Frank Buck Interview podcast ep 20

📚 Mon, Oct 31, 2022 9:34AM 🕐 1:22:37

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, day, frank, tasks, software, principles, task, app, peter, symptom, principal, problem, piece, work, blocking, front end loader, system, thought, book, company

SPEAKERS

Dr. Frank Buck, Francis Wade

Francis Wade 17:18

The Task Management and Time Blocking Podcast, episode 20.

Francis Wade 17:21

When it comes to task management, you know that one size doesn't fit all. You already know that. And you're someone who has increased your workflow over the years, you have more tasks than ever, and a future of more task management not less. At the moment your current approach works, but you suspect that it may run into problems as you add a new project, add a new child to your family, pick up a new hobby, one of your parents gets ill or need some extra support, you take on a new sport, decide to do a marathon, you want to travel the world, you get a promotion, you decide to go back and get a master's degree, and so on and so forth.

Francis Wade 18:12

How do you adjust your approach when you realize that you need to change your methods as your task task volume increases and you can only see a future of mortality knowing that this is a problem just isn't enough. You want more. Tune this episode to hear from me and my special guest Dr. Frank Buck as we solve this challenging problem together. I'm Francis Wade and welcome to the Task Management and Time Blocking Podcast

Dr. Frank Buck 18:43

Francis Wade 20:59

So welcome back. So as you see, we have a special guest for this episode, Dr. Frank Buck. And before I introduce Frank, let me welcome you in case us this is the first time you're actually

listening to one of the podcasts here at the Task Management & Time Blocking Podcast. And we follow a slightly different format, actually a very different format from most podcasts. What do we do? Well, we spend the first part of the episode pulling apart the problem. So we spend a great deal of time on diagnosis, or belief is that if you understand the problem, you will actually be better equipped to solve it. So that's the first part. And the second part, we go into solutions, which is all about putting our heads together, trying to come up with something maybe that neither of us have even thought of before. So we bring all of our prior thoughts on our thinking. And we're also looking for that golden moment where one on one equals three. Now, if that happens, you'll hear a bell in the background. And that will be a thing that will signify that we've come across something brand new, and we've innovated something fresh for this podcast. If we get to the end, and there is nothing there, that's new. I'll also put in a buzzer, just to keep things fair. So we have a ban on a buzzer like this is a boxing ring. Right. Okay. All right. So, before I introduce Frank, let me just tell you a story.

Francis Wade 22:38

And the story is about a fellow named Peter. Peter works with a well known task management app developer, just like the ones you've probably heard of, like Trello, or Todoist. He did well during his first two years on the job. But a promotion to senior project manager has been difficult. Why? Well, Peter leads up three teams, totaling 15 people in all, and the complex projects they're working on, translate to hundreds of tasks. So as a result, he's got to make sure that they're all done. In order to move each of these projects forward. He uses the app the company sells to the public. But he starts to think that it's not well suited for his new job. All of a sudden, unexpected errors are reappearing. The kinds of things he had thought he had gotten over a long time ago, like his inbox, which now has 345 unread messages in two weeks. So he went from zero inbox to 345 in the inbox in just two weeks, just about the time he got promoted. Now he can't just stop using the company's app, because that will be like blasphemy. In fact, he also gets a commission every time one of his trainees or a prospect or customer starts using the app for the first time. So he's got to be a role model. You can't sell what you don't use... right? Eat your own dog food! Or else it could reduce the sales and a word get out. And next thing is people are saying on Twitter that the people at the app company aren't using their own app, they're off doing other things. What should he do?

Francis Wade 24:23

Well, that's why we brought up Dr. Frank book to be with us in our episode to delve into this and all other problems related to the one that Peter has. By way of introduction, Frank Buck is ranked number one in the world by Global Gurus Top 30 in time management is a speaker productivity coach and author of get organized and get organized digitally. He helps busy professionals achieve total control over their time and the peace of mind that nothing is falling through the cracks. Frank Buck, Welcome to the Task Management & Time Blocking Podcast.

Dr. Frank Buck 24:55

Francis, great to be here. We we have worked on so many projects together over the last several years, and I'm delighted to be here, and maybe we can solve Peters problem.

Francis Wade 25:08

I'm hoping that we can put our heads together and come up with something that the world has never seen before. And we shall see. That's what happens. Let's be honest that so far is each episode, no pressure. But we've not had the buzzer come into play on any prior episode yet. So the problem is that Peter is going through a transition. And he's clinging to prior way of doing things. And this is not unusual, is it?

Dr. Frank Buck 25:41

Right, right. What so what worked before is not working now?

Francis Wade 25:46

Right. And he's not he's, he's suspicious. But he's not exactly sure. Because when this happens for the first time, it certainly happened with me. You double guess, yourself, and triple guess. And you you second guess, third, fourth, but you think that you're not doing it right? Because if he's like everybody else, he go back to the manual of how to use the app., book or program. And he thinks he's doing something wrong. Right? Because he said, first of all, I'm wrong. And I'm not doing something. Right. Correct?

Dr. Frank Buck 26:26

That's the, you know, to me, that's the thought I would have I would go first to Is there something I can do better? Because he's got a dilemma. He's selling this app, you know, he, he works for this company that's making its livelihood off of this app. You can't very well say, Well, gosh, this app doesn't work. You know, we actually do something. And as you said, so beautifully, Francis, you must eat your own dog food. So the first thought I would have is, is there something I'm doing wrong? And yes, if there's an owner's manual, go back. And is there some way we can use this software better?

