Ep 30 Raw recording Renee

📅 Mon, Apr 03, 2023 9:55PM   🕐 1:02:28

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

software, simon, task, management, duolingo, productivity, management software, thinking, renee, problem, slack, talk, rolling, change, work, analog, francis, tasks, play, love

SPEAKERS

Renee Clair, Francis Wade

Francis Wade

The Task Management and Time Blocking Podcast, episode 30. Your company has come up with a bright idea. From now on the announcement states, everyone will share the same task management software. It's sold as a win win for everyone. But you realize this is a problem. Your favorite task management software will now be a side show as you're forced to change your practices. Gone are some things you like to do using your software's features. Also, there'll be some shared tasks that everyone can see. You're not sure if this is a good thing or bad, or what you should do about it. Tune in to this episode to hear from me and my special guest, Renee Clair, as we solve this wicked problem together, welcome to the Task Management and Time Blocking Podcast

Francis Wade

music music music music bring Rene on the stage. Music Music, Music Music break Rene on the stage. Okay. I made everything back. So, first, I tell us first I tell them the podcast and I tell the story that I bring on Renee, I have your bio, and they will show Brighton. So the problem of Simon is you haven't been able to see the case that I read. I did it Okay, great. It's very last minute. Politics.

Renee Clair 01:49

It's very good for last minute and helped me to to be like, Okay, we're coming from this place. Got it.

Francis Wade

Cool. All right, great. Okay.

Francis Wade

And welcome back. As you can see, I've brought on our special guests, Renee clear. Just before I introduce Rene, I want to welcome you if this is the first time that you've been actually logging into this particular podcast, it's a lot different from other podcasts. We don't quite interview people, some books that they've read and that kind of thing. Instead, I invite folks to come and help us solve a wicked problem. Something that does this seem to have an easy solution. But something real, cannot like real life, right. And the approach that we take is, I would say we follow Einstein because he said that if I had an hour to solve a problem, I'd spend five minutes thinking about the problem and five minutes thinking about solutions. Albert said that, so we're going to spend a good amount of time trying to tear the problem apart before trying to address the solutions. And as we do so, what's a little bit different from this podcast is that we're trying to come up with something that is brand new that neither of us have ever thought of before. Sometimes we do. Sometimes we don't know if we do, you're going to hear a bell. If we get to the end of the podcast, you may hear a buzzer, which means that time ran out and we weren't able to come up with any new brilliant insights that not to be earth shaking, just at least something that in a way that is a function of the two of us coming together, trying to solve the problem putting our heads together, finding some new kind of solution. And going yeah, we just discovered something that's kind of cool and something is kind of new.

Francis Wade

Alright, so Simon, start with a story. Simon is a productivity enthusiast who enjoys being a high performer. One area that he's mastered is his personal task management. And he relies on a software called ABC to stay on top of hundreds of tasks at a time. But yesterday, he opened his email messages to find an announcement from the IT department. From now on the company is strongly recommending that all employees change to a group based task management software. He responds with an angry emails...IT = You cannot be serious. The manager of IT actually calls him back. And he explained. It's only a recommendation. You're free to continue to use your ABC app. Simon says thank you. But a month later, his boss Kathy calls him in. Simon you're missing some key deliverables. In response to his very confused look, she asked him, aren't you checking your ABC inbox? I don't use ABC. He explains. Well, by the end of the discussion, she gives him a look which could be understood to mean "use it or else". Now what?

Francis Wade

So to help us solve this problem, which is running rampant you may see through corporate corporations all the way through around the world. We have Renee Clair. And let me tell you about Renee, she is the productive wellness entrepreneur, her moniker. She's a productivity consultant for small business owners in the wellness industry. She helps clients letting their workloads they have more time and energy to enlighten others. Her clients gain deep values of boundary setting and self compassion through her phone approach to otherwise though productivity tasks. When it specializes in process projects, and change management, which often includes recruiting, training, automation and time management. She lives in San Antonio, Texas with her fiance and their four dogs to work from home travels off into her favorite state of California, loves to sing karaoke and a big fan of chocolate, and tea. Yeah, chocolate. Renee holds a Master's of Arts in Industrial and Organizational Psychology, as well as a 200 hour yoga teacher certificate. And welcome, Renee.

R Renee Clair 06:11

Hi, Francis. Hi, everybody. Thanks for having me.

Francis Wade

Great. So what do you think of the Simon situation...that's off the top of your head?

R Renee Clair 06:21

It is classic. I've seen it happen on many, many occasion. And doesn't matter if it's a large corporation or a small business, this is definitely something I keep seeing happening. And I am just kind of baffled by it. Being a marketing project manager, I am not sure how to always handle the situation with with grace and ease and guidance, you know?

Francis Wade

I suspect that if anyone has ever been through a situation like this, they are feeling the same way because you kind of want it to work out peacefully. But it's not easy. Is it?

R Renee Clair 07:03

No, oh my gosh, no, no, it's not in it's really hard. Being at the other end, as a messenger, I'm often the messenger like, hey,

Francis Wade

You are the one who carries the message?

R Renee Clair 07:15

And I can tell you, I am met with all kinds of reactions and all kinds of personalities, and preferences. And it tends to be an interesting game of you know, push and pull. Right?

