and a ring it and you'll hear it and it'll mean that we discovered something that neither of us found before. So this would probably be a shorter episode, you may not hear a bell. And in that case, I won't penalize us with a buzzer, which is the other half of what we do. We'll see.



Francis Wade 02:29

But let's start with a story. Norman. So Norman currently uses Google Calendar to do his time blocking. But he recently came across the Motion app in an ad on Facebook. It promises to revolutionize his productivity by automatically scheduling his calendar, and making smart recommendations. He wants to give it a try. But he's reluctant. He is a busy person and can't afford to make mistakes in his task management setup, just to try a new app. Really? If it doesn't work, he would have a big problem. And he doesn't like the idea of changing a wing on his productivity airplane while he's in flight over the ocean. So when he searches for reviews, he can't find anything in depth that could really help. He decides to pause his curiosity about Motion indefinitely. But you know, is that a long term solution? No. He can't stay stuck in one place forever using the exact same setup. There ought to be more guidance in making this kind of decision that isn't just a sales pitch or a superficial summary, the kind of guidance that would give him an idea whether or not to try the app or not.



Francis Wade 03:50

So Dr. Mary Wilson is a clinical psychologist turned homeschooling mother of six. she publishes the homeschool curriculum. Grammar Galaxian. She is the author of A Year of Living Productively. Melanie welcome to the podcast.



Melanie Wilson 04:05

Well, thank you so much for having me. I love your interest story. So I'm excited to help him with some guidance on Motion



Francis Wade 05:30

But he's not alone. Melanie, is he? Norman. He, he is like many people, because a lot of us have seen the ads, right that there are now following me around because...being curious... I clicked on a bunch of them. Um, no, you know, Google or Facebook or LinkedIn or somebody thinks I'm the best possible prospect for Motion. I guess. I guess I am. Have you seen the ads as well?



Melanie Wilson 05:55


Yes, for sure. All the time. And one of the things that I really struggle with, I always have in many areas of my life is I'll make a decision about something. And then when it keeps getting presented to me, I think, oh, I should take another look at that. So that kind of sets up our conversation about it.



Francis Wade 06:20


Oh, algorithms Love you. Love Me, too, is is here out? Here I am. And some of the ads were you know, they were provocative, right? They were like saying...Are you still stuck in using to do lists? Are you listening to gurus who are telling you to use to do lists when you shouldn't? You


know, it was as if they'd heard our podcasts. Let's go after those guys. Because guys, in case you haven't, in case you didn't know, and you're listening to this podcast, Melanie and I did a two part series back in 2018. Am I right?


 **Melanie Wilson 06:59**
I think so.

 **Francis Wade 07:00**
It was long before COVID. But yeah, we analyzed six of the auto schedulers that we could find at the time, I think we, we found six... one was kind of on its way out. But the landscape has changed so much, and we'll talk about that in a separate podcast. But we did the only analysis I've ever seen of auto schedulers. And in case you don't know what an auto scheduler is, you don't know what they do. Let me just give you a quick briefing, the auto scheduler puts an invisible hand into your calendar, and moves the flexible tasks around. It preserves the appointments. So for example, Melanie and I are in an appointment right now that's in our calendars. The auto scheduler would ignore the appointment that you have with someone else. But it would move all the other tasks around in an effort to optimize your calendar with the click of a button. So technology has been around since at least the late 90s, with a few prototypes and motion, I think as we speak is the very latest entry. Is that accurate? Everything?

 **Melanie Wilson 08:10**
I think so I haven't seen anything else.

 **Francis Wade 08:14**
Okay, so Motion is, you know, they're, they're not the most accurate, but they're the by far the most aggressive in terms of advertisement. With that, seeing the things that they're seeing, and they're persistent. So they're they're spending, you know, there's a spend happening here, they're looking for a return on their investment. No other auto scheduler has, has promoted this extensively on multiple platforms. So there is a provocative nature of ads, and there's the volume of the number of ads. So no, Motion has popped up on lots of people's radar, and has them asking, Well, what is an auto scheduler? What are they talking about? Can it really do these things? And the answer is yes. Right?