Francis Wade 27:12

And he probably talked to some people who would reaffirm that, and there's a lot of people who have used an app or an approach like GTD. Who ask other people, why is it not working? And their advice is to double down? Right? Yeah,

Dr. Frank Buck 27:27

Yeah. And so yeah, he can ask the people who are there in the company using the app, I think he also needs to ask people outside the company, who maybe have used the app, left the app, use a different app are familiar with a lot of apps, you get, I think we see a lot of commonalities. And even though maybe I don't use the piece of software that Peter does, I know the kinds of things that I'm expecting it to do. You know, for example, I'm expecting to be

able to assign a date to a task, assign a repeating pattern to that task, to be able to forward emails to that task app. So there might be a little something that Peters missing within that piece of software, that someone else who doesn't even know that software says now, in your software, can you do X? Can you forward an email into it, and Peter goes, what you can do that kind of thing. So he didn't even know the capability was there that would solve would help him with the overflowing hundreds and hundreds of emails in the inbox, many of which are in the inbox because they're reminders of things that Peter has to do.

Francis Wade 28:49

Right. And he's a good salesperson, right? He, he's he's evangelical about its software. So absolutely, yes. He doesn't go talking to the enemy. He doesn't go to the church of Satan. Right? Yeah. Because his, you know, he's, he makes living from selling the app in part. And he convinces people that this is the best thing. And when they come to me say, Yeah, but what about this other feature? He says, No, you don't want to use that. And part of that is because he sincerely believes that...like many people who believe in GTD or Trello or Pomodoro or anything, he sincerely believes that it's a real thing and right thing to do, and he has a financial incentive to, to keep pushing it. So he...lirting with the enemy and finding out what other people are doing is difficult for him...no? And it is the most the most people once you settled on an app and if you become sort of a real believer or you sit around and approach and you start to evangelize to other people, you don't give it up lightly.

Dr. Frank Buck 29:59

it's hard to do. Yeah, yeah, you know, and I've been there, I've been there myself, you know, when, when a piece of software goes belly up, or when the management at a, you know, at a piece of software when the President sells the company to someone else who immediately starts dismantling things. I've been through it and you know I jumped ship, went to something else. Told followers look, I no longer use this piece of software I'm because for the following reasons. Here's where I went, here's why I went there. Here's what I'm recommending to you. And here's a good on ramp, I put together an ebook that will help you get there quickly. Of course, if I'm selling that first piece of software, I can't exactly do that, unless I've now gone to work for the other guy.

Dr. Frank Buck 30:53

You know, if I'm stuck working at that company, um, I'm selling that piece of software. It's it's one of those things where I've got to make it work. Now, I think one of the ways to make it work is to get familiar with the competitors. Yeah, I mean, you always want to be cognizant of what your competitors are doing, so that you know where you're better than they are. And you can shout it from the mountaintops, and know where you're not nearly as good as they are, so that you can hopefully avoid that part of the conversation.

Dr. Frank Buck 31:31

But in doing so, you, you peel back that onion of what are the good things about the competitor's software. And one thing you may find is that your piece of software has that and

competitor's software. And one thing you may find is that your piece of software has that and you just didn't know it. You know, in that movie about Dorothy and she's wants to get to Kansas, how long did she spend before she figured out that the ruby slippers she had on her feet the whole time gave her the easy answer, she was trying something much more difficult. So number one, we can find that, ah, there's something our software will actually do that we just didn't know, until we ask the right question of the right person. And then secondly, if it really won't do what it needs to do, when you're inside the company, you are in the perfect position to ask the right questions of the right people and make some improvements in the software. If if you get to the right pair of ears and eyes.

Francis Wade 32:41

But I would have to come away down the pike because he'd have to, he'd have to have that. Let's say let's call it the early Inkling the first inkling. And for me it happened when I was leading programs for a company in about 2001. My mom did the program. And I talked to her maybe like six months later. Yeah. I said, Well, how's it working? And she said, Oh, I'm not using any of that stuff. And I said, Well, why not? And she was not really for me, you know, I'm retired and I don't need that kind of thing. And, and I thought this is kinda like, you know, I didn't have kids. So this was my firstborn. Yeah, she was like denying my my child and saying that, you know, it was no good. I took it personally. So I tried to correct her ways...like an idiot. But it dawned on me, somewhere around there, that one size doesn't fit all. Because I couldn't negate her experience. And if this is work, at first thing I thought was maybe it works for busy people who are still in the job. But then I started to talk to other people who done the program. And it started to dawn on me that one size doesn't fit all. So for Peter to get to the point where he goes back into the company, and starts to ask for more features, it will have to dawned on him that maybe all of us don't use the same thing the same way for the same end result. And that's, that's after we've drunk the Kool Aid and after we've come to believe in whatever we're doing, is a bit of a hard way to go. And are there folks listening to this who are in their mind, they're saying, "You're wrong, you're wrong, you're wrong". And we're just kind of shedding a light, maybe one size doesn't fit all, and maybe what you think to be correct and true and right. May not be. Like you said check out the other apps that are out there. Open your mind just a little bit to what people are doing. They are good people. Get your Mom involved because you can't say that she's a bad person and she doesn't know what she's doing. You can only go so far when it's your mom right?

