[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:04] DC: It takes the right skills and the right innovation to design and manage meaningful print marketing solutions. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse, where we explore all facets of print and marketing that create stellar communications and sales opportunities for business success. I'm your host Deborah Corn, the Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse. Thanks for tuning in. Listen long and prosper.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:31] DC: Hey, everybody. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse. This is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. More specifically, we are here with the Time Management Tips in 20 podcast series, which means I am here with my the time sherpa herself, Sarah Ohanesian, from SO Productive. Hello, Sarah.

[0:00:49] SO: Hello. How's it going?

[0:00:50] DC: It is okay. I guess we can see I'm about to get a time management student report card. Sarah thought that it would be a good point in time to check in and see how her tutelage of me was coming along. Let's just say, today, we have the good, the bad, and the ugly. But you know what, I'm probably not alone, so this might be a good place to start. Do you want to start?

[0:01:20] SO: Yes. Well, and also, just for the record, this is Sarah's fault today if this goes terribly awry. I love it, but Sarah thought it'd be a good idea. The reason I thought it would be a good idea is because we all get into these best practices and then we can fall off the wagon a little bit and it can be hard to get back on track. So, I just wanted to have an honest check-in with you, Deborah. We've been talking about time management for two years now or more, together, and wanted to hear how it's going, what's working, what's not working. The more honest that we both can be about what sometimes doesn't work, I think that really serves the listeners quite well, especially people who have been with us for a while and have implemented so many of these things.

So, for the record, this is my idea. It wasn't Deborah's, but we are all in today. So, Deborah, let's start with, how has it been going? We've been talking about this for quite a while now, and what are some of those things that you've been most excited to implement?

[0:02:17] DC: Well, I will stick by the Todoist, and the link to Todoist is in the show notes is probably the best tool that has come my way since Photoshop, Illustrator. I can put it up there in any of the tools of the Internet, as far as something that I have come to rely upon as the single source of the best information of what I need to accomplish, whenever that might be, or what I want to keep thinking about as far as formulating an event, or an idea, or something creative. Or something I have creative inspiration, like for posts and things like that, which don't need to be on a to-do list. But I do, often, before my newsletter comes out, or I start writing an article about something, even if it's for other people, I'll go into that post idea list and look and see the stuff I was collecting.

Which, by the way, I used to collect in emails by emailing myself. So, the workflow at that point was to search Deborah Corn in my inbox and literally find, I don't know, 600 emails that I've sent myself with no subject lines and only links, which I would have to click into to figure out what was going on. So, when I say that this tool really, really helped me, just in that one instance alone, it really helped.

I did happen to use Asana, which is a project management tool when I was working with drupa, and we were all on it. The team was from around the world. Obviously, it didn't translate. So, there were some things in German in there that I didn't understand what was going on. But, in general, that was really helpful in keeping us organized. Again, a single source of where I could go to find that information, and it really saved me a lot of time. Even though, occasionally, I would have to go back to look in emails because I needed to add information to the status sheet, and the progress report, and everything that was going on, and that's where it was.

But once it was on that report, I didn't have to go into my email box again. So, I will say that the two tools that you suggested that I and everyone else on this podcast at least investigate, definitely have played a positive role in my time management journey.

[0:04:51] SO: That's amazing. Thank you. I feel the same. I think when you compare that to the Internet, pretty powerful. So, what we're talking about here is a task management, project management software. For those of you, if this is your first episode, you're like, "What's Todoist and Asana?" Capturing those items in a single location so that you can easily find them again. I think for people who have been emailing themselves things, which is a practice many of us did for years, that's been a really good tool for you. Now, it sounds like one of the big benefits of this is capturing your ideas. Maybe speak a little bit more about that, and why do you feel like that's been such a time saver for you?

[0:05:31] DC: Sarah, I am typically thinking about things later at night, certainly after work hours, usually after midnight. I used to, you know – I could see something on TV, or maybe I was listening to a podcast, or TikTok, which is my new obsession. It will inspire me to, either write a post about something, or maybe come up with an idea for an event, or a theme. What I used to do is just email myself that information. Again, it's one o'clock in the morning. I think I'm going to remember what I prompted myself about, and most of the time, I don't, I realized when I woke up the next day if I even read that email the next day.

