

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:06] DC: Time is one thing we can't make more of, but we can make more of what we do with it. Welcome to Time Management Tips in 20, where productivity expert, Sarah Ohanesian, Founder of SO Productive, helps you take back your day one smart habit at a time. In each episode, Sarah shares practical proven strategies to help you prioritize what matters, get out of overwhelm and get more done without working more hours. Because when you use your time with purpose, productivity becomes less about output and more about making space for what matters most at work and at home. Let's begin. Your time starts now.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:54] DC: Hey, everybody. This is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador to the printerverse. We are here with Time Management Tips in 20, which means I'm here with the time sherpa herself, Sarah Ohanesian, the CEO and Founder of SO Productive. Hello, Sarah.

[0:01:10] SO: Hello.

[0:01:11] DC: How are you today?

[0:01:12] SO: I'm doing great. I'm excited about this topic we've got today.

[0:01:16] DC: Me too, because it's going to sound a little weird, but it makes total sense. The framework of our conversation today is about how we can help our managers and our team members delegate better, because it's very difficult to manage your own time if your manager's not managing theirs, or the team isn't managing theirs. A lot of people hold on to things too tightly. I hear myself in my head saying this all the time, let me just do it myself. It'll be faster. If I have to explain this to you, it's going to take me longer than if I just did it myself. I'm not saying that that is not true, but now what happened to the other 90 things that I was supposed to be doing? It's a drip effect.

Whether it's out of habit, or fear, someone's going to write three words that I don't like and now what am I going to do about it? It does create bottlenecks. It does create burnout, and it actually can create lost opportunities, because you're focusing only on, let's say, the fire drills that are going on at all times. Besides the reasons that I just mentioned that were personal to me, why do some leaders struggle to delegate even when they are overwhelmed and you can see that they are overwhelmed?

[0:02:43] SO: Yeah. I think any of us that have been in leader positions can be a little bit guilty of this. Either I know how to do it and I'll just do it myself because it's faster. Maybe I believe that I can do it better than you can. The other thing is, it's funny, I don't have the time to delegate, although delegating would free up by time, and that is just a vicious cycle I see people stuck in all the time. I don't have time to delegate, so I'll just do it myself. But the investment in delegating to them and teaching someone else how to do it would save you time in the long run, but we're so stuck on the hamster wheel, we don't even have time to think about what could I delegate and then how could I do it and train my team on how to do it?

[0:03:26] DC: It actually brings up something interesting, which is that in all the conversations I've had with you and all the conversations that I've had about workflow and automation and making everything go faster, I've never heard anybody discuss a process for delegating work to other people. Maybe if it was a process, there could be a form. What is this project? What is the next deadline? What is the very simple things? Or just to focus on the next. We don't eat the whole elephant. We eat it one piece at a time. Maybe it's just one person focuses on one bite of an elephant. This is a hard – sorry, elephants. We have to change our example. I think when –

[0:04:13] SO: I don't know ever. We've been using this example for two years, so.

[0:04:17] DC: Is there a process for delegation that is time friendly?

[0:04:21] SO: Yeah. Well, the other thing is, too, I would point out, there's a lot of tools now to help you with this. I think, we think we have to have it all wrapped up in a bow perfectly. Deborah, here's your SOP on what I'm delegating to you. I would just say, turn on Zoom, turn on Loom. There's a lot of cool technologies out there now that can actually record your screen. I'm going to do this thing. The computer just follows along and then therefore, writes the SOP for

how to do it. Delegation can actually be done faster than ever. Just follow along. I'm going to do it, so you can learn and do it the next time. I think too, if you're stuck on like, I have to have it all perfect, or I have to make a tutorial for them on how to do it, I would say, cut that and just use a technology to help you.