Dr. Frank Buck 35:00

Yeah, exactly, yeah, yeah.

Francis Wade 35:02

And start to talk to the people who are in the company, the designers, not just the fan base, and ask them, "How come this doesn't have this particular feature?" And start to query and start to open your mind up. It's like, for me, it was an epiphany. I think for many people, it might be just this. It's a like a little crack that opens up, right? The sunlight starts coming in. And it's like, Well, that explains why this is not an easy an easy transition for some to make. You know, there are many who believe that one size should fit all right. You really should do what I'm doing...it's the right way. And you should follow what I'm doing.

Dr. Frank Buck 35:46

You know, and sometimes you have the feature is not in that particular piece of software. But there's is a workaround, if you know, if you know, the end, you know, where you're trying to get, you know, what you want the software to do, maybe that particular feature is not built in. But there's another way to skin the cat, as we say here in the south, that there is a workaround, that's, that's one thought that comes to mind. Another thought that comes to mind as we're having this conversation about Peter, who evidently has some real strengths, and he's moving through the company, and he's been successful with the software and his workflow. But now the responsibilities have changed. And what worked in the past, he doesn't foresee working in the future. And I think any of us out there, as we move through our careers, we're moving from handling tasks others are giving to us.

Francis Wade 36:46

Right? That's a nice three step model, did you have that one coming into the coming into the show before? Or did you just invent that one on the fly Frank?

Dr. Frank Buck 36:46

Where we show up to work. And our to do list has been prepared by somebody else to we show up at work, and we're doing the work that we are able to define. And then at some point in our career, we're doing the work with other people that the project is one that's so large, that it's not something I produce on my own. And here's the end result. It's I've got to be in collaboration with other people all day long. And we've all got to know who's got what part of the puzzle, where are each of us. And then at some point in our career, we're we're getting work done through other people, where our job is maybe to do the schmoozing with other higher ups and solicit the funding, get the grants, that sort of thing. Be the face of the company, and the day to day operations are being handled by somebody else, but we can't just have the confidence "Wow, that's being handled!" How do we stay on top of who's got what, who's doing what they're supposed to? Where are the balls being dropped? So totally different requirements of our system.

Dr. Frank Buck 38:13

Well, in a way I invented it on the fly? But I mean, if I look back at my own career, you know, I was a junior high band director, well, and the very first day here, here's the Red Book, as, as everybody on the faculty knew, it was the notebook that had every question you needed answered, was in the Red Book.

Dr. Frank Buck 38:41

But then, as far as really running the band program itself. I had to do the inventing layer, you know, it wasn't like the teacher down the hall from he knew how to do band. No, he knew how to teach art. And he did it successfully. And she knew how to teach speech and drama.

Dr. Frank Buck 39:02

But the to do list as far as getting that spring concert, going, and it being successful. That was me. And then now I'm a principal. And now I'm getting work done through other people. So how can we make sure that teachers have what they need, and that they're doing what they need to do, and they're collaborating like they need to collaborate? And the things that make you successful, at one point may not make you successful somewhere else. You know, I've seen I've seen people who weren't very good teachers, who were successful principals because they knew how to motivate other people, get them to work together, that sort of thing. It's the exception rather than the rule. I've also seen people who were phenomenal teachers. They could get it Close the door, let me have my 20 kids and I can do wonders. But then when they were in charge of the whole building, it was like....

Francis Wade 40:08

Alright, I'm gonna put the thing. If I if I beat it my beat was working, I beat No, because that three, three level invention that usually is exactly what we're here to cope with brand new stuff like that. That's a great example. In the case of Peter, so Peter, and I think almost everyone who goes through that maturity, the three levels of the Frank Buck Maturity Model.

Dr. Frank Buck 40:08

I could sell that now ,see!

Francis Wade 40:33

FBMM, yeah, the people who go through that, which is most people who have a successful career, the more successful the more you transition from a low volume of tasks, which somebody else gives you. To a very, very high volume of tasks, which, following the FBMM, you are giving yourself for the most part, when you're a principal, you don't have a chairman, who is on you every day telling you what to do, and micromanage. ....Or if you do, it's like it will kill you, it will cripple you. So it can't work that way. Instead, you're the one assigning yourself tasks. And as you become more adept at it, as you go from teacher, to an administrator to principal, by the end of it, you're lying in bed at 10 o'clock at night, your mind is creating more tasks, because that's what you do. You're assigning yourself more and more to do.

Francis Wade 41:43

The problem that Peter has is he he doesn't know he (even if he realizes that one size doesn't fit all), he may not know that task volume is an important determinant of the system you need to create. And the task volume he had as a entry level salesperson or a trainer is very different than he had as the project manager of three teams and 15 people working for him.

Francis Wade 42:15

So he may not catch that, as the volume of tax increases, the app that the company sells is perfect for down here. But not so good for up here. Yes. The core problem that we have, we're talking about today is that people who know that one size doesn't fit all. And I've seen all kinds of explanations. I've seen personality explanations that say, Oh, if you're this kind of personality use this kind of task management tool or approach or if you're in this profession...oh use this. But the the the core idea, that task volume.