So, skipping that step and going right into Todoist, which is what I consider my digital to-do list enables me to add additional information. As long as I'm there, I'm already in the field. I don't have to copy it over again. So, it's actually worth it to put the information there. So, it has become very handy as a list of inspiration or future ideas that I want to call back upon, which I'm not going to do anything about in the current moment. Because if I was, it would be on my actual to-do list. Or, you have another option, which is like an inbox.

Well, actually, all of these options, you can set a due date and it will remind you. But I turn all those things off because I don't want – except for the things that are really due today, because I don't want reminders every five minutes, and I'm just moving things for no reason. So, saving time by not using. I definitely do not use all the functionality of Todoist. I know this because I get emails, and I'm like, "Huh? I didn't know we could do that." But for me, I just use it as a to-do list and to have other lists. It keeps me organized in a different manner.

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[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:08:33] SO: So, it sounds like you're keeping a simple system as well. One of the benefits is probably how simple you've made this. It's easy to use. You can get what you need in there, in the middle of the night. You are awake at this hour, to be clear. You're not sleeping, and waking up, and thinking of these things, you're coming up with them when you're still awake.

[0:08:48] DC: Correct. But it could be like two o'clock in the morning. I'm like, "Ah, that's a good idea."

[0:08:52] SO: That's when those good ideas come. It also sounds like one of the other principles we've talked a lot about is separating your ideas from your actions. So, we are both in creative fields, certainly if you're in print and mail, very creative field. So, sounds like you are taking that step of separating your ideas, which might not need a due date in that moment, from the actual things that you are going to be doing. So, how does that play out within the tool? Maybe you can speak to it too, if someone's not using the tool, that concept of ideas versus action items on your to-do list. How has that been working for you?

[0:09:25] DC: Well, it works really great, because you told me to do it, so I listened to you. That is because I had ideas for posts, ideas for events, ideas for initiatives, all on my – what I labeled my to-do list. It wasn't really helping me, because then, my to-do list wasn't really organized.

There was too many things on my to-do list. We had done plenty of podcasts prior to that about what do you keep. I keep moving the same thing from to-do list to to-do list.

Some of these, I actually check before this podcast. I mean, I have items on there from a year ago, which is still valid. The right time hasn't come yet, right? So, I would still be moving it on my to-do list if it was handwritten, or at some point, I would lose it just because I forgot to move it over, or I would give up because I hadn't gotten it done. Now, I use the free version of Todoist. So, I believe that allows me to create four different boards so I can organize my tasks into four different things. The way I did it, as I said, is a to-do list, a creative list, and ongoing, which just means things that I just have to check on.

[0:10:47] SO: Got to pay the bills every month.

[0:10:48] DC: I want to prompt myself. I mean, not necessarily a bill, but definitely like, "Oh, check Google Analytics. Make sure you gave stats to some people," things like that. Then, I have post ideas. And then, I started, actually, a new board for artificial intelligence where – that's when if I'm just on my phone, or I see something really cool, I just put links to that information or those people in that list specifically. So, I have handy access to it later on. That's it. I mean, there's a ton of stuff you can do with Todoist. I am just not using it for anything else, but these lists for right now.

[0:11:29] SO: Perfect. I think a couple takeaways there. One is, have a place to capture, have a place to separate your ideas from your actions, and keep a simple system. Because I've actually found if it gets too overly complicated, people might stop using it, and think, "Well, there's so many fields I have to fill out. There's so much information I have to put." Just keep it really simple. So, I think those are good takeaways that our listeners can learn from you.

[0:11:51] DC: I just want to clarify, because I'm on Todoist. A free account, actually, you can have five lists before we go into a paid version.

[0:11:58] SO: Perfect. Awesome. Deborah, that's what's working well. Is there anything else you want to say about what's working well before you can probably imagine what's coming next?