 **Melanie Wilson 09:02**
Yeah, it can. You know, it's not going to do it perfectly. But yes, it can do what it promises to do.

 **Francis Wade 09:11**
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Right? So it's not false advertising or anything that it really is doing what it promises. It can do. But let's talk about the challenge of, you know, you you've if you've seen ads or not, you're hearing us talk about motion. And you're asking, shouldn't isn't there an easy way to kind of test this thing out? And let's, let's say that that's kind of the villain of this whole episode, because there will always be an app that presents itself to you, and you will have to make a decision as to whether or not to test it or not. And there are some challenges that come with that. So the challenge that you have, maybe is that you want to try Motion, but you don't want it to disrupt your workflow. Is that accurate, Melanie?

M

Melanie Wilson 09:57

Yes, for sure. You know why? Why go backward with your time management in order to maybe gain just a little bit of benefit in your process? So I think that's one of the key issues here.



Francis Wade 10:14

Because we have we have real lives, right? It's not like we're testing this thing for fun....I mean, it's fun, right? But not for the fun of it, we're looking to gain an actual improvement. But to do to gain the improvement, you you, you have to actually to do it in real life. And I did the five day, five day, or they call it a trial that you took the five day trial. Yes. And I did as much as I could, in terms of learning how to do it in the five day, but it's not the same, definitely not the same as having it run your life. No..., no right no. And one of the things that you've done, so that folks know, since doing or, or review 5 years ago is that you're no longer using an auto scheduler. So what are you using?

M

Melanie Wilson 11:14

I'm not, I am using Amazing Marvin. And I would say, it actually makes so much sense that I'm using Amazing Marvin because that particular task management platform allows you to keep all of your tasks in one place, but then change your strategy whenever you feel like it. And as you know, for a year of living productively, I tested so many different strategies. And as you were saying, at the beginning, it is really challenging to take all of your tasks and move them from platform to platform and get them set up to be usable. And so with Amazing Marvin, I don't have to do that. And we can talk about, you know what I'm what I'm actually doing in Amazing Marvin, which is a little bit funny to me, because it's not really, it's not really anything very fancy. But I noted that it would be it would be nice for me to try an auto scheduling approach within amazing Marvin, and other people have asked about that in their community. And they don't yet have it available...



Francis Wade 12:30

as an option. They way Motion does. So you know, to Motions credit, they've, they've found the latest technology, and they've implemented it. And they're offering it to us. And the two of us tested it. And I tested it as someone who uses SkedPal. So Melanie is a is the one who introduced me to SkedPal. So she got me got me to use it. Very thankfully, I'm really grateful to her, she introduced me to the role of auto scheduling. And she has regressed since then, and


she's given up giving up giving up the gospel. eBut, but with the switching, you know, she's closer to it than I am. Switching is difficult and when an app like motion or any app that promises over and over again, in a provocative manner, that you should use it because it will change your life. You need to consider it because it could be truthful, you know. So Motion, you know, you could be a little bit frustrated because you don't really know, you know, do I test this thing? Or do I? Do I go the full monty do i do like Melanie did ...d o I move all my tasks from one app to the another just to test to see if it works in real time, only to find out after a series of mishaps that I made a mistake. You know, there, there really should be a better way to do these tests. I don't know that there is five days for me wasn't actually enough. Not enough happened in the five days. I didn't put my real tasks in Motion. I just put the I put a couple of fake ones just to see what they will do. So I don't really know what would happen if I turn it on, for real. Was five days enough for you? For me? It was like...

 M Melanie Wilson 14:24

I would say yes, but that's because I have very specific parameters of what I want. in a task manager. And spoiler alert. It didn't happen though. It's for me. It was it was easy. It was easy for me to figure that out in a shorter period of time.

 Francis Wade 14:47

Right. So this is an expert talking. As opposed to if you're really just trying it for the first time. You're, you're it could be it could be very different for you. And you know as you're going through these tests, you also don't want to be the one stuck in an app that is so 1995, when everyone is everyone is out in 2023, for example, using, you know, things that are mentioned in the Motion, and like machine learning, for example, and its using AI.