Francis Wade 43:00

And if you're if you're if you've not heard this idea before, let me let me do a quick explanation. It's like, imagine Frank, if you invite if you invited me to help you move some dirt around? And I said, Oh, great. Sure I'll, if I live in Alabama, of course, I'd have to do that. I'd say sure Frank I'll come over and help you move that dirt around. And the night before, I'm supposed to head over to Frank, you know, I go into my garage, and I pull up my trowell, you know, my hand, my hand shovel. And I show up the next day at Frank's and he says, Where are you going with that? And I said, we're gonna move some dirt around, right? We're gonna, you're gonna pot some plants right? Not much. No... I wanted you to go pick up the pick up the front end loader from UHaul. All right. Bring it bring that with you. I'll pay you back. Well, that's what I wanted you didn't you get that part of the message? And I'm like, What are you trying to do any, you take me through the back of the back of the property. And I look at all this hole you want to fill, because you want to build a 20 foot pit using the front end loader. And I am holding my trowel in my hand and at the space that you've mapped out. And I think, oh, it's still about moving dirt. But it's way more dirt than I imagined. And the tool that I have in my hand is useless. Yeah, helping you to move that volume of dirt. Right. And so that happens in real life.

Dr. Frank Buck 44:24

And of course the the tool that you had would have been great if it had been we're going to fill a few flower pots. And in fact, the front end loader would not have worked at all,

Francis Wade 44:37

Yeah, that would have been a disaster.

Dr. Frank Buck 44:39

It would have been an absolute disaster. So you know the right tool for the right job. And I think also using the tool for the JC another thing that I see so much is people when something doesn't work, the first thing they want to do is get another piece of software, adopt a new system, they do. And I did a lot of that if you looked at my very first formal time management productivity organization system, it was as a senior in high school. So we're talking in 1976. And mine was an index card for the day, it was in my pocket, on the front of the index card, they were my marching orders for the day, any appointment, I had any particular thing I needed to do. And then anything that came up during the day, homework assignments, pretty

girl gives me her phone number, whatever came up during the day went on the back of the card, on the back of the card. So now when I get home, I've got exactly one job, handle the card, do what I can do, and what needs to be done at some time in the future start a card for that day.

D **Dr. Frank Buck** 45:56

So yeah, that would not work for me today. The volume of stuff wouldn't work for me today. But you know, what does work? The idea of on the front of the card, predetermined. Here's what I told myself at some time in the past, I wanted to be doing that day that lives on right now. And it's all an expensive phone that said to an expensive computer, it's bouncing off satellites, all that good kind of stuff. And then whatever does come up during the day, stead of going on the back of an index card. I'm throwing it as in as a task and remember the milk usually with my voice. And then there's little Remember The Milk in box. Right, Frank, here's everything that you threw at me today. It's the back of the index card from 1976. So I think a lot of this is looking at those principles with a PLA that are are timeless. Right? And, you know, instead of junking the system, and actually, the thing that took me back to that was decided that yeah, since 1976, to now a lot of water has gone across the dam. And as things started not to work, my inclination was a new system, this systems not working in the new system. And so the new system would always work until it didn't. write a new system. And that would work beautifully.

Francis Wade 47:30

Until it didn't.

D **Dr. Frank Buck** 47:32

And so when I finally was smart enough to figure out after several decades was during the process of changing my system, I was cleaning it up. And so I was starting with something that was clean. No wonder it worked. So now every time I get the idea that, Oh, I need a new system. The smart part of my brain tells the dumb part. No, you don't need a new system. You need to clean up the one you have. Yeah, you don't need a new house. Because it's all cluttered. You need to clear up the clutter in your house, you need some garbage bags, and you need to sit down and you need to make some decisions. And so many people don't make those decisions. They just go oh, well, let me get that piece of software. It was I just saw a YouTube video. And it worked great on the YouTube video. It worked great on the YouTube video for the guy who only had five things on his to do list.

Francis Wade 48:34

Yeah. Have you noticed that software apps in their advertisements? They never have more than like 10? I think, yeah, they always have a really small number, which is which, you know, it helps for the selling point. But it doesn't help you to make the transition because someone who did what you did, and jumped from one to the other may think that there's something very wrong with they're jumping from one to the other. They may not see that the there's this invisible task volume that's increasing in the background. And what they're doing is they're

scaling up. Now, they may not follow the smoothest process to scale up. But they may think that something is is wrong. And they may unwittingly or mistakenly... I did this. I went from time blocking. I used to keep lists, I learned about time blocking, started doing it ran into some difficulty with backhand listing, keeping lists stopped time blocking, I stopped using my calendar because I didn't know what else to try. And I had no map of the universe to say oh, it goes in a particular order. And I went back to keeping lists got rid of the time blocking... things got 10 times worse. I saud "No, what was I doing?" I had to go back out to time blocking send me this zigzag progression. wasn't a progression it was it was back and forth. Because you know, if we stick to the one, we stick to the one level, or we bounce between levels, then we don't quite understand why we need to change, we see an ad, we see somebody makes a recommendation to us, we change, and then it doesn't work. And we don't know why it changes. So we're left floundering. And because we don't really have a philosophy, we don't understand the principles behind, we can, I guess you could be like a, you know, someone who tries something for the first time and you get some luck. But then it gets measurably more difficult. And you don't know why. Because you never really understood the principles to begin with. You basically lucked out on some practices. And that leads you to try all kinds of things and to get into this kind of state that Peter finds himself in, where it's like, what do I do? Do I stick to what I have? Do I change what I have?