Francis Wade

Alright, let's talk about that. Because if you're the person who's on the receiving end, like a Simon, you know, you're you're dealing with a poor situation, right? You're dealing with an IT manager who has some power. At the same time, you're also wrestling with yourself on the inside, wondering, you know, what should I do? You know, because it's not as simple as just,

you know, being a jerk. There. It's not a matter of resisting, resisting the demand to conform. You're also wondering if you have any sensitivity and self reflection, whether or not you're doing the right thing, right, because you kind of doubt yourself, right.

R Renee Clair 08:17

Yep, exactly. And I think there comes a little bit of fear, you know, knowing that oh, my gosh, other people are going to see what I'm doing. You know, there's are there's that piece that we love in corporations, we love the word transparency. But what does that really mean as an individual contributor, you know, and what if we have someone in our lives? That's a micromanager? What does that look like? What does that mean? What does that mean for our morale in the corporation?

Francis Wade

Right, right. So it's easy, I think, to start off thinking that the corporation and IT are the enemy, or the software is the enemy. But on reflection, you kind of wonder if the enemy is not inside of you. It's not your own resistance, not your own own ego. Because they you know, the group is asking you, you know, you're an employee. And would you conform to what all the rest of us are doing? So that we can all benefit? Right? Yes. It's sold as this is what we're all doing. Right?

R Renee Clair 09:22

Sure. Sure. It is. Yeah. And we all nod our heads and then go and talk amongst ourselves on on Slack.

Francis Wade

Right. So we resist quietly and outwardly we, in this case, you know, he was..Simon who was given a backdoor and he took the back door, which is, oh, it's a "recommendation". So he said, Oh, okay. That means therefore....., but it comes with a problem, which is that there's asome discomfort that comes around because he said no, because he's not using ABC, his tasks, tasks that are being shared in the group aren't visible to him. Because he's not using it at all. So unless he's given the task in a meeting or via email, he's not seeing the ones that are transferred within the software. So now he has a tangible problem of, of not being able to produce his deliverables. And then he has now all the new angst that goes with not being a contributor to that. And he's a high performer so he wants to, he's always been, he expects to, and no, he's not delivering and he's starting to feel just a little bit of anxiety and doubt.

R Renee Clair 10:40

Yeah, and definitely that anger too like this new software is contributing to this perceived failure. And that's a lot to take on when you're you know, a type A or a go getter for sure.

Francis Wade

You're on the wrong end of the stick, you know, because exactly,

Renee Clair 10:59

it's it's a different is using it. Yeah, exactly.

Francis Wade

You're like the only one hanging out there kind of like what are you kind of taking a stand? Are you being super productive? You know, by the time all of the forces kind of land on poor Simon inside there's like, "I don't know if I'm doing the right thing". If he's a little bit self reflective. He could be just a jerk and just say I'm right, they are wrong, I will fight this all the way to the breadline or something like that. Right. If you will,

Renee Clair 11:36

I will be defiant as possible. Yes. I tried to look up the good side of people and be like, "Okay, well, what's the reason underneath this defiance?" You know, what does it say about you? How are you internalizing it? That is the psychology part.

Francis Wade

I have a right to guarantee that you just thought, you know, it's not to go that route. It's like, oh, boy.

Renee Clair 12:00

Yes, but yeah, there's just this internal turmoil of emotions and self beliefs that are coming up for poor Simon, you know, as he's being faced with this dilemma, and he's kind of caught in the crosshairs like, okay, IT is saying it's okay. His manager, I mean, it's okay, if that he doesn't use it, his managers like, no. So, you know, what's, what's going on at the higher level, you know, for the rest of the employees, you know, is everybody else on board?

Francis Wade

With his boss, if he's in the game of, I hate to say being a team player, but you know, that's probably what his boss said to him, "You know, Simon, it all comes down to whether or not you want to be a team player or not. So you let me know"...something like that.

Renee Clair 12:45

like, I thought I always was a team player.

Francis Wade

It's not something like a recommendation anymore. It's it's only like, I'm questioning your contribution and, and your willingness to, you know, when, in a company when someone says, You're not being a team player, you're in trouble.

Renee Clair 13:07

Yes. Yeah. It's like, okay, am I on the verge of being written up? You know, do I need to start putting my things into a cardboard box?

Francis Wade

Something ugly is about to happen? I'm gonna get a knock on the door and a guy with the security guard, the guy with a gun comes with a box, you asked for your badge when you tried to log in, and you can't because they've changed your login without you knowing. And then there's a box right? That always have that security guard brings up box for you. It says this is it, buddy. Sorry.

Renee Clair 13:42

Could we could write a movie?

Francis Wade

Yeah. Layoffs I've seen and witnessed.

Renee Clair 13:48

Oh, my dear Francis, I always wanted to write a book called Life After layoffs, because I was laid off. So there is.

Francis Wade

Yeah, you know, I remember I had a colleague who was laid off with a security guard with a gun with the box. You know, he was the way it took it really hard. Yeah. He didn't see it coming. It took him a while to recover. Yeah, you know, sort of getting to that point, you know, there should be a way to resolve this. For some of our listeners listening if you're you're hearing this and you've never heard of it before, consider this to be a heads up because there's going to be more of it. If it has not visited your company yet or you don't know what we're talking about? Consider that it very well might. It might not be task management. But it could be some

element of your productivity ecosystem. That you know you you may have instigated it by going off the you know, gone off the edge and found some exotic AI driven thing that no one understands or has ever heard of, have you found it and it's sliced bread for you? The latest thing! And then you know, IT says, "You're using what?" And unless it's on your phone, you know, they may have a conversation with you about security. But anyway, the conflict is still it's inherent whenever, whenever software choices are real. And the truth is, you know, there really should be a way to attack this problem, even from the way it's set up from the very beginning, that... so we're trying to find a peaceful solution to this. Even looking back all the way through the when it was when it began. Thank you. As it was envisioned, as it was rolled out, there's probably a bunch of things that could be introduced to resolve the situation. And so maybe it doesn't even get to this point, I don't know we'll find out. But let's, let's assume that this is not a problem that is going to go away just because software is getting better or anything like that. And the implications for people like Simon are very real. So maybe we can ...we can we start with that if this doesn't get solved, he could be, he could end up, you know, leaving.