 Francis Wade 15:22

You don't want to be the one who is kind of stuck in the hinterlands of productivity apps when better one exists. So most people, I think, when they come across this problem is that they kind of ignore it. And that actually, is that healthy? It stops them from really growing, because we wouldn't be where we are right now. If we hadn't bitten the bullet and done some kind of switching, testing, and then switching ...true? So we want other people to have the benefit of doing that. It's just there are ways to do it. And there are probably ways not to do it.

 Francis Wade 16:00

But the the thing that makes this different from using, for example, a social media app is once again, the fact that this is your life. If you're time blocking, your life is in a calendar...this is not fun. Like, let's go try Netflix. This is not Ooh, Tic Toc, no, this is a core of your doing everything that matters, this is your job. This is how you earn your money. This is how you pay your bills. This is how you take care of your health. This is how you spend time with your family. These are the meetings that you need to attend to work, the most important things in your world are

being time blocked into your calendar. And when an app comes along and starts to get your interest, you got to take it seriously as to whether or not you're going to try it or not. Is that accurate, in your experience? Melanie?



Francis Wade 16:04

Definitely. Yeah, it, it's it's not just a, you know, a recreational journey you're you're messing around with, if you do a real test, and I use real tasks in my test of Motion, then, you know, it can be serious, you don't want to drop the ball, you don't want to miss things that are really, really important for you to do.



Francis Wade 17:28

Right. Right. So So we'll talk about that. Ultimately, we're looking for a way to test an auto scheduler, because we'll keep it narrow and see if an auto scheduler... what's the best way to try one out? because there'll be a Motion 2.0. And there'll be a nother thing 1.0 that comes along. There's going to be an endless stream, because as far as we've seen, there maybe is a new app every year or two every I think every six months or so I think based on what I'm seeing, they seem to come out every six months, a new auto scheduling app. And, you know, if you're someone who is into this kind of level of productivity, it's worth paying attention to.



Francis Wade 18:13

Alright, so hopefully, we can give you some insights that would allow you to approach the question of using a new auto scheduler in the future with some more felicity and some less pain and less fear.



Francis Wade 18:28

Okay, so let's talk about Motion. So I'm guided by the analysis that we did, of auto schedulers, which we'll put in the show notes, so that you can see what we did back in 2018. December 15, according to my, my URL here and looking at, and we looked at a number of facets, but maybe we'll start with an overall assessment. For me, Motion, felt like the early versions of SkedPal. Like, it's, it's cool, it works. And to get it to work, you got to do a lot of things that the developers... their problems that the that an auto scheduler user has, that the developers haven't quite discovered or fixed yet, as a result. It's been like an early version of auto schedulers, like when you're doing it for when you're creating one for the first time, you tend to wow, look, it's moving the tasks around. So it focuses on on that and other kinds of features that you don't really, that aren't really core to the auto scheduling experience, like scheduling time with someone else.



Francis Wade 19:48

So that's a part of Motion. I thought it was... that's nothing to do with auto scheduling. That could be done somewhere else right now. And I'd prefer if the app just focused on the auto scheduling part because that part is actually hard enough. And that parts could be developed a

scheduling part because that part is actually hard enough. And that parts could be developed a whole lot more, rather than putting in other things, which kind of, they could be interesting. They could be useful, but they're not essential to the auto scheduling. I want to motion just to be an auto scheduler, and a really good auto scheduler, not a beginner auto scheduler, but I could be being harsh man, and what was your overall assessment?

M

Melanie Wilson 20:30

I absolutely agree with that. And I think the only thing that I saw that I liked, that was something that SkedPal introduced a little further into their development was once Motion reschedules your tasks, it will ask you if everything looks fine, or not. And I thought that was a very nice touch that. In other words, it's saying, Hey, we're not a dictator. Here. We are your partner. We're working with you. And so I liked that. But otherwise, I would agree with you. Even right from the beginning, there are no, there are no time maps, which we talked about with respect to SkedPal. Just explain what a time map is.

M

Melanie Wilson 21:26

I will.

