communication, priorities, tools, and habits

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what?

- business communication
- setting priorities
- *personal* project and time management tools and systems
"Don't tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results."

-- George S. Patton
tools and methods used for

- personal
- team
- section
- organization

- ...may vary

I encourage discussion of tools and methods that have worked for you, particularly how you integrate them into other personal or organizational tools.
All reasonable requests will be entertained; all unreasonable requests will be entertaining.
tools and systems

• for all these topics:
  – pick your favorite rectangle
  – use what works for you
  – find sites and systems for inspiration
  – work on habits

  e.g., 43folders.com -- for inspiration or ideas
43Folders.com

• a website about finding the time and attention to do your best creative work
• Merlin Mann delivers practical, useful, and entertaining insight into the challenges of doing great work in an environment defined by distraction and incongruous expectations
• http://www.43folders.com/about
“I cook with wine, sometimes I even add it to the food.”

-- W.C. Fields
communication

- business communication
  - providing information
  - requesting information
  - requesting action


... but these principles also apply for leaving voicemail and other written communications.
Interesting? OK, maybe that is a stretch (it’s not my list after all), but I would say: do avoid the temptation to include a stand up bit to try to achieve this—that strategy seems to fail more than it ever succeeds.

… true and helpful for most business communications you are going to have to do in your role in NETS.
email

• 9 second guide to better email:
  – subject line?
  – attachments?
  – recipient list?
  – proofed?
  – spell checked?
  – send at all (call or visit or wait)?
Mann on email

- why am I writing this?
- what do you need?
- write a great subject line
- brevity is the soul of ... getting a response
- what is the action here?

http://www.43folders.com/2005/09/19/writing-sensible-email-messages

http://www.43folders.com/2006/03/15/email-dash

I think these principles also apply to voicemail!
Try to develop effective habits for dealing with large volumes of email. The ‘inbox zero’ approach has some good ideas you might want to try to implement. This has ties in to the ‘getting things done’ ideas I'll introduce later.

**inbox zero**

- “action based email”
- http://www.43folders.com/izero
How much uninterrupted time do you think you’ll need to make progress on something?

And what is the relative priority of that project (and time/deadline issues?)?

May need to adjust for some projects or if you are waiting for something important to come along via an email notice?

Ties to the ‘management expectations’ issue, team leader/owner ideas discussed earlier in the day, and dealing with priorities—i.e., there may be some items that you have to close your door and have some DND time!
Tomorrow is often the busiest day of the year.
--Spanish proverb
Doing something systematic is a better habit than always aiming for perfection and never completing anything.

Priorities will vary depending on each person’s job, what is currently going on, and so on. As for time and project management tools, I’d rather think conceptually about the topic and some methods and words to consider then leave it to the individual to decide on specific tools and methods. For example, which email client (and various tricks there) to use, how to track priorities and assign precedent. That is even more important in areas of time management (e.g., paper versus electronic tools decisions).

As for project management (e.g., MS Project may be what is prescribed by the organization or large project lead, but for personal project management, maybe there are other platform specific tools that work better for a variety of reasons). The list of traditional project management tools is large and varied and will be addressed in the “large project planning” section later today for NETS specifically.
get organized

• “Organizing Your Office and Your Life - Surviving Information Overload”
  —by Laura Stack, MBA, CSP
• attendees: Susan Guastella and Belinda Housewright - May 22, 2007

Good brief ideas and tips; also mentions using 43 folders!

http://netserver.ucar.edu/nets/internal/docs/trips/2007/
InformationOverload.html
Good method NETS has had success with to track and refine various procedures; forces you to identify them, discuss them, prioritize them, and not forget steps (and that can save hassle later).

better (hope of) completion through...