[0:12:08] DC: I think we can move on.

[0:12:10] SO: So, what isn't going so well. What are some of those things that we've talked about that you maybe have tried, and they haven't worked, or you just haven't really built a habit around them?

[0:12:20] DC: Well, let's not assume it's all me, and let's put the obstacle under the heading humans.

[0:12:27] SO: Yes, love it.

[0:12:28] DC: Humans.

[0:12:29] SO: We're all here.

[0:12:30] DC: They're out there, and they have free will, and they make decisions about what's important to them at any given point in the day just as I do. If I have a task that needs to be accomplished today, and I've known about it, and I've been working towards it, but I might need information from somebody else, like, oh, I don't know. A quote for a press release, for example, I can't move until I get that information. Sometimes, when you're navigating giant global corporations, they're just like, "Yes. You and 900 other people need quotes from us, and we'll get to you when we get to you." Obviously, they have a vested interest in it, it coming over, and it being correct, and there's a ridiculous approval process, and things take time. But things take time not on my time, so there's a big thing.

The other end of that, with all fairness, is I am a human too, and it's the summer. I have been a little more lax with my to-do list than usually. I don't know if it's just me, hopefully, it's not, but I really feel like this summer is really has just felt barren in a lot of ways. I do spend a lot of my time online. I mean, obviously, in Europe, traditionally, they love to live their life over there. As they say in the South, bless your hearts, so they're on vacation for two months. People here, if they're lucky, they're maybe getting off on Fridays, or whatever it might be. It just seems things have slowed down, and because of that, I might be giving –

All right, I'm not going to be wishy-washy about it. I am giving myself too much leeway on my list. So, I freely admit that I'm not being accountable to myself here, and it has not at the present moment led to a panic attack of, "Oh, my God. Now, I have 900 things to do this week," which it eventually will. So, this is why I'm happy that we're discussing it now because I'm admitting to you that I am not being so regimented about it, but that's really where I am right now. I will say that before we got on this podcast, and a reason that I'm really happy about it is that I went through all my boards, and I really – I decluttered the whole thing, and I emptied everything off my to-do list. If I hadn't done it, I put it on a future idea, or I got rid of it, or I moved it somewhere that was relevant.

I only put nine things on my to-do list that I actually have to do between this week and next week. I will hold myself accountable to those nine things. But my to-do list was too cluttered, so I looked at it, I felt overwhelmed, and I was like, "Well, it's three o'clock, and it's July, and maybe I should go outside."

[BREAK]

[0:15:48] SO: I'm Sarah Ohanesian, founder of SO Productive, a productivity training and consulting company. Teams I work with get more done. They experience improved processes, greater productivity, and increased efficiency, all without stress and burnout. If you want to improve your performance or the performance of your team, visit so-productive.com and get started today. I offer conference keynotes, one-on-one coaching, and hands-on corporate workshops, all focused on increasing productivity and time management. Let's discuss how SO Productive can supercharge your organization. Links are in the show notes.

[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:16:31] SO: A couple of things that I loved what I heard there is one you are recognizing; this is feeling like I'm slipping a little bit on the accountability side of things. What can I do about it? Another major theme, if you've been a longtime listener of this show, is eating the elephant one bite at a time, which is what you did. When it starts to feel, that list starts to feel like it's too big, what can we do about it? Another theme that we haven't talked a ton about, Deborah, but I see this with a lot of my clients as well, is that feeling of control.

So, sometimes it can start to feel like it's out of control. There's just too many things, and pulling out one piece, two pieces, three pieces to make that list a little bit smaller, a little more manageable, even though it's three o'clock on a July summer day. We still can tackle a few small things to get that momentum. I think getting that sense of control back is really, really powerful. So, instead of feeling overwhelmed and a little out of control, you start to feel like, "I've got this, there's something that I can do about it." So, I heard a couple of good things there, though. You're like, okay, but I'm able to get myself back on track.