M

Melanie Wilson 21:27

In other words, I can tell SkedPal that I want to be doing, let's say, writing projects from eight in the morning until 10, in the morning, Monday through Friday, and then no more, I don't want to do writing projects in the afternoon. And instead, I want to be doing administrative work. That's not as you know, process heavy. And that is so so important. Because without that, if I tell Motion, these are all the writing projects that I have coming up, and they're all high priority. And maybe I maybe there's like a moderate deadline, and we can talk about how it does that as well. But it could absolutely have me writing eight hours a day, because it doesn't know that there are certain kinds of tasks that I want to be timeboxed to have limits around and SkedPal allows you to indicate that. Right?



Francis Wade 22:37

So SkedPal had that as an innovation earlier on. And it's gotten better. The idea that the classification of a task to a... it is the two step you define the time map, and then you define, you assign a task to that time map, because it belongs to a category of task. So Motion allows you to do that per task. But there's no time map behind it that's trying to optimize the shape of your schedule. And I missed I missed that as well. And I couldn't see myself. And it's it's it's something I think, happens with young, young or new new auto schedulers is that they don't, they don't try to optimize your schedule, per se as an entirety. They're trying to optimize tasks. They're thinking more about putting the right task in the right place, rather than giving you the entire schedule that you want. That that seems to come a little bit later. For the ones that we studied the last time, it seems to be an objective that evolves over time, but it's not there

initially. So they don't typically put that capability in there. They're basically telling you... Look, tasks organize themselves. It's that amazing, which it is. And it takes you part of the way, but not the entire way.



Francis Wade 24:10

And I think ...Tell me what do you think of this? I think the challenge is that they they're trying to Can I say this? The first problem they face is how do I schedule in a way that allows the schedule to at least be feasible. So they're working, they tend to work with, and they tend to show you examples of really small numbers of tasks. They are at the 10 task kind of world, right?. It's like it looks for the demos look great, right? Yes. And then you get to 200 which is what I think happened with SkedPal, but you get the...It doesn't scale. What do you think? Right? Well,



Melanie Wilson 24:56

right. And I mean, if you have 10 tasks And then you can schedule those yourself. It's easy would be easy to do. The people who need an auto scheduler, they have a lot of competing priority projects and tasks, they don't want to let the little things fall through the cracks. And they just, they just want someone who knows them like an assistant would, and could say, you know, you should get started on X project, because it's due at the end of the week, and I know you have other appointments coming up. So I think you should start this this morning. And and notice how I said, I think you should... not, you're going to do it. We don't want that kind of, you know, authoritarianism in our task scheduler any more than we want it in our real relationships. So I do think motion is doing a good job with that part. It's just, you know, these? And I mean, no doubt, it's, it's a daunting task to try to figure out a good schedule for someone who is over committed, let me and let's be honest,




Francis Wade 26:17

yeah, more more tasks that you can complete in 168 hours, number of hours in a week. Yeah. And, and you're right, that's the tool, this tool is for those people. So in a way, not optimizing it. But solving the problem of auto scheduling 10 tasks, 20 tasks, 30 tasks, is a whole different world than managing 200. I, one of the things I noticed in motion is that they don't really give you a way to manage a list of 200. And in fact, SkedPal didn't do that. This is why I made the quip about this being like SkedPal Junior...SkedPal in the past, SkedPal didn't have it either, you had to schedule everything into the calendar, the way Motion, SkedPal evolved into a blend of a task manager, which is a database or list and a calendar. And now you move tasks in between the two at will you it gives you a place to park tasks indefinitely if you want, and not necessarily schedule all of them. And Motion don't have that. And I think it's on the same learning curve that SkedPal was, because SkedPal wasn't there in the beginning, we discovered that...hold on scheduling, everything doesn't make sense. So and by the way, just just so that everyone knows that I mentioned SkedPal, because that's the auto scheduler that I've always used. But I also have a tiny share in SkedPal. So in case you're thinking of this guy, I do have...on my website I want to declare that. Every time I mention SkedPal you could be like...huh? But Melanie has no shares.