Francis Wade 50:58

But really what what I think we're saying is that without the understanding behind it of the principles... like the principle that you you shared of capturing your tasks and planning a day, the principle never changed. But the method of applying it needed to change. And now you can look back and you can understand, Oh, okay. I was doing my best without understanding the principles behind it. But now I can see the principles at playing, and I can help other people to do it. But we don't know these principles and you find yourself floundering you either cling to what you think, you know, or you bounce around randomly. And it's a it's a tough spot to be in, isn't it?

Dr. Frank Buck 51:41

Absolutely. Absolutely. Yes. It's like Lucy and Ethel in the candy factory, you know? And I think, everybody I mean, have you seen that? You? I'm sure you've seen....

Francis Wade 51:53

Charlie the Chocolate Factory?

Dr. Frank Buck 51:55

No, no, Lucy and Ethel from I Love Lucy?

Francis Wade 51:58

Oh, yes, yes, yeah. The conveyor belt.

Oh, yes, yes, yeah. The conveyor belt.

D Dr. Frank Buck 52:01

It doesn't matter someone's age, or where they grew up on the on the planet Earth. Everybody knows that episode of I Love Lucy where they you know, and, and it looks easy at first, you know, there are only a few pieces of candy and the conveyor belt is moving very slowly. Now, if they had any idea what was about to happen, they would probably have spent some time fashioning some kind of little machine that would help them wrap chocolate quicker, box chocolate quicker, that sort of thing. Instead of just trying to work faster, using tools that weren't working for them. They were working a whole lot more than they really needed to be working at. And we're getting the results. Yeah, just

Francis Wade 53:01

Good visual example. Fantastic, and it but it's it actually mirrors what we tried to do, because we try to, we try to move faster, we try to pedal faster, and we don't see the progress. And don't know why, we all make mistakes, we make mistakes we think we try doubling down. We try to ask people for help. But the truth is the people like you our I...or experts, we don't talk about task volume. It's not studied, as someone who spent a heap of time in academic journals looking for people who have researched the kind of points we're talking about. And in the area of task management, I've not found it. I could find parallel studies in industrial engineering, which happens to be my background. But they have to do with batteries. They have to do with physical objects, not psychological objects, and they don't behave the same. So research isn't there. And people like you or I... and experts in task management who study this thing for a living productivity experts. We're not really clear about the relationship. I can tell you, like I say this from talking to other productivity experts, we don't have a really clear message about it. We just kind of say that this will work better for you, but we don't say under what conditions or why. So it's part of the job that we're not we're not bringing this kind of understanding to the general audience so that people can know what worked for me in high school just won't work for me as an adult. And the reason is just you know, it's it's Lucie and Ethel all over again, right? Yeah, I need to back up a step and say, Okay, if they're going to increase the number of chocolates coming down, I need to change my approach. You just step back and think but we're not doing a..., I'll criticize people, folks like us and say, you know, when we're coaching or training, or writing books, it's easier to sell one size fits all stuff

D Dr. Frank Buck 55:13

It is and and to portray it as if you don't have much to do, you know. Here's your to do list for tomorrow with my software. And there's only three things on it. And then you even get the people that say, you know, I'll just only pick three things to do during the day, do those three, and then keep that big long list somewhere else. And just pick three things to do. And leave the 300 things over there on the list. And that works great the first day you do those three things, and the world didn't come crashing down, and you feel great. And so the next day, you pick three things only now the list is over, there's not 300, it's 350. And then after, you know, after doing this for a week, and you've been doing three things each day and your list over there's now 972. And they're no clean dishes, because they're all in the sink. And the grass is now a

foot tall because you had mowed it because that wasn't one of the top three. And you know, then suddenly the electricity is cut off because you didn't pay the bill because that hadn't risen to one of the top three.

Francis Wade 56:31

Your inbox is exploding. Yeah. And and you know, a few weeks ago,

Dr. Frank Buck 56:36

Delegate delegate those things. Well, that's great, you know, if you got somebody to delegate to most of us wind up being the person that other people are delegating to, you know, at some point, somebody's got to be the one to empty the dishwasher, you know, for crying out loud. We're Yeah, we want to handle the big things. But somebody's got to handle the little things as well. And a lot of times that somebody is us.

Dr. Frank Buck 57:04

So do we have procedures that will allow us to handle a whole bunch of things, you know, I have my little list for that I handle once a week, little no brainer kind of stuff. And just handle is back to back to back to back to back to back to back. Like one of them is just once every two weeks. Go outside, open the crawlspace under the house to make sure there's no water underneath there. Okay, that's not exactly like writing the great American novel. And so far knock on wood. There hasn't been any water been any water under there. But the day that it's a foot deep, I'd sure like to know that then instead of six months down the road when the foundation is now you know, is now crumbling.

Francis Wade 57:55

So you gotta check. No matter what, president the United States, and that crawl space has got to be quick. Oh, yeah, you know, we've got a regular basis.

Dr. Frank Buck 58:08

We all have dumb little things. They aren't glamorous. But they have to be done. So can we put them into some kind of routine, so that so that number one, that we're not waking up in the middle of the night thinking about, Oh, I need to check under the crawlspace. I hadn't done that in a while. Just put it on a list where you know, once a week, you're going in handling a dozen of these things, that once a month you're handling 20 or 30, things that need to be handled, checked, looked at whatever about once a month. And you're not beating yourself up about being so dumb about forgetting all...