R Renee Clair 16:22

Yeah, he could leave on his own, maybe he gets frustrated, he feels like a failure or management says, Okay, you haven't proven yourself, you're delayed, you're not performing underperformer now, or maybe they go on a performance improvement plan. And then, you know, it can even kind of grow out from there, right? Like, it starts with the individual and then grows to the organization. So team members can be affected, the morale can suffer. There's just a lot that goes with it when when there's not this sort of peaceful unity, of adoption of a new software of any kind. But in this instance, you know, with a task management software,

Francis Wade

Yeah, as we know, task management software is the, it's probably the one that you touch the most, if you use, if you use task management software, you're always managing tasks. So more than PowerPoint, or Excel or Word or, you know, it's right up there with email software, which is Yes, something that you use all day, you really don't want to do without. And you know, he could go down the route of what people typically do, which is have a list there of of options, like surrender and resist. So you have people who pretend to surrender. And what they're really doing is fighting all the way down. Then you have the passive aggressiveness, right? So that's, they're also pretending, not really using, they say, Oh, sure, I use the software. And they don't even log in or open it. And they find other ways to work around it. And then there's the ones who say, I'm gonna go to the CEO with this complaint. You know, there's people who will just outright say, I'm not using it. And that's the end, that's the end of it, I'm not going to ruin my productivity, because you all like different software now. So any of those work?

R Renee Clair 18:18

Probably not. But I love the confidence that people have.

Francis Wade

Some do believe, yeah, it'll kind of work or do they go that route? One of those routes?

Renee Clair 18:29

Yeah. And then it ends up costing the company, more money, you know, and then I'm thinking back to my master's degree days, and one of my college courses where, you know, people felt like they weren't being compensated, or they weren't happy, they take things home, like paper clips, or staplers or paper, reams of paper to compensate themselves or help themselves feel better, you know. So I think it could be really costly to the organization as a whole...

Francis Wade

...And they start coming in late and taking sick days and start doing all these things that finger, they don't read, they don't work. But no, you know, it exacerbates the problem because the root cause really isn't addressed, and that it could just come across like a sledgehammer. You know, they they're not there to really solve your psychological issue...They're there to put in software. So they put it in the software. So their job is done. Change Management isn't a part of what they are interested in. It's not in their remit. So they just announce and move on? And they move on to 10 other kinds of software? And here you are stuck up on the first one.

Renee Clair 19:39

Yeah, yep. Exactly. Yeah, you just, you just got used to using this other software. And here's another one. You're like, ah, is it ever going to end? Probably not.

Francis Wade

IT is just like rolling stuff out. Or rolling it? Oh. Is there any change management? Anyone? Yeah, we sent an email to let everybody know. That's the change management. Yeah, sure.

Renee Clair 20:05

We're changing. That's the change management. That makes me laugh.

Francis Wade

Can't you read it? We're changing. So Simon doesn't really get any, any assistance, and his way of responding to it really doesn't work and the buy in, the aspect of getting people to agree before announcing it, or helping them to transition. Or, and there's some leaders who will just, you know, people roll their eyes, they they'll say, whatever, get used to it, and they just keep moving on. And that's probably one reason why IT will keep doing what it's doing without any repercussions, but without any cushioning.

R Renee Clair 20:53

Yes. Yeah. Well, they're, they're rolling it out and downloading the software for everybody, but then they don't see how it's really affecting humans, you know? And, and what does that really look like and some people are getting left in the dust and I don't really see people relishing, I don't really see a lot of people really knowing what to do with it, even if they are using it every day. Like, I feel like people are just sitting in kind of this darkness not really knowing or feeling confused, but they're trying their best to go along, you know?

Francis Wade

Right? I think part of the reason that this can can continue, because let's imagine that your organization says that we're going to use Slack for our task manager. Bad idea, right? But somebody has decided somewhere that that's what they're gonna do. And they start rolling this out. And you come across a group of people who actually know something about task management, and they say, "It's a bad idea. You know that?" And IT says, "Huh?", Ahm. Ahm, it's already been decided. And this really bad idea, because part of it is that no one who's making the decision understands how task management works.

R Renee Clair 22:15

Right, exactly.

Francis Wade

And making mistakes like this, because I've heard, especially in kind of medium sized companies, where people making the decisions have the power, but not the know-how. Yes. Is that right?

R Renee Clair 22:33

Yes, yeah, I've seen it quite a few times where management's like, yes, you know, get on board with this task management software, and then it comes back to the communication software. And they're like, you do this, you do this, and this is urgent, and everything's urgent. And there's no like, it's a, it's so difficult to keep track of all the details and the pieces and understand a viable deadline when it's in a communication software, you know,

Francis Wade

right. And, you know, the fact is, you don't solve the problem by having people who are clueless make the decisions, because they'll always make the same mistake. Yeah, just be different software. Right, as you move along.