 Melanie Wilson 28:02


Yes, but I am a huge fan. If you're gonna adjust, honestly, I frequently consider going back to an auto scheduler and SkedPal is the one that I would choose still after testing Motion. So

 Francis Wade 28:20


We'll talk about that in the podcast that we do to update your waning fandom?

 Melanie Wilson 28:28

Yeah, wow.

 Francis Wade 28:29

Yeah. You know, but but so Motion...it's felt like it's at the beginning of a learning curve. And the sort of promises that I that you read in the ads sounded to me a bit bombastic. An unkind word, it was like, for sure they were like in your face? Sort of 25%? Yeah, we are tasked in restoring statistics around that. But those of us who are using auto schedules, I think it's a tiny market. We tend to have tried everything else. We know a thing or two, because we've been around the block. And when we hear these ads, we know we have read these numbers for years. So the numbers aren't new. And the claims aren't new. We kind of filter them and say, Yeah, well, I've heard that for 10 years or that for five years. And this is -- I don't know if this is a criticism of the way motion has rolled itself out -- but it seems to have bypassed or leapfrogged in its thinking or just dismissed or didn't think about the precise nature of the people who use auto schedulers. The auto schedulers that were already in the market to see okay, "Why are they using these features and not others? Why did they abandon This approach or not that one? What happened to the companies that were auto scheduling in 2018, that no longer exists? Or they're no longer have an app?" You know, what's the what's the, "What are they grappling with? What are the people grappling or whether the app developers grappling with".

 Francis Wade 30:15

Motion has a feel like they just came out of left field. And didn't do that kind of analysis. And when I read the language in the ads, it's not really pitched to people who are senior productivity enthusiasts, right? It's pitched to the general person in the general audience, right? A generic person, a novice, that novice, is going to be like the novices of all the programs that all that ever pitched. But I think there's something to learn from those who have been using these for a while. And should they have called us before they launched and said, "Hey!" What do you you think Melanie, or is that just an ego thing?

 Melanie Wilson 30:56

No, that's, that's absolutely right. You know, there is really the onboarding for someone who's

never used an auto scheduler is pretty, pretty sparse. And they have no idea that a schedule, a very, very unrealistic schedule is going to be presented to them. I mean, I'm just thinking about, you know, if I gave a schedule like this to my homeschooled kids, if I said, Okay, first, I want you to do an hour of math, because you're behind, you got to do an hour of math, and then I want you to do two hours of science experiments, and then you know, and so on, and so on. My my kids would just say, forget it. I'm not gonna do my day like that. And it can be, that can be your experience, if you if you aren't used to an auto scheduler and how to make it work for your life.



Francis Wade 31:55

Right, right. The kind of gentle, gentle, nuanced onboarding that everybody goes through when they pick up on auto scheduler because it's this animal that behaves in a way that you need to train it. To do what you know what it does for you. I think that's, I think we can all safely say having analyzed a few of them, to use them. When did you introduce me to SkedPal? I think it was, it was my second... I had to rewrite my second book based on our conversation. So that was 2015. Okay. It made me have to go rewrite my book.



Melanie Wilson 32:34

Now, if we're if we're talking about the influence on each other, I mean, you I may have introduced you to SkedPal, but you were the one you wrote a post for my blog, at the time about using a calendar. And you talked about why I think the title was something like why busy CEOs and college students what they what they have in common or something like that in terms of their time management. And that article really had me taking a close look at scheduling because I was very resistant to scheduling. I think as many homeschoolers are we have this idea that, hey, we're homeschoolers, we can do what we want, when we want to do it. We don't need a schedule. But as I've gotten busier and busier and, and every time I've run into a task management, quandary in my life, especially my professional life, and I turned to a guru, someone who has really been successful, and is very, very good at managing their time. They always use the schedule,



Francis Wade 33:46

they always use the schedule. Time blocking using something.



Melanie Wilson 33:49

Yeah, yep. And it, it has convinced me that that is the only way that I'm going to meet my goals and get the important tasks done. So that that is my I believe, so they the influence goes both ways...It's whether or not you're using an auto scheduler to make that schedule work for you, or whether you're doing it manually, which is more what I'm doing.