Dr. Frank Buck 58:48

because let's face it, none of us can remember all the things that are on our plate, it just it doesn't work, I was lucky enough to have realized that as a senior in high school, because up to that point I was going from I can remember that page 57 in math, that's my homework tonight, I can remember that. Heck, I'll stick a piece of paper in the math book and and I'll just do it in study hall and won't even have to take the math book home. That worked until the senior year in high school. And at that point, there was enough that I realized it wasn't working. And I was kind enough to myself to say I need a system that's going to now match my workload.

Francis Wade 59:37

Well, here's here's what some people say. So they're they're advised to do three things per day and no more...so you have destroyed that. But what about the person who says you have too many projects? Or you have too many interests? You need to cut them back. So that's a really popular piece of advice. Cut back your projects, cut back your commitment. Get rid of two kids. There's a fallacy in that, which is that if you stop, for example, if you if you think somebody tells you, you got to cut something, so don't do exercise as much.

Francis Wade 1:00:20

So then you say, Okay, well, I only go walking once a week, as opposed to my five times a week. So I cut back my exercise. And that way, I'll have more time to do my project. Well, the truth is that, if you're a creative, committed person, you're going to keep creating at that level three, using the Frank Buck Maturity Model. When you're the principal, you keep creating more and more and more things. It's not a function of what you call a project. It's a function of your capacity to create and assign yourself new tasks. And that will always fill the task list to the brim, because you won't stop being creative, or you won't stop being committed. We may stop exercising. Okay, that's nice.

D Dr. Frank Buck 1:01:10

Right? So we stopped exercising, which gives us more time now for these other things, but then we take on more. So what else are we going to cut out? Well, well, I'll just cut out eating, you know, and then I'll have more time to work on my..

Francis Wade 1:01:24

people do that go? Yeah, honestly, no, right people, people skip meals. In order to get through the day. People skip exercise for years, in order to get through a decade. Because stop caring for their parents because they don't have the time to get through adulthood. Now these things, what you're implying is that they come back and they eventually they bite you in the butt, because there's a feedback loop there somewhere with these things. Yeah, yeah. Not escaped...just because you're a president, you can't stop brushing your teeth, does it just doesn't work that way. There is an increase in task volume that you can't just willy nilly say, well, I'll just scale back. It just doesn't work that way. Because it's false. It's poor coaching, and doesn't work.

Dr. Frank Buck 1:02:12

Absolutely. You know, and I think there's some good exercises that do fit for all of us, somehow, some way, putting it in whatever system you have, so that you can see the whole thing, you know, what's the totality of what's on my plate? Is it 500 task? Is it so many repeating tasks? What what is it? And then what are the things that yeah, that I don't like doing that don't need to be done? What are some things where I'm wondering, why do we even keep doing that? Why is that thing on the list, get rid of some of those things? What are things that we can automate? The other great thing about living in the time we do is how many things technology can do for us? Right? Can a bank draft some things instead of sit down writing all those checks? What What can I have technology do for me? And if I don't know how to set that up, who does know how to set that up? I could make a phone call and they could help me do that. And so many of us, we just kick the can down the road, and we don't make those kinds of decisions.

Francis Wade 1:03:27

We don't know how to, to make those systematic improvements. We know like we want that. We want that magical improvement from the new magical app, as opposed to following kind of what you're saying is make clean up what you're currently doing in a mindful way. Yes, it will show you what's next, as opposed to this Magpie kind of chasing shiny objects, which is a very modern way of trying to solve problems is to, you know, go to a Google search and ooh, shiny new object, and then go after that. But there's a I think what you're what you're implying is that your improvement is more a matter of an inside journey, than an outside discovery. Yes, yes. unlikely to be an epiphany from the outside. If there's any epiphany, it'll come from kind of a reflection.

Francis Wade 1:04:31

There's one thing I wanted to add to what we were saying before we pivot over to purely talking about solutions, which is that they what's confounding about this whole thing? And when I coach people I hear this is that like, for example, let's use the example of Peter from the story. So Peter, is is back to 345 unread emails in a matter of a few weeks from inbox zero to hundreds. And he, he may very well think that this symptom which he suffered with for years, the cause of it is the same cause that he had five years ago. Because he may think it's like, oh, it's kind of like the common cold, you know, what you do when you have the common cold, you take vitamin C, you rest, drink lots of liquids, you know, there's a, and when the problem comes back, the human tendency is to tackle the problem the same way. But what he doesn't realize is that he's not the person he was 10 years ago. And he's not using the system he was 10 years ago. The only thing that's the same is the symptom. And this, the fact that the symptom is similar, is a huge red herring for most of us.

Francis Wade 1:05:53

Because like me, I thought that oh, you know, I'm not managing, so I need to go back, give up time blocking and go back to what I was doing before. No, instead, these symptoms show up, whenever our volume gets to the point where it starts to increase above our capacity. So that could be you could have five tasks, and you're forgetting, or you're gonna have 500 tasks, and

you're forgetting, or you're not executing them the way you want. Right the symptom is the same, but you're not in the same position. So you can't turn back the clock and say, Oh, when I had five tasks, what I did was I started to write them down on a piece of paper and keep the piece of paper in my breast pocket, because that's what worked when I was forgetting stuff. Yeah, no, you're a whole different person, you're using sophisticated tools you're using, you're using software, and you now need to evaluate the symptom in the light of where you are now, not where you were. And that, I find, cnfounds a lot of people. Have you have you seen that happen Frank?