Renee Clair 23:14

They may mean, well, I know they mean well.

Francis Wade

Actually, that's true. So they're not evil. They're the villain of the story, but it's not because they're evil. It's because they're just, you know, "Slack for task management" is a sign of cluelessness. Right? It's just, you know, benign ignorance.

Renee Clair 23:36

Yeah. Yes. And Francis, and you and I had talked about this word before, because I hesitate using it because it gets such a bad rap, but we're really using ignorance and just the they don't know, you know, they they're not just not aware of the best action to take, you know, there's never a correct action, but like the best one, and how to lead in that regard to which is which is huge, a huge part of being a manager and a leader.

Francis Wade

Right, right. Well, you know, you can be a great leader, traditionally, in the analog world. So, and here along comes the digital, digital world. There's a distinction floating around right about analogs who are over the age of like, 40. I may date you OK. But analog natives think that digital is an appendix to the analog world. But digital natives who are like supposed to be 35 or under. They've been brought up in a world of digital solutions.

Renee Clair 24:43

Yes. You know, Francis, I've been, I've been told that this is a unique thing about me. I'm actually at that junction between between analog and digital. So I understand both worlds and can help people transition. Which is neat. I didn't really know that about myself. But I, you know, for those of you watching, I am much older than I look. But I appreciate my

Renee Clair 25:09

they really do

Renee Clair 25:11

in digital...digital people they were very, very quickly.

Renee Clair 25:18

They move very quickly, but I think pieces

Francis Wade

Well, usually the best idea is to combine the best of the both. But if you have an was typically you have an analog manager making decisions like, Oh, I just started using Slack last week, and so should you. As opposed to digital natives who are like I have been using slack for five years, and I stopped using it last year because it doesn't work for the following reasons, especially for task management. So they're way ahead of the game. And you know, analogs who makes these decisions could screw up everyone's productivity. Not to save upsetting, upsetting people, because they just don't understand the inner workings. The nuances. Yep. Right. Right. And they think, just like you said, they think they're doing a good thing. And in fact, they are making something worse.

Renee Clair 26:09

Yes. So you, you bring up a huge point to this, like, we're, we're looking at generational gaps and understanding, we're looking at individual preferences, we're looking at, you know, groups and group psychology and conformity and that kind of thing. There's, a lot going on in this like little teeny tiny question.

Francis Wade

Right? There is, but you know, it's it's also very personal, because this isn't like changing your desk.

Renee Clair 26:41

No. It's a lifestyle change. Yeah,

Francis Wade

Changing your desk could be annoying, but it this is, this is this is changing something that is at the heart of like what you do every day. It's almost like the soul of your productivity is your task management. And here is that something from outside of you that you don't have any power over? Is no messing with it. It's, it's almost like saying, here's here's the deodorant, you should be using to use a physical, a physical analog equivalent that people could relate to perhaps, you know. It's like, don't use any other kind except this and you're like, What? No, no, because of the choice of software that you're using is, on a frequent basis, like this is extremely, you know, we could say it's a personal matter. It's not just a matter of oh, you could teach yourself how to use this, right? Because you might say that, for example, like a new app, like what? So I'm using Duolingo the other day to learn Spanish. That thing is like magic. It's amazing, right? It is? It is yes. So someone recommends that you use Duolingo? And it's like, oh, yeah, sure. Because it's an add on. It's not essential or inherent to my work. And if I stop using it, it's like, no big deal. And I pick it back up later. And it's not, it's not a personal matter of using you know, it's not I don't take that personally. And Duolingo stops, it's like, oh, well, I'll just find the

next one. Right? It probably won't be as cool as Duolingo and isn't as much fun, but I could make the switch. But when you tell me about my task management software, and maybe my email software as well, my ears perk up. Yes. Tell us some more about your laughing there.

R **Renee Clair** 28:43

It's true. I have so many people asked me, okay, Renee, you know, what task management software should I use, and I'm just like, oh, my gosh, is such a personal thing. And then I explain the ones that I've experienced and work with and the pros and cons of each, I explained the one that I love and the one that's, you know, that I really, really love that I'm not using right now. And then the same thing, it's, you know, if you're watching this or listening to this, it's, it's usually Uutlook versus Gmail, right, or Apple, you know, versus Outlook and Gmail now. And it's interesting, like, like, once you get into it, and I'm very partial to one of those, I'm trying not to say which ones I'm partial to. I'm trying to remain unbiased here. We're unbiased here. But even still, like, I have really good productivity when it comes to using one of those products and across the various products. And then if I am used to working with another client who prefers something else, it is it is this little like hump that we both have to bridge, you know, to work together and refine our productivity habits. So it is it's so it's such a personal personal thing.

R **Renee Clair** 29:55

You can be the only person who wants to use your software in the group of 50 know what? Right? Yeah, you know, there's there's a social pressure to conform, perhaps. Or you join a company and you realize, oh my God, they're using slack for task management. And you're like, No. And then you learn that 49 other people are in your department or are using it. And they're looking at you like, what? you don't use Slack for task management? And then you realize that you've, you've discovered something they haven't. If this isn't happening to you, folks, if you're listening to this, this episode, let's imagine that it actually will at some point. And let's we can as we prepare to do solutions. So we're moving from this world where it's just software, you can teach yourself, this is easy, which you might say is the old way of looking at things. So what we're proposing I guess, is a new way, which is this is kind of personal. And yes, it does have a group impact. But it's a personal matter that has a group, a group effect. It's not this easy, easy problem. That's just a matter of like a Duolingo. Or like playing a video game. And this is, this is not that this is way more more tricky. Alright, so let's talk about some solutions. Where is the pivot?