Francis Wade 34:17

Right, Right. But I think the general idea that on the principle that makes some sense is that --

right. Right. But I think the general idea that or the principle that we've come across is that as you add lots of tasks, you are going to be pushed into time blocking, or you may be pushed into auto scheduling as well. Right? Because you need different tools than people have. If they're just managing a task manager or a list. It's the lack of discretionary time eventually becomes an issue that you have to deal with the sequencing of activities. Mm. One of the things I'm I did a we noted in our analysis two years ago, was the presence in some auto schedulers of Reschedule Button. No motion offers you the chance to reschedule. But I didn't, just because I'm coming from SkedPal, but in SkedPal file, I like to follow the sequence of loading up my tasks, and then hitting the Reschedule button when I'm ready to not have the power taken away from me. So it felt as if you know in motion, I added the task and then it just got it's gone. It's doing its thing, it might want to change it. But my thought was, well, why not just ask me before you even do the auto scheduling. Because this is a delicate business. And if you have 10 tasks, not so delicate. But if you have 100 tasks, or 200, you're asking it to do some pretty heavy lifting for you. Right? And because of that you want to have I want to have some control over when you give me that new schedule. Not before because No, you're you're up you're you're not the app is no optimizing a schedule that doesn't have the other 30 tasks I need to add in. I'm not ready for that yet. I'm still. So it's very, it kind of like out of sequence.



Francis Wade 36:15

Like if I have a back to your example of you're trying to in a way copy the perfect admin assistant, right? So if I told my admin assistant, okay, I need to have lunch with Bob, I need to work on the paper that's due tomorrow, I need to do some research. I need to actually cut you off and said, Okay, well, you should do this. We're not We're not finished yet. I also have to. So she's cutting you off. I'm telling you what you need to do before you've told her everything. It's like, it's weird, right? Yeah. But this business of... if you're not, if the app isn't mimicking something happening in real life, like a real admin assistant, like the example I always give this is Jeff Bartlett from the West Wing, and Mrs. Landingham his Secretary. And she was the perfect secretary. And she would tell him what to do when to do it. And she would organize his schedule, is that the thing about she was his auto scheduler, right? That we're trying to mimic a real life relationship with a human being probably. But it seems as if the app, and this is a criticism of all of the auto schedulers for me, the graphical user interface is not really built to mimic a real life relationship. It's more like I'm interacting with an app. Like I'm like, I'm working with Google Calendar than it is I'm working with Mrs. Landingham. What do you think of that?



Melanie Wilson 37:49

Yeah, that's, that's absolutely the case. So, you know, a person would know, well, I can't put I can't put these two really, you know, heavy mental resource tasks back to back for her with no break. But we would have to say hey, this is really this is going to be really, you know, concentrated creative work. I'm gonna need a break after this task after an hour and a half. And you know, I don't even think that there is a way in any auto scheduler to kind of code that in and to say hey, you know, maybe task by task at times like I'm going to need a break after this one.



Francis Wade 38:43

you can prove on both times but yeah before



Melanie Wilson 38:45

Or how about a reward you know, because this is going to be you know, when I get my taxes done yeah. I want to celebrate. I don't want to do something else turn right around and do something else and so you know, we have discussed before how I mean with with SkedPal too this was an issue that SkedPal can give you buffer time between tasks, which is lovely, but if you are going to be driving to an appointment, for example, you face a challenge of well do I make my appointment on my calendar? Not the task manager do I make the appointment such that it... The appointment is actually when I'm supposed to leave to get there. And then if I do that, if you have my ADD brain, you go, now when is the appointment though? Is it at three o'clock or did I put it in that I'm driving at three o'clock to get there and I never remember, I mean, I'm sure I could have created a rule that you know, I'm always going to make it for the drive time or or vice versa. But so there's that. Or if I don't do that, then I have to create a separate task for each appointment, driving to the appointment, returning from the appointment, it's such a pain. And if I, if I had an assistant, I would just say, hey, it's gonna take me 15 minutes to get there. So just make sure you don't, you don't schedule me for anything. Right? You know, I don't know, that's...