[0:05:05] DC: I love that you said that, because you just reminded me that the other day I was at my friend, Will's print shop, and he was making some comments on a design for something and he opened up Slack. He put his screen on. He did a screen recording and he said with his mouse moving around, "I want you to move this here. I want you do that there." I'm looking at him and I'm like, "What are you doing?" He's like, "I'm making comments on this." I mean, I'm telling you, I would write them down point by point with screenshots. I love that example, because I'm doing it now and this just started last week. Now, where have you been for the last two years that we've been talking and I'm making crazy things? But I love that. How does poor delegation truly impact team productivity? I'm going to say, morale as well.

[0:05:54] SO: Oh, for sure. Deborah, it's so crazy how often productivity and morale go hand in hand, because we've been a leader who's not delegating. What does that make the team feel? It makes us feel like, we're not good enough. We're not capable. You don't trust us. There's so many just sad things that come with it that we can avoid. The other thing is too, I had lunch today with actually someone who was just young, but fantastic and fabulous. Really young. I thought, oh, this is so cool. Deborah and I are older than some of our listeners, probably.

[0:06:28] DC: Speak for yourself.

[0:06:32] SO: You hear so often about the younger generation. I think this is such an opportunity for us to build up the younger generation. Let them have a chance. Let them do great work. Let them wow you with something. Truthfully, from technology to AI perspective, they might be able to do it better than you can. Give them that opportunity. I would say, use it as an opportunity to build up your team and certainly, those that don't have quite as much experience.

[0:06:59] DC: What can you actually do though when your boss's time management, your manager's time management, or your teammates time management is limiting your own

productivity and you're juggling what you can do, because you're waiting on things from other people, you can't move to the next step until somebody three steps behind you does what they need to do?

[0:07:24] SO: Well, first, I would go back and listen to one of our previous episodes, which was about managing time within a project. So often, our tasks and our projects are in a relationship with each other. One thing leads to the next, one thing's dependent on the next. When we've got a bottleneck, essentially, and that might be a manager, or another person on the team, that becomes a hindrance. Now, I can't get my work done, because you can't get your work done. Could I help you? Could you delegate something to me, so I could help us, which is going to help the entire team?

I think the people that are the bottlenecks, they don't often know that they're the bottlenecks. This comes something that you being a bottleneck, you being someone who doesn't effectively delegate could be impacting your team on such a grander level than you even imagine. Sorry, hard truths today on the podcast.

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[EPISODE CONTINUED]

[0:08:52] DC: It is a hard truth and I know that you're not an HR person, but sorry, at some point, if somebody's messing up the whole team, somebody's got to do something about it.

[0:09:01] SO: Yeah.

[0:09:02] DC: What do you do about it when it's the manager who's doing that?

[0:09:04] SO: Yeah, yeah. Well, Deborah, I'll give you one of my first tips I have today is leading with curiosity and not criticism, and I think that's a big deal. Are you coming to the manager, or someone in your team and saying, "You know, you're a big ole bottle of back for the whole team." That's probably not going to go so well. Instead, could you ask like, "Is there anything that I could take off your plate this week? I'm just curious. Is there anything I could take off your plate this week?" Show that initiative. Volunteer. Take something off of their plate. I think the key here is being specific to – like, I'm not trying to steal this project from you, but I'm so happy to help you with the first draft of that, right? What could we do that can help us to be curious and position ourselves to be helpful to that person, rather than saying, you're really causing a problem here. That framing of help, I think, is critical.

[0:09:57] DC: Mm-hmm. Okay. We're going to have a fight now. What am I supposed to do about the other 60 things that I'm already juggling, waiting for this thing? I'm going to go up to my manager who's supposed to have this all under control and say, "How can I help you get things off your plate?" I mean, just help me make sense of that, please.

[0:10:17] SO: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, again, we're pretending today. A little bit of this is hypothetical. I don't know what's on your plate specifically, but I think when we see bottlenecks on a team, so often, there's a phrase of, you can't see the label when you're inside the jar.

[0:10:32] DC: Okay. Or the forest for the trees.