R **Renee Clair** 31:34

Let's go. Let's do it. Should I stretch?

Francis Wade

Limbo? The warm up is over, it's time to like now, start sprinting. So I had an idea. The first idea I had is, is at the at the point of consideration. I don't know if you know how to do this exactly. But Simon could go to back to the source and say, So where did this decision come from? And if it's slack, for task management, for example, he may go back to the person who instigated it

could be a vice president or something. And basically have a "Well, you know", kind of conversation, where he tries to bring in the principles of task management, and help the Vice President to see that he or she is making a mistake. So what do you what do you think of that tactic as kind of like, he goes right back to the beginning? What do you think of that?

R Renee Clair 32:40

I love it, just because it really does help us to gain buy in if we understand why something's being done. However, oftentimes, some leadership won't share their reasoning. Or they'll just say, because so and so told me to, you know, like someone else higher up. So it's like, how far can do you have to go to get the reasoning? It's smaller companies, you could probably get there, right? And then, you know, it depends on the software, if it's something that, you know, it's like using a communication software for task management, or maybe they are recommending a new task management software that you're just not on board with, you know, that could be a fruitful discussion with the higher ups like, hey, why don't you try this? And but usually, from that end, it's like, you're inviting yourself to be a part of it. Should they say yes, right. Okay, how are you gonna lead this project? Do you have time to take that on? You know, so those are some things that I can see potentially coming up in that conversation.

Francis Wade

It's kind of it could be risky for the average employee as they think about because not only do they are they dealing with the power differential, the power to make the decision and you don't, but you also need to be able to explain how comes and explaining how comes is...that could be for you, super challenging. Because, you know, you'd have to go to some abstract reasoning to say why task managemen and slack shouldn't... I'm just using Slack because it's a popular software for communicating. You could say that other kinds of email or IM or WhatsApp for Apple messaging or direct messaging, they're all equally equally not as good. So it has to go to some pretty abstract principle. Before explaining you could explain at that level because you don't have a half an hour to draw diagrams and see a whole bunch or send them a podcast and say, Here, listen, you know, or send him a book. You know, I remember in high school I tried sending a book a book to a teacher. It was called Teacher Child and it was on teaching. I read and said "this should help her."

R Renee Clair 35:05

How was received? How did they receive that?

Francis Wade

Not very well. Well, I had parents were teachers. So they had books, I read one of the books and said "she should read this."

R Renee Clair 35:23

Yeah, it is, it is an art to go back to your superior, or their superiors and share your preferences

Yeah, it is, it is an art to go back to your superior, or their superiors and share your preferences and ask why and offer input. Especially if you're like, if you know, Simon was angry when he was replying back to IT, if you go and approach it with anger, people usually just shut down at that point, it could be set up for failure. So yeah, that's interesting.

Francis Wade

So maybe Simon before approaching the big one who has the power and the decision? Do some practicing? Role playing? Yeah, some role playing? Fine, fine. Some of his colleagues who, you know, I'm getting ready to go talk to Mr. Big or Miss big. And it's about their favorite software and using it for task management. And I just want to go through some principles and show them sort of why. (Pick your pick your language carefully) why that's all thinking, why it doesn't work, why it causes a problem, sort of why. And, you know, roleplay, to the point where it's ready for the road, what do you think?

R **Renee Clair** 36:37

Yes, I'm a firm believer in roleplay.

Francis Wade

So imagine he doesn't get through. So he tries a roleplay method, and he never quite is able to put together a coherent kind of case. Can't explain from first principles, why it's a bad idea. What should he try next?

R **Renee Clair** 36:59

What should you try next? I would say come into kind of the 180. Understanding the current software's potential benefits, whether it's communication or you know, Slack or something else. So understanding Well, how could this work? How could this be a benefit for me? And an approach it in that way? What do you what do you think about that?

Francis Wade

Yeah, so doing like a deep dive into? "How can I make this work?"

R **Renee Clair** 37:30

Yeah. And almost it's kind of funny to say this, but almost getting your own buy in, right? Usually, usually we want our superiors to gain or buy in. But sometimes we have to do it for ourselves like, well, "How can I make this interesting and fun and usable for for my purposes here", and almost like a game? Well, okay, I'm excelling here with my own task management software, I have this new thing. How can I make this work now so I can keep excelling, right. Now I'm thinking about my overachievers on the line here.

Francis Wade

Right, right. Well, there's two things, two things that I think you mentioned that I picked up on. The one is, one is using it to the point where you authentically start to find a way that it's useful. So using it to the point where you, you're able to say, Okay, actually, if I do this, then I do that, then I do the other it starts to work. So you're authentically finding, finding a path that you initially hadn't thought of. And that may mean digging into the features, it may mean messing around with some of the options, changing the settings, you may have to go into Zapier to find maybe there's a way to just use this as a front end, that sends all the tasks via Zapier into my regular task management software. So I'm using it but I'm not using it the way you know, using all the features, I'm just using it as input. So maybe there's ways to you know, use pieces of it or, and you actually be happy with the results at the end, because presumably Simon does want to do a good job he wants to know when his his colleagues have a task for him to do. And should he ask all 49 of them to leave the software ABC or the new software? And should they then use a different method to get the message to him? Should they then send it by email as opposed to the new software? It's probably a little bit you know, you know, special to want everybody to change their behavior does to suit you. But with a you know, maybe there's a way to get him have his cake and eat it too. So that's the first thing I thought of so that we are authentically buying in.