Francis Wade 38:49

It's one of these kind of nuanced behaviors, that Motion...so Motion is trying to capture these behaviors in software, which is like any auto schedule is a really difficult task to do. And it started along and it had gotten some of it some some of the behaviors like the part where you move the tasks around in your calendar. It's gotten that part. But to make it work, when I hear you seeing is that there are other subtleties that can totally throw that off. If they're not taken into account. I imagine that's where the Motion people are going, and all other schedulers are going they're just not they're not there yet. So I don't want to discourage the Motion guys



Melanie Wilson 41:11

No, I don't want to discourage them a bit. But here's the problem. We we know if you've if you've done any experimenting, or reading in productivity like we have, you know, that if you don't trust a system, that's the kiss of death, you're gonna stop using it. And so if Motion or any other auto scheduler starts planning tasks, right up to my appointment times and not giving me that that buffer, then I'm just going to ignore it. I'm just gonna say, yeah, so Motion doesn't even know what it's talking about. You know, I'll just do it. And so then if I'm just going to do it, and if I'm just going to figure it out, then why am I using Motion at all?



Francis Wade 41:58

Right? Right, if you're left having to figure out too much, right, you just you just bypass it? Yeah. All right. Anything anything else we want to cover about Motion, Doc?



Melanie Wilson 42:13

So well, can I give some some suggestions for improvement?



Francis Wade 42:20

Oooooooh... The guys at otion or Now, like bristling?



Melanie Wilson 42:23

Okay, so number one, it's, it's a black background, on their iPhone app, I have an iPhone, obviously. And on their desktop app, I don't like it, I find it it, it's hard on me, like just with my eyesight, it just it's not very clear. I would change that immediately, or at least give an option for a different background.



Melanie Wilson 42:56

There is no and, and SkedPal did not have this either, like a really fast integration between Gmail and Task Entry. What I like to do is go through my email and everything that is task associated, I like to just click a button and add it to my Task Manager. And there isn't there's nothing like that. I believe



Francis Wade 43:23

I believe there's an app called Akiflow that I tried that has that. Okay. It makes their their specialty is making it seamless to do that. Okay. But different app altogether. Wouldn't... doesn't help us in this case. Yeah,



Melanie Wilson 43:38

Amazing Marvin has a Chrome extension that I use for that purpose.



Francis Wade 43:42

And it does that, yeah, okay. Yeah.



Melanie Wilson 43:46

So I have the email open, I just click the little check mark, Amazing Martin button to give me the chance to change the task title if I want. Or I can just do all of that in my inbox. So that would be one for me. The



Francis Wade 44:04



Francis Wade 44:07

to the email integration, and



Melanie Wilson 44:09

Then something that is really a problem for me is that it automatically adds all of the tasks to my main Gmail calendar. They're right there. They're either listed depending on your setting, they're either listed as a Motion task, period, just generic, or it will give the exact title and there is no way to disconnect that there's no way of yeah, there's no way of undoing that.



Melanie Wilson 44:09

I saw them show up. I didn't try to get rid of them though. I didn't go the next step.



Melanie Wilson 44:49

You cannot, No. So other Task Managers that I've seen, they make a separate calendar for you in your account. that you can then hide. So you don't have to see all those tasks and that kind of thing. But Motion is treating each of my tasks. And, you know, I mean, there's a, I guess a case to be made for that. It's like, hey, treat these like an appointment, but they're not.



Melanie Wilson 45:16

And so now I have, you know, and I have some short tasks. And so I have this big black, you know, list this big black blob of, of tasks on my main calendar. And that is a no go for me.



Melanie Wilson 45:33

One thing, I'm just going to insert it, because we kind of got on to the constructive criticism. But one thing that I do that I do, like if I, if I had the calendar, set up it the schedule was set up the way that I wanted, I do kind of like that they have this little pop up. It's a focus banner, I think they call it and it makes a little, a little pop sound that pops up on your desktop, and it says what you're working on, I thought that was a nice touch. I haven't been able to figure out how to turn it on.



Francis Wade 46:12

It's a notification that says "I'm working on this." Okay. Yeah.