[0:10:33] SO: The forest to the tree. Yeah. Yeah, you get it. I think the same thing happens so often on teams. Like, I can see, the outsider can see that there's a problem here and it's affecting the whole team, but maybe the manager, or the leader can't. Again, we cannot go to our boss and criticize them and say, "You know what? You're a real problem today." But instead, we can offer to help. Again, I think it's always about prioritizing. I've got 60 things on my plate, but this thing that is a bottleneck right now, that's actually one of the top priorities. I can do something about it. I can help. All about prioritizing.

[0:11:12] DC: I guess, it's because I come from advertising and I worked in the traffic department that I don't even understand what you're saying. I'm like, what are you talking about? Everybody has to do what they're supposed to do, when it's due, or there better be a really damn good reason why it's not happening. There is no, "Hey." I can't go to the art director and say, "Hey, can I do the five other ads that you're supposed to be designing right now?" I'm not a designer. I can't do that.

What I would say is that in my experience, sometimes there are other small things you can do that might even come at the end of the project that you can get ahead of. You can set up the email, or the whatever it is with everything but the missing pieces of information that you're waiting for somebody. You can even keep the project moving by saying, "Hey, everybody. Here's four of the five things that we need. I'm waiting on a response from whoever the hell you're waiting on response from, so everybody knows your step is completed, but I didn't want to hold up the project." Then you put a little passive aggressive. "So, Frank, when are we going to get that piece from you and make them –

[0:12:24] SO: Always Frank.

[0:12:25] DC: - sort of committed to it?" Well, it's usually, what's the guy? I can't believe I forgot his – Jerry. Remember, Jerry was the big guy who lived in my house during COVID? So I could yell at somebody. It's always Jerry.

[0:12:38] SO: Yeah, it's got to be Jerry.

[0:12:40] DC: Jerry. It's not Frank. We love Franks. Jerry, when do you think you'll have that? Because all of a sudden, now there's accountability. I still think you're being curious like, "Oh, Jerry. When might you have that thing that, the entire department is waiting on and we're not saying you're not doing other things," because that's what you don't want to get back. That's usually what you get back from people. "I got 90 things I'm doing." Guess what, Jerry? Everybody does.

[0:13:06] SO: Everybody does. That's the key. Yup.

[0:13:06] DC: But right now, you're holding up everybody else and that's where it matters.

[0:13:11] SO: Totally.

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[0:13:13] DC: Get ready to turn up the volume on print. PrintFM is a global internet radio station dedicated exclusively to print and graphic communications, accessible around the clock in every time zone. No more searching across channels and apps. PrintFM brings relevant topical programming from Print Media Centr, Girls Who Print, and an array of industry contributors who bring their own perspectives, guests, and conversations to the mix. PrintFM also broadcasts from industry events, with live shows being scheduled throughout the year. Visit printfm.com to explore our daily programming, event schedules, and opportunities to share your content or sponsor our shows. Expert discussions, real-world insight, and industry voices are just a click away. Listen long and prosper.

[EPISODE CONTINUED]

[0:14:11] SO: Deborah, you mentioned what else can you do? I think, think outside the box. Can you go grab lunch, because Jerry hasn't eaten in two days, because he's been stuck at the office. Go get Jerry some lunch, so that his energy can come back up and we could – There's things that we can do to help each other, because, again, we're trying to work as a team here and collectively raise everybody up. What are the things that we can do that might not be the direct job, but that align, or support? Get curious about what else could be helpful here?

[0:14:41] DC: I once was on the phone with the art director's wedding planner, so she could do the design I needed. I was pretty much on hold just a bunch of times and they would ask one question. I'd say, how many white tables or tablecloths, right? She'd be like, "12," or whatever it was, but she wasn't allowed to have a conversation with them. I literally got on the phone and I was like, I'll take care of that.

[0:15:07] SO: That's an amazing example.

[0:15:08] DC: Well, you have to do what you have to do.

[0:15:09] SO: You got to do what you got to do. That's really the point. It's like, let's help where we can help, so that together and collectively, we can have a great wedding and get the rest done.

[0:15:18] DC: Yeah. I mean, short of you can't say, "Hey, I'm going to go pick up your kid from work," or, "Hey, I'm going to go to your doctor's appointment for you." Obviously, you can't do that. But hopefully, you knew about those two things and they have been scheduled in, or that person has a plan on how to get back on track and when they can.