D **Dr. Frank Buck** 1:07:06

All the time, all the time.

Francis Wade 1:07:10

And some of us write articles that, unfortunately, they have titles like "Are you forgetting to do important things each day?". And we have here are the three steps that you need to follow. We're really talking to Frank Buck, when he was 18. In the article, we're not talking to a principal of a school or a CEO of a company who has hundreds of tasks. So they pick up the advice, they pick up the article, and they're like, really? I'm not 18 years. And if they even realize that, some of them may say, Okay, you're right, I need to simplify things, I need to do three things per day. And they may even take us literally, and the principal is now acting like an 18 year old because they're trying anything that will help we, we confound the diagnosis, when we make it sound as if a symptom me has always had has a particular cause in task management. Because in task management, to follow your maturity model, it just doesn't work that way. How does that sound? Do? I'm kind of putting three things together.

D **Dr. Frank Buck** 1:08:31

Absolutely. I'm thinking as you're, as you're mentioning, that said that article. "Here are the three things to do to manage your time" and so forth. And you know, probably number one is going to be write it down. Was that applicable to an 18 year old? Sure, if they're trying to keep it all in their head, there's an opportunity to improve? Are we talking to a 30 year old? Absolutely. If you're trying to keep it all in your head? Yeah. Are you talking to the CEO? Absolutely. But what does that look like in practice? Where's it being written down? When you're the 18 year old that needs to do page 37 in the math book, as opposed to a CEO who needs to make this phone call and when he does, needs to have this document in front of him that lives on this drive, and three different URLs and three different emails, and how do we get where are we going to put all of that together?

D **Dr. Frank Buck** 1:09:42

Now, if somebody was following me around, they would see exactly how I do it and go, Oh, okay. And, and one of the nice things about having been, for example, a principal or central office administrator and there are other people around you, who get to see you on a daily basis. I've never my first year as a principal. And so nobody in the school knows me. And I've got my

day timer. So that was back before anything was digital. And what they noticed was that new principal he's always carrying around that little book. And he's always writing stuff in it. What's he writing now? And so, when when I did a little session with the faculty, oh, on those professional development days, you know, when you got to come up with something, and it's usually boring. And so we just did just a sessional. I showed them the tickler file, and my day timer. And they were like, "Wow, that is so simple. And how do you man, you're How do you do this kind of thing with the tickler file?" And you just go through some use case scenarios? And it's like, yeah, you know, now, if you just told me, here's the tool, that's one thing. But when I'm actually understanding exactly the methodology behind how you're using it, how it gets in the system, so you have to be able to follow people around a little bit. That's one of the things that, you know, you're not able to do with the article. Yeah, you're not able to follow the author around to see exactly how did they do what they do? Because what she then see is, oh, okay, that is that becomes simple.

D Dr. Frank Buck 1:11:31

You know, as a band director, we didn't send everybody home with their clarinet and say, hey, just here's your clarinet. Go for it. We said "Let me demonstrate line one for you."

D Dr. Frank Buck 1:11:45

"Oh, now I see about how much air he's he's got, he's getting a bigger sound, it's much less. Oh, he's looking at how much air he's taking in."

D Dr. Frank Buck 1:11:56

You know, when you're able to sort of walk, not necessarily walk a mile in your shoes, but walk behind you, as you're doing these things. I think that's the missing link for so so many of us. Yeah, we all need mentors in so many different ways.

Francis Wade 1:12:15

We can't We can't all get them unfortunately. Right. So we know, we need people who know a thing or two, to share principles in a way that I guess it's a, it's a substitute for having a live individual with you because you can you can learn it, but in the abstract, without having to be with the person.

Francis Wade 1:12:40

If you can be with a person who tells you "Here's the principle behind what I'm doing". So what what I'm doing, and learn that understand that there's a principle of applying. Now, not every mentor does that. They just would tell you just "Just do what I do". And you say, "okay, sir", you salute the flag, and you go try do it. And then the circumstance changes slightly. And because

you don't know the principle, then you don't know how to apply it. But good mentors, right, good mentors teach you the principles behind what they're doing. Bad mentors don't even have principles. They're just, yeah, you're saying it's working. So just do it!

D Dr. Frank Buck 1:13:21

Yeah, they teach you the principle and the step 123. Are you just a sports example. You know, I'm from the state of Alabama. And we really like our football team there at the University of Alabama. And when when Nick Saban was hired as the as the head coach, he was hired away from the Miami Dolphins during a period of time it was kind of a low period for the University of Alabama football team. And and the thing he said to the athletic director was, you've just hired yourself one heck of a recruiter. Now I think anybody if if they said, Yeah, how can I have a successful college football team, we say, Well, look, go out and recruit really good players. So it's like, Okay, let me put that on my list recruit really good players. Well, everybody knows that. But why are some people successful and other people are not? Now what we found is, well, yeah, Nick Saban every year is recruiting if not the number one recruiting class in the country, it's right up there. But you know, what we've seen over the years, the assistant coaches who have worked for him and then gone out to be head coaches on their own, okay. They're also fantastic recruiters. Oh, so they've seen not only Oh, you need to be a great recruiter. They've been there to see exactly what does that look like day one, day two, day three, in bite size enough things or bite size enough staff so that they can then reproduce that. And so that could be in football that could be in band, leading a school that could be in leading, you know, in leading a corporation.