- checklists...
- an easy way to ensure all steps are covered (especially good for recurring or routine tasks with many components)
- good tool for personal, team lead, and section (e.g., UPoP new member checklist).
GTD

• David Allen
• his 2001 book “Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity”

http://www.davidco.com/what_is_gtd.php

http://wiki.43folders.com/index.php/GTD
books, seminars, etc., http://www.davidco.com/

all kinds of software and blogs and so on around this system; lots of good geek appeal (all kinds of hardware and software to compare and try; lots of variation and figuring out what works best for you and your situation)……

I think there is some real elements to improve our work and personal lives in here somewhere though…

“projects” as defined here is something that has multiple steps that you can act on (a ‘project’ is something with a lot of steps (sequential or parallel) that you break down and mark off to complete the project);

Flexibility here on methods and tools and freedom to be as obsessive as you want…..
Get the distinction? Most all of those big verbs can and should be uncorked to reveal that they contain nothing but dozens of smaller verbs. And those little fellas are your physical next actions. That's your work.

http://www.43folders.com/2006/11/14/project-versus-next-action#more-788
Eisenhower

“In preparing for battle I have always found that plans were useless, but planning is indispensable.”

“Most things which are urgent are not important, and most things which are important are not urgent.”
priorities

• the ‘quadrant technique’ (Eisenhower first, then Covey):
  – quadrant 1: important and urgent
  – quadrant 2: important but not urgent
  – quadrant 3: not important but urgent
  – quadrant 4: not important and not urgent

Short answer is that priorities are usually driven first by time then by some scale of importance or impact.

Sometimes it comes down to: What can you say NO to?
recurring tasks

- daily
- weekly
- monthly
- yearly
- ...those are naturals for a calendar tool

They could perhaps link out to other resources and tools for you (e.g., standard checklists) or NETS, but the calendar tool kicks it off….or you could tie it in to your tickler file (43 folders).
GTD software

- OmniFocus [www.omnigroup.com]
- ThinkingRock [www.trgtd.com.au]
- more examples:
blogs

- www.lifehacker.com
- www.43folders.com
- www.lifehack.org
too far?

• an alternative view to the whole productivity debate
  – no longer focusing on the habit of being productive
  – instead you are more into the tools themselves and endless experimentation
  – hoping that something will eventually click and make you productive

Alternative views (or how to tell if perhaps you’ve gone too far);

Mann’s comments about how it is a lot more easy and fun to buy running shoes than it is to be a dedicated runner.

Alternative Productivity Manifesto at http://thegrowinglife.com/2008/05/the-alternative-productivity-manifesto/ [the ‘productivity industrial complex’]
zen cool

• Mr. Fake Zen guy really likes, you know, “that Asian spirituality stuff”
  – refers to eating with chopsticks as “zen power eating”
  – the life hack people might refer to that as “hacking your meal”

hobbyist: A person who pursues an activity in their spare time for pleasure

http://thegrowinglife.com/2008/03/introducing-the-hobbyist-productivity-genre/
zenhabits.net

- http://zenhabits.net/2007/05/massive-gtd-resource-list/

OK, so after poking a bit of fun at all that—this site actually has some pretty good GTD related stuff! :->
for even more info

- step 1: try the GTD book (and system)!
- [http://www.davidco.com/](http://www.davidco.com/)

Or other information, notes, links, and references in the notes of this presentation.
Pick something and solve it! Especially if it keeps coming up—things like that are prime candidates to attack first with some of the tools and methods covered here.

deal with ...

• ... what is bothering you
• the most, first
  —e.g., take a look at ‘starter lists’ like this one: http://www.43folders.com/howto
How hard can it be?

(Top Gear mantra)
tools

• what works? why?
• what doesn’t? why?
• existing tools
• new tools?
• personal tool integration with organization tools?

For discussion here or elsewhere today or longer term for NETS.
NETS tools

- email
- meeting maker
- extraview
- phone/voice mail
- readytalk
- web
- wiki
- contact management

Starter list for discussion at end if time?
other tools

• doodle
• to do lists
• checklists
• applications (e.g., office suite)
• paper files and folders
other questions or more discussion?

Now on to large project planning and more formal project management tools.
That is the discussion John will coordinate.