[0:15:39] SO: We're human beings at the end of the day and like anything that we can do to help each other, as other human beings who have to go to the doctor and go pick up children, or whatever it is, I think that's a big deal. Deborah, if I may, that leads us right into tip number two, which is build trust through results. To that point, if over time, you trusted me with your wedding, a consultant, or whoever I'm talking to that day, you trust me to do other things as well. It's an opportunity to build us up, so that we can start with some small wins. We know that we now communicate really well. We are able to share updates with each other and it just builds confidence over time. Now you trust me more and more and more to do the work. When I'm consistent and I'm good – somebody asked me not long ago, she wanted to have her laptop out during meetings. She said, "I want to have my laptop out during meetings, because it allows me to take better notes." She said, "But it's frowned upon."

I said, "Nobody's going to care. If you are taking good notes with your laptop out, if you are awesome in every other area." Be so good, be so results oriented, and so trustworthy, and so driven that people actually don't care if you're standing on your head in the meeting, because we can trust you to produce good results consistently. That's my tip number two is just be trustworthy, give results, and then people are going to want to delegate to you more and more.

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[0:17:12] DC: Are you looking to elevate your game, take your bottom-line customer relationships, and events to the next level? Then, I want to work with you. I'm Deborah Corn, the

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[EPISODE CONTINUED]

[0:18:13] DC: I will echo that with a follow up to the story about the same creative director with the wedding planner. Along the lines, I mean, once you're – she was like a vice president of this banking account we had. I mean, you cannot mess with those people at all. When I say that, they want to go home 7.00, 8.00 at night. When I've been talking 5.00, we're talking after that. We got to a point in our relationship, because I was her traffic and production person. I was assigned to this account. We got to a point where she allowed me to approve the art for her, because I knew how she liked it. We worked together a couple of times and she said, because there's brand standards for these things. As long as you follow the brand standards, it's just a matter of scooching things. You know how art directors are. Like, a little to the left, a little to the right, a little lower, a little higher.

Once I understood the style that she liked and where she wanted things, and a couple of times I would bring her the proofs and I would say, okay, these would be my notes and she'd be like, "Okay, great. Except for this one. I like it this way." Once we got into a rhythm, I didn't need her to stay in the agency, which is what causes all of the catastrophes. Because of that, anytime I walked into her office, she would stop her meetings and say, "What do you need, Deborah?" I got the fast pass for it, because in our trust, I didn't torture her, make her stay in the agency for a couple of ads that just needed to be seen. I mean, I knew her signature. It's all not great. But that's how we worked it out. I love that. Okay.

[0:20:03] SO: We're just in sync right now in this podcast, because that's tip number three is help them see the ROI of delegation, which you just illustrated so perfectly. So often, we think

just about the next 30 minutes, or today. Today, it's going to take me more time to teach someone how to do this. Yes, today it is. Think about next month, the following month, next year, the investment that you are making in teaching someone else how to do it, or how you think in the case of your story, that is an investment that pays dividends. We don't even know the ROI on that right now. We've got to get out of this narrow thinking of, it's going to take me so much time today. I don't have that time today. You are investing in the person in the future, and you're going to get that ROI. You're going to get that big return.

[0:20:52] DC: Thank you so much for your time today, Sarah, and for everybody who's listening. To connect with Sarah, everything you need is in the show notes. Until next time, time manage long and prosper.

[END OF EPISODE]

[0:21:04] DC: Thanks for listening to Time Management Tips in 20. To connect with Sarah at SO Productive and find links for any resources we mentioned in this episode, just check out the show notes. Remember, all the great programming from Podcasts From the Printerverse is streaming 24/7 on printfmradio.com, the world's first Internet radio station dedicated to print and graphic communications. Until next time, time manage long and prosper.

[END]

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

Productivity Power Hours: <https://www.so-productive.com/productivity-power-hour/>

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