Renee Clair 39:51

Yes, I think I think there could be I've actually experienced that as a project manager. It gets tired or some poor, the manager, the project manager to do that to do individual things. So just thinking on that side, you know, but and then for the individual, I think it would would might depend on the size of the organization too, you know, if there's like just a couple of employees, sure, maybe they can have individual preferences. But if we're talking about a larger corporation, or if things are just super fast paced, I could easily see things getting missed, you know, even by the manager who's promising to send the separate emails or do something unique for Simon. So Simon, very well could keep getting left in the dark, depending on those unique circumstances of his team or the work environment.

Francis Wade

So the intent there could be...he could have a good intent, and he may want it to work. And he may find a way for it to work. So he works with those on his own, you know, ordinary actions. But how about this, this as another option, which is that he...you said it's like a game? I think the ethos of having it be like a game take... brings some of the play back into it. So it's not like you're personally violating my space. It no big deal moves from it being an attack, to it being a fun, challenging, entertaining way of finding a solution. And you could play the game and win the way that you said, we had the first way, which is that you make it work, using whatever Zapier or whatever else, you could also play it like a game and make it fail, right?

Renee Clair 41:44

Ooh, tell me of that. What do you think?

Francis Wade

What do you like you, you decide to play it, play with it as much as you can? Okay, and you start to catalogue the things you have to do manually. And the things that it does not do, that your old software used to have. Okay, yes. So now you have in front of you a list of things that it used to do, and you now need to do. And you're looking at some costs. So you know, you can say, based on 60 tasks a day that I'm managing, this is going to cost me about a half a minute per, so we're looking at a 30 minute cost. So use this particular software, it's, it could be there could be easily unintended consequences, like there are for a program like Slack, is that it seems you know, it's small, small volumes of messages it's cool, a small number of people it's cool. It's a nice, it's a nice, cool way to message each other, but get up to 50 people 100, 200. And the same problem that occurs with email, you now, have in Slack. And you now, start hating it the same way you hated email. And that's a lot of rain on Slacks parade, it's just that any kind of instant messaging is not going to replace email, once you get to high volumes. They all kind of start going out of whack in the same way. So yes. So he in his good faith efforts, he could actually break the software, in a sense that he could show that it's, it's a worse by by virtue of playing with it, show that it's a poor substitute. And then make a case from there that guess what I'm, I'm losing half an hour and I think everybody else's and half an hour times 50 people, and he does some math and he starts to put some dollars to it. So he starts to say, he starts to actually build a bottom line case that you know that Mr. or Ms. Big made this decision. They didn't use any data or any underlying analysis to decide. It's because they kind of liked it. And they're now costing us $100,000 a year.

R Renee Clair 44:03

Mm hmm. Yes, data speaks louder than words to certain leaders in our organization, for sure.

Francis Wade

So I think your idea deserves a ding? Why? Because the idea of gaming thing, give me thank software until it breaks by like, it's not the same as trying to break it. Because if you enter it and you're trying to break it, right, someone is gonna smell a rat, like his boss is gonna say, on a minute, he's just trying to disprove that this thing is any good. So the way you enter it, that your frame of mind entering it needs to be one of play. Because if you bring bitterness and you know, sense of righteousness and and, you know, all the all the different things that you know, make people unbearable if you bring all of that to the party's very far, right?

R Renee Clair 45:04

No. And in fact, it shuts down, you know, pieces of her brain, so we can't be productive with her without the software. So yes, excellent point.

Francis Wade

Yeah, it shuts yours down and it shuts theirs down. Because now everybody, now we're into

Yeah, it shuts yours down and it shuts theirs down. Because now everybody, now we're into open warfare where, you know, we were trying to use data to as our bullets to show that this damn thing has cost those are untold dollars a year and where did it come from? A very upset person could you know, jump on, let's say the company's intranet and say, you know, can you believe it? This new software, they said that they wanted us to be productive and I calculate it's costing us $100,000. And, and whereas the you know, Simon could be right? In the logical sense, but because he's not approaching it from a gamified way, like a game from a sense of play. Yeah, he loses everyone even before he starts. What does that? Have you seen? Have you seen that in practice? Someone take it, not the gamifying part, because that's pretty rare. But someone being righteous, and then trying to get everyone to see their point of view and add more they talk. Everybody hates them? Which,

R **Renee Clair** 46:22

yes, it creates a very toxic environment. Yes, I've experienced that quite a few times. And then yeah, in it does it shut down. It's just down everybody. Everybody can't do their work, they need to take breaks. And and then it's just not one day, it's several days, several weeks, and it just kind of permeates a culture. So it's it's a shame when that happens. But yes, of course, I got play from, you know, thinking of counseling techniques, or even myself I'm like.

R **Renee Clair** 46:56

So one of the one of the things in counseling or psychology is if you are thinking from a place of curiosity, or come at it from a place of play it, it changes your outlook on things, and you can kind of get yourself unstuck and move forward and see what's possible. So it's really kind of neat to do this like reframing, even when it comes to productivity practices. So I love this idea. And I'm glad we came to it together. Because I didn't think about the data collection part. So that was cool. That's a really cool piece.