Francis Wade 1:15:13

Right, the great thing about the examples that you described is that each of them actually has a curriculum laid out, somebody has pre thought it. So you can actually follow someone else's system. We know the movie Moneyball is a great, great example. But in task management, we're left to our own devices, we were just making stuff up because the principles of task management, even a great book, like GTD, they're mixed in with specific practices. They're mixed in with some things that made sense way back when the book was written in 2001. Don't make sense today.

Francis Wade 1:15:58

The book says don't do time blocking. And other parts. David Allen says, okay, Blockbuster in your calendar. So. So the job I think of us as people who will want to be productive, is to listen to podcasts like these and see and ask ourselves, "What are the deeper principles behind what is being said?" Or "What's being written on the page that I can apply everywhere? And how can I use that for not just forever?" but to do what you said, Frank, which is to do that kind of deep dive into, if I'm having those symptoms, like Peters, that I need to bring these principles to bear.

Francis Wade 1:16:38

So where I am right now. And when I bring them to bear to where I am right now, and start to

So where I am right now. And when I bring them to bear to where I am right now, and start to, as you said, clean things up? Or in other words, make this as good as it can be? Then I can I earn the right to see where the improvements could come from. Because I'm going to try to apply the same principles. But I'm looking now for some daylight. Yeah, say, okay, when this gets as good as it can, then I can maybe forge a path to where I can get to.

Francis Wade 1:17:10

That's, that's what I'm in combining the different things that we've said, if you can get a mentor to help all the better. But they're in areas of the world that we working in task management, you get somebody who's really productive. And they may never explain anything to you, because they may they themselves may not really have principles, they may just have practices. Some of them may have principles that actually aren't principles, or they don't actually work out of a particular context. So then you got to be thinking, but there's like a second order of thinking that you need to bring to the party in order to make sense of it. How does sound? I'm trying to summarize, because we're actually out of time....

D Dr. Frank Buck 1:17:55

Absolutely, and even a lot of those people who are doing things successfully, explaining to someone else how they're doing it, a lot of times that thought process, process is not there. Whereas you and I, when we're we're in this field, we're thinking about this kind of stuff all the time, right?

Francis Wade 1:18:17

We're different, we're kind of, we kind of want everyone to do that. Because Peter's story is common. To everybody that you you, you're a teacher, you say I want to be an administrator...You're and administrator, you say I want to be a principal, that's just kind of normal. And as you make that, as you make that journey, what you said about transitioning from someone who does tasks given to me by others, to generating my own tasks, from my creativity and my commitment, every career, everyone in every career makes that journey, if they're, if they want to, if they want to, if they're ambitious, they make that that change. But as they make that change, the task volume goes up. And they will have to meet multiple jumps. And I guess what we'll close off by saying is that those multiple jumps are not easy to make.

Francis Wade 1:19:23

Because there isn't it's not like football, where it's all laid out. Where somebody has figured out the philosophy and figured out the principles. You got to figure out the principles more or less on your own. And you got to sort of do this deep diving that you talked about, without much help, probably because you probably can't afford a coach or a mentor to consider a course for two days...Ordinary folks, you know, it really does come from this kind of deep insight that you get from thinking. Both are hard on your own.

Francis Wade 1:20:02

Well, Frank with that. How can folks get more more more of your thinking and your ideas?

Dr. Frank Buck 1:20:11

Okay, come over. Come over to the website, Frank Buck.org. See, I've been blogging since like 2005. So you can just have fun. Don't try to read all the posts that are in there. But you know, you can search for whatever... you're you know, if it's Remember The Milk search for Remember The Milk, Evernote? Yeah, whatever you're interested in, and I probably written about it, get on my email list, you'll see right there on the homepage where you can do that. And every Tuesday, you get an email from me that says, here's the new content that I have created over the last week. Plus, here's some things that I've read over the last week or two that I like that I think you would like. So it's kind of cute. Now, people ask me, Frank, how do you how do you know all this stuff? Well, I have the time to do it. And then I put it there so that other people don't have to go through the same process that I do that, that there are those little tidbits for you. So come over to the website, Frank Buck.org get on the email list. And, and we'll just go from there. It's it's a journey that I hope we're I hope you'll join me.

Francis Wade 1:21:23

Great. So I request of you Frank that you before the before the episode goes live, that you write a post on the Maturity Model. Can you go Yeah, yeah, I did. Okay, that folks can go link right back to it, because we will have a we have enough time. Yeah, it would be a few weeks. Absolutely. Yeah.

Dr. Frank Buck 1:21:46

So I liked that idea. Thinking. Yeah,

Francis Wade 1:21:49

I think there's, there's some, there's there's some some has a clear evolutionary principle in terms of one's career that you've nailed with that maturity model. And I think it deserves some legs. And I think anybody can use it. As long as they're ambitious. As long as they want to make progress in their career, they're gonna have to make this transition that you described.

Francis Wade 1:22:12

So thanks, Frank Buck, for appearing on the task management and time blocking podcast. Folks keep listening. I'm going to keep listening because I'm going to tell you a little bit about our next episode and some other good things coming up in just a few moments.