



SPI 258

The Productivity Project with Chris Bailey

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Pat: This is the Smart Passive Income Podcast with Pat Flynn, session number 258. Let's do this!

Announcer: Welcome to the "Smart Passive Income" podcast, where it's all about working hard now, so you can sit back and reap the benefits later. And now, your host. Dad jokes and puns are part of his daily ritual. Pat Flynn!

Pat: What's up everybody, thank you so much for joining me today in this session of the Smart Passive Income podcast. The past few weeks, or at least this month, we've been talking a lot about productivity, and I wanted to have one more episode to round out this concept, and to make sure that we can all, moving forward into the year, can really make sure that we are approaching productivity in the right way. I wanted to bring somebody on who's written about this, who has really structured his whole life around productivity, and this is Chris Bailey, from alifeofproductivity.com. He's got a couple TED talks under his belt, and he's got a best-selling book as well. It's called "The Productivity Project."

I know some of you might be thinking, "Oh gosh, now another one of these episodes that's gonna teach me something that's maybe different than what other people have said." Now, first of all, Chris comes on and he verifies a lot of what's already been said, which is great, and so those concepts, you want to make sure you incorporate into the work that you do moving forward. However, I will say that in my experience, when experimenting with what Chris has done his whole life, to try and become a more efficient person, and do more meaningful work, I've found that sometimes it's just the one tip that you hear from that one person. It can also be a very small thing that can make a huge difference down the road, so keep an open ear, there's a lot of great information in this, and Chris has a great personality, fun to talk to, so I'm excited to share this with you.

Let's not wait any longer. Here's Chris Bailey from alifeofproductivity.com and author of "The Productivity Project." What's up, everybody, I'm so happy to welcome none other than Chris Bailey from alifeofproductivity.com and author of "The Productivity Project."

Chris, thank you for being here and welcome to the show.

Chris: Pat Flynn, how are you, buddy?

Pat: I'm doing good, man. Super stoked to talk to you. You know, this month, we've been talking about productivity. We've interviewed people like Cal Newport, and Mike Vardy. I'm trying to be the best and most productive person I can be, and the only way I know to do that is to do the research. I'm going out there, reaching out to new people, understanding how they work.

I want to know how you work and how you stay productive, what your definition of all that stuff is. But before any of that, I just want to know more about you. Who is Chris Bailey, and at what point in your life did productivity become important to you?

Chris: It's always kind of existed in the background of my life, if that makes sense. I think that's true for everybody, where whether we tune into this kind of frequency of the way that we live and work or not, productivity is this idea, because it's about getting stuff done, whether in our personal life, whether in our work life, it's always there whether we realize it or not. I think it was about a decade ago, probably more by this point in my life, where I started tuning into this frequency and thinking, "Okay, we all get 24 hours every day, but some of us are able to accomplish a disproportionate amount in those hours."

I started to dig deep, deep, deep into the psychology of productivity, into these productivity hacks, a lot of which are BS, frankly, because they're fun to read about but we don't actually earn the time back we spend reading about them. That's the thing about a lot of productivity advice: it's one thing to read about it, but you have to make all that time back and then some, or else you're basically just reading, or listening to productivity . . . There's a lot of that out there, and so this last decade has been kind of a process of sifting out the stuff that works from the stuff that doesn't, to really see what ways we can accomplish more on a daily basis.

- Pat: Love it. What were you doing before all this productivity work and coming out with the book, and all that stuff?
- Chris: I was in business school. I was doing a bunch of internships at Fortune 500 companies. I was studying management and marketing, and so I had that experience too, when I graduate, I got a couple job offers, but I thought, “If there’s a time to actually look at something that’s meaningful to me, now is the time.” So I thought, “I’m gonna decline these jobs and sift out the stuff that works from the stuff that doesn’t in this productivity project.” That’s kind of how this racket, as you say, started.
- Pat: How did you determine what was right or wrong for you? What was the research process like for you?
- Chris: It was really just soaking up the information and experimenting what I could with it. The experimental angle was kind of the big angle that took the cake as being the most interesting, but the research, it was first and foremost a research project. I saw it as kind of a Ph.D thesis, in a way, where the book is like a thesis that people actually read. I’m sorry for anybody who’s doing a Ph.D. I hope my partner, I hope she’s not listening to this right now because she’s actually doing her Ph.D. She might actually be listening in the other room, and I’m so sorry, Arden, if that offended you.
- Pat: Just tell her to start at five minutes in so she can skip it.
- Chris: Yeah. I’ll send a little timestamped link in Overcast to whatever player she uses. So, it was really, first and foremost, a research project looking at those journal articles that people skim over, looking all the books that people had published, and more than that, once people started reading my site, which I didn’t expect to happen, I had the chance, kind of a gateway, to interview the people that I respected the most in this base. People like David Allen, who created the “Getting Things Done” methodology, one of my heroes. Some people have sports heroes, and celebrity chef heroes; I have heroes like David Allen and Charles Duhigg, who wrote “The Power of Habit,” who have really explored these ideas

of productivity for years and years.

I chatted with them, I looked at the research, and I boiled that research down to actually get my hands dirty on it, to experiment with meditation. I meditated for 35 hours in a week. There's a lot of research between our wake-up time and how productive we are, so I woke up at 5:30 every morning for a few months, worked 90-hour weeks for a month, and experimented with my body fat percentage and how much mass I had to see the impact that physical activity had.

That was the sexier part of the project, where, to me, if I look at how I spent my time, it was mostly a research project, and an entropy project, and the experiment was putting all of that into practice.

Pat: And that's what the book is about? How you've determined what has become the right strategies for yourself?

Chris: Yeah, exactly. It's about 250 pages, and there's a 500 page book on all the stuff that didn't work. After sifting through