Francis Wade

That's why we're here on the Task Management and Time Blocking Podcast, to come up with some new stuff. That's why we deserve that thing. Yes. How did you? How do you coach or advise someone who, because they're not probably going to realize this on their own right there, they're going to be hell bent on not using this bad software, and all of that they have a sense of the cost is going to. How do you advise them to bring a sense of play to it so that they don't destroy themselves and other people's productivity in at the same time? What would you say to them, Renee? Say they're talking to you at lunch table? How would you engage them? They're angry, and they're gonna do something about this, Dammit.

R **Renee Clair** 48:15

Say, Hello, Simon, will you share your french fries with me, first of all? And then after that, I might, you know, just be really curious. Because usually, it's first it's a good idea to figure out what's underneath the anger. And so okay, I hear that you're angry, you know, what's underneath that? Well, I'm afraid of failure or change is really difficult for me, which is usually what I see, no matter the generation, you know. And so kind of like tapping into that, and then

figuring out from there, whatever that underlying thing is, like approaching that area from a place of play, like, Okay, if it is change, how can you slowly you know, move towards it? Like, what's one feature that you could look at? And kind of look at it in a different light of curiosity? Or, or make it like fun? Or, you know, if you got one task like somehow on that software, what would that feel like? Would that be a success to you? What would success mean for you? And like, two weeks or so? Right? So and I think, I think a lot of it has to deal with, I don't know, I, I do strongly feel that training of software, especially when it comes to task management and project management, which I know we'll talk about, maybe one day soon. It's such a, it's such a personal thing. So I often feel that people should be trained as such, right? Everybody's at different levels. And when you can work with someone and just say these are the things I'm struggling with, you can untangle them. And task management software is really difficult to use because there's just so many features available. But I would say just, again, just to start off slowly and kind of untangle that the sadness, the anger, the frustration, and start there and just take it day by day, moment by moment.

Francis Wade

On the outside, I didn't make it may look like, you know, this is Task Management coaching, but it's actually closer to emotional emotional coaching therapy support. It really is an emotional. It's an emotional shift that we're asking Simon to make, isn't it?

Renee Clair 50:15

Yes, it is. Right? I've worked with several people when their new task management software rolled out and I hear them, they're like, really? I don't want to I don't know why you're making me use this. And I'm frustrated. I don't usually the number one thing is I don't /I can't learn technology. Technology and I don't get along, you know, or?

Francis Wade

No, you want me to use? Or you want me to use software instead of paper?

Renee Clair 50:44

Yes. Yeah. And, and so that takes a different kind of training, right. And that's what I'm personally afraid, where these things get rolled out. And people sort of get lost, because like, you can do a group training and they're just listening to one person. But if you're like me, I'm thinking of 10,000 other things. I'm not paying attention to the person at the front, right. So I do wonder about people who get left out in the dust not of their own faults just because they're, they just learn in a different way. You know, they just need a little something different. Have you encountered that too?

Francis Wade

Yeah, yeah, I unfortunately, the companies, I think we're at the stage where companies are of the old point of view, which is that "This is easy to teach yourself."

the old point of view, which is that "This is easy to teach yourself."

R Renee Clair 51:31
Yeah, it doesn't work.

Francis Wade
And if you can't teach yourself, we've got a whole bunch of Digital Natives lined up outside the door. Yeah, got Get with the program? Well, you know, we understand maybe this isn't the right place for you. That can be the next conversation. And something about that doesn't sound ... right, but it doesn't sound like the best decision. The best alternative, it's what you do when you run out of answers.

R Renee Clair 52:04
Yeah, yes. And I don't agree with it.

Francis Wade
A certain lack of empathy?

R Renee Clair 52:10
Yeah, yes. Yes. That's speaking my language, yes, very much so. And I, it breaks my heart, because certain people are afraid to share that they, they feel like they can't learn a new technology, so shut down, they kind of do a little bit of Simon, I'm gonna fight back. I'm just gonna ignore and I'm not gonna say anything. And then before you know it, they're sort of getting left behind because they're trying to cover up the fact you know, this, what they're perceiving as a weakness, right? I don't see this, I just see it as a learning opportunity, you know, and just a different kind of, yeah, that that self learning that that works well, for the new Gens I don't even know if that's a word I just made it up. Rather than them people from you know, as you say, the Analog Gens.

Francis Wade
And people don't, you know, people who make these task management decision software decisions for either the original decision, or the IT decision, or the lack of change management. They don't usually tend to have a whole lot of EQ and not be trained in you know, that. At the bottom of it, we're seeing this is a personal emotional decision, unfortunately, emotional shift that that you're being asked to make. Yes, it's software, and it's bits and bytes. But most of what we've talked about, as we start to kind of wrap up is that it's a I was gonna say transformation. No, no, no, it's not. It could be a transformation. But the way it's normally phrased and rolled out is that it's, it's just kind of announced and told.

R Renee Clair 54:01

Yeah, it's so callous, you know, a little bit calloused.

Francis Wade

Yeah, it's kind of callous. And then, you know, the thought is, it's just software. It's Duolingo. You know, use something else, it's no longer available, you know? And you're supposed to kind of be all rational about your response.

R Renee Clair 54:21

Yeah. And that's not fair either. Because it's, it's requiring you to learn a new habit. And you're right, it's tapping into very personal issues at any given moment. Whether you're an overachiever you use something else or you're, you're like you're not good with technology. And so you're, you're hitting the nail on the head there, Francis for sure.

Francis Wade

Yeah. And then if companies offered, offered staff a kind of a gamified way to approach it.

R Renee Clair 54:48

Yeah, incentives.

Francis Wade

Yeah, if we could, if it could be if it could be all wrapped up in a, you know, we're, even before the switch takes place, really with where this conversation should take place, it should say "we're thinking of". And "we'd like for you to play with it." And "as you play with it, figure out is, is there a large gap between what you're doing now and this? And how can you make the gap if we ever decided to go that way?" So there's a, you know, there's a playful way to enter into the whole change that could be brought about, but, you know, the management would have to initiate that in that case.

R Renee Clair 55:28

Yes, yeah. And that, that goes back to change management where, you know, we really need our leadership to, to figure out how they're going to approach it and roll it out over time, not overnight. And, you know, for instance, I wish companies would do more betas, you know, instead of just rolling it out and telling everybody get like the small groups together and say, Hey, what do you think? Try this out? Let us know what you liked what you don't like, but I love

I still love the idea of play and fine, and just a little more lightheartedness. And, you know, if you're having a shoe here, let's get you right, right kind of training, you know, you can sure you can self train, or Sure, you can go to a group training, but some people might need one to one, you know, and that's okay, too. I don't feel like it should be a shameful thing, you know,

Francis Wade

Especially in these days, because nowadays, you know, if you're a tech, native, digital native, your your management is used to you picking up software, or starting to use it right away. When I was younger, Renee... back in the 90s.

Renee Clair 56:41

I was young in the 90's too, we can both say that.

Francis Wade

I think you were maybe born and maybe in like, high school, maybe high school, maybe

Renee Clair 56:52

it was in high school.

Francis Wade

I was more in the working the working world already. So we had that one day training courses and how to use Microsoft Word that like three.

Renee Clair 57:05

Remember that? Yes, I love that's where I wanted to become a trainer, I wanted to be a corporate trainer back then I just loved it, you know, it's

Francis Wade

You sat in a classroom, the person was up on all, you know, had a thing with a projection thing. And you press this key. And I want to know, the assumption is that if you're not a digital native, then you you're you're the next best thing to it because you thought you you know, have those skills. And now we're not going to teach you anthing, by the way, here's where you download the software that you need to use. And here's the help desk, but don't even call that you just said. Yeah, there's some video somewhere on YouTube. Good luck. And you need to be using it. Because guess what everybody else is using. But that's the that's the far extreme of I think that the assumption today is that sure you can do just about anything, right? It's just software?

R Renee Clair 58:02

Yeah, it's not.

Francis Wade

I think task management is an exception to that kind of Duolingo, I am kind of riding that Duolingo, you know, use a different app as opposed to that one. There's millions of apps out there that do it. I think that management deserves some of the care of empathy, the consideration, there's an emotional side to it, then there's a productivity side to it. And there's a technology side to it. And they're all coexisting together. An Environment. Yes. And in when it comes to a task management choice, this is kind of this is kind of the hand that you're dealt with before you even start thinking about switching over. Yeah. Does that sound like a bit of a summary of sorts to what we're what we would recommend when people think about this,

R Renee Clair 59:03

I think, I think it's perfect. I have a fun note to leave us off on if you'll allow. Yeah, of course. One of the first very first things when I'm training people learn and adapt to Asana, the task management software. There is a setting, it's this little radio dial that you can toggle on to have a little bit more fun. So when you complete a task, you see these animals with unicorns. across your screen, or Yes, or if you if you say that you like a task, it does like many thumbs, it kind of sparkles out. And so, you know, of course I'm training people much older than me oftentimes but they just they get a kick out of it. So I want to encourage everybody to find that setting of that to software at you use. Message me or Francis, to show you how to Turn it on, maybe I should do a real on that. But it's it's just so much fun. It brings the play back in and, and people can have a good time with it. Right? So wanted to share that bit.

Francis Wade

Actually the software, the task management software I use doesn't have, as far as I know, has no unicorns and no thumbs up. And no, there's no playful side that I've ever found. I could be wrong, but there's no playful side. So that's a whole nother conversation for us to have about the future of task management software, because it's it just gets down to business and kind of it's an engine, you know, it's an engineers dream. But the engineer who all...engineers have feelings about why not? That's kind of what we're seeing, you know? Yes. Think about that, as you even design the software as you implement it. And as you think about the changes that people need to make. So Miss Renee Clair, where can folks hear more about you and get to know you, and where can they get some of the goodies that you may have available for them?

R Renee Clair 1:01:05

Yes, I have lots of goodies. So first of all, come hang out with me on Instagram, my handles @theproductiveWP. And I love hanging out on there. That's my favorite social media place. And

then you can also find me on my website, which is www.renee-clair.com. And I have a beautiful time blocking guide and worksheet and little video there that you can grab and then join my nifty email list as well. I've got some great master classes that I do once a quarter. So I'd love for you to come and enjoy me and play have fun with productivity.

Francis Wade

And let me spell out the Renew clear. They know that it's not the other way and it's not the other clear. And that's a problem. I got it. www.renee-clair.com.

R **Renee Clair** 1:02:08

Yes. Thank you.

Francis Wade

Great, really, it's been great having you on and folks keep listening. I'm going to tell you a bit about the upcoming next episode that we have here at the Task Management and Time Blocking Podcast. Keep listening.

R **Renee Clair** 1:02:23

Thank you, Francis. Bye, everybody.