Melanie Wilson 46:16

But that would be that would be kind of nice. You know, it'd be like having your assistant pop in and say, hey, you know, your, your next appointment is coming in 30 minutes, you should you should be ready for that one. Oh, that that that is a good one.

should review your notes for that or whatever. Okay, that that is a plus and a minus.



Francis Wade 46:34

Right? Does Motion has to be running in the background for that to the tab has to be. Okay, so you're trying to get rid of



Melanie Wilson 46:43

alarming? Like, how do I turn this off? Now? I don't know.



Francis Wade 46:47

I need someone from Motion to send you an email, and I'd see my trial is up, but I'm getting pop ups anyway. Will this be auto scheduling forever?



Melanie Wilson 46:58

So those are, those are some things. You know, besides what we've also talked about in a more generic sense that I would really encourage them to work on. And I completely agree with you that I would not have this whole scheduling piece. And by scheduling sorry, it gets confusing. And even in the app, it gets a little bit confusing, because it will save schedule or scheduling. And you're wondering, Well, okay, is that like, I'm scheduling my tasks? And no, that means meetings, you know, where are you give an appointment calendar, that kind of thing? I would take that piece out completely,



Francis Wade 47:38

and have another app do that. Yeah. Because it's tough to, it's tough to try to be great at both. And if you're going to be an auto-scheduler, be an auto-scheduler if you're going to be a calendar app for managing meetings like Calendly, or I use Once Hub, I think I use then do that. But we both in the same space is they're both big problems, big challenges and to try to solve them together. Our advice is, you know, be a fish or a fall, but not a fish fall. Off analogy. Yeah. The other the other feature I wanted to see was dependency task dependency, which you do need to have real project scheduler, and then to prioritize between projects, program management, basically. But like I said, my relationship to motion, like my conclusion is that it's an early, it's an early auto scheduler based on the ones that we've looked at. And that will, eventually that's not something you see in an early version, something. So I think our net net is, you know, guys Motion, if you're listening, keep innovating. And if you're not using Motion, or you're thinking about using it, we believe it has promise. I don't know that I saw any feature that's worth adopting it for given the market of auto schedulers and the maturity of other apps. So it doesn't it doesn't it doesn't displace any of the others. It's an early version of a few of the others. And it you know, it's one to watch. But we think it has I think it has a way to go. Is that a fair assessment?



Francis Wade 47:41

Yes. And it and it doesn't have a beta price point either.



Francis Wade 49:34

It came in, it came in with a full product. It's probably the most expensive auto scheduler out there. Right? So those don't really exist, you know, as if we didn't bother. We didn't bother to check what the market is doing. We were pricing at a premium point, which is you know, this is not a marketing show...but as a user, it's like... only five days to decide whether or not you pay the full price is.



Francis Wade 49:45

Right. That's Yes. It. So, you know, kind of bringing it back to the beginning. You know, you said was five days enough time... for me it was, but for someone who isn't familiar with auto schedulers? Absolutely not, that is not enough time at all. Right?



Francis Wade 50:28

Right. It's tough to make a big decision like based on.e. Okay, so, Melanie, we're going to have you back for another chat about auto schedulers in particular, and to revise or list of the best and the worst and what we think of the market on a whole revising or 2018 analysis. But where can folks get a hold of you when they want to talk to Dr Mel?



Melanie Wilson 50:57

Well, I have the I have a website where I sell my book A Year of Living Productively, it's on my homeschool books website. And that's called funtolearnbooks.com And you can find my book there, of course, it's on Amazon, but you can also I still have the psychowith6, that's the number the numeral psycho was six at Gmail account. That's my blog where I originally did all of my productivity experiments and posts. And just so you know, if you haven't figured it out, I'm a psychologist with six kids. And so that's why that was my log name. I'm going to be retiring that and making it a part of homeschoolsanity.com But psychowith6@gmail.com. You can reach me there to ask about any productivity questions.



Francis Wade 51:54

Great. Great. So folks, reach out to Melanie and keep listening. There's some information I want to share with you about our next podcast coming up in just a moment and some other information you may find useful. Keep listening