So, one of the questions I have for you is, what do you know – We haven't talked a lot about this, either. What are the triggers or those key motivators? So, when you're in those moments of like, "Oh, I feel myself slipping a little bit." Do you know what that thing is that's going to get you over the hump, get you motivated, get you to take the next action.

[0:18:00] DC: For me, I actually get paralyzed. I just stare at the list, and I don't know what to do first. I will always, as I've mentioned a million times on this podcast, I will always defer to people who need things from me as the top priority. So, honestly, not only is it because I have agreed to do something for somebody, but I don't want it on my list anymore. As soon as I hand it over, or send what I need to send, then it's off my list. When it comes back, I might have a task related to it. So, when I find myself paralyzed is when I realize that I'm not organized. The exercise this morning of looking at those five boards and saying, "Okay, I don't have to worry about a creative idea right now. I can look at that some other time." I don't need to really worry about – I'm not writing a post. I'm not doing any research; I could put that to the side.

Post ideas, again, not doing that right now. What do I have to do right now? I went to that list, and I got rid of everything that has been lingering on there. Like I said, I organized it. Then, when I look at it, I'm not paralyzed anymore. I'm like, "Okay. Now, all I have to decide is the order that I'm going to do these things in," and if anyone is waiting for something for me from these things, I put them on the top of the list so I can get them gone, and it made me feel better. I'm not going to say relieved, because I haven't done everything on the list yet, but I wasn't panicking anymore that I didn't know what I should do.

Now, I can clearly see what I've decided I need to do within these next two weeks. If anything comes up, I put it appropriately on the to-do list, and move things around as needed, and reach

out to people if I owe them things, and say, "Hey, this might be a little late because something else scooted in," whatever it might be. So, yes. The act of regrouping really helped me, and I would not have done it if we were not having this podcast. So, thank you.

[0:20:29] SO: Love it. Deborah, thank you for sharing all. I appreciate you opening up and letting people know. I think when we're real about what's actually going on, this becomes really practical for a lot of people. A couple of things I heard in there. One was panicked. You said the word, I can get panicked, but I didn't panic. The other thing I heard in there was that you were able to get it organized. I think that's a real key, is when you start to feel as if it's getting out of control. Those moments of panic, those moments of overwhelm, start setting in, what can you do about it?

I hope a really key takeaway for our listeners today is that you were able to get yourself organized, get yourself back on track of those items, because that simple act of getting it organized, getting back in control, deciding what you're going to do next, and what your next best action is, you're making that decision. That sense of control, that's such a game changer. So, it's functionally the same list of things you had two hours ago, but now you feel as if you've got the ability to actually tackle those things. So, that's a key takeaway that I've learned. I think, Todoist is just supporting you in doing that more efficiently because it's digital. So, it sounds like you are at the center of this. You are in control of your to-do list, and Todoist is a great tool and a vehicle to help you do that.

[0:21:49] DC: Thank you so much, Sarah. I really appreciate your support in my time management journey and for allowing me to have my ups and downs, but always being there to help me pick up the pieces and move forward. Sarah can help you all do that too. Links in the show notes. Get in touch with her. She's a great keynote speaker. That is where I met Sarah. I fully recommend and endorse everybody at your company is having a time management problem. I can almost guarantee you. Many of them are probably the same as I have that I share here all the time. So, you can go back and listen to Sarah's audition podcast because she's been providing advice and information for, I think it's almost three years. It's crazy already. A lot of time management stuff. So, thank you so much, Sarah. Until next time, everybody. Time management long and prosper.

[END OF EPISODE]

[0:22:49] DC: Thanks for listening to Podcasts From the Printerverse. Please subscribe, click some stars, and leave us a review. Connect with us through printmediacentr.com. We'd love to hear your feedback on our shows and topics that are of interest for future broadcasts. Until next time, thanks for joining us. Print long and prosper.

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Mentioned in This Episode:

Todoist: https://todoist.com/

Sarah Ohanesian on LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/sarahohanesian/

SO Productive: https://www.so-productive.com/

Asana: https://asana.grsm.io/sarahohanesian308

Command the Chaos Course: https://www.so-productive.com/productivity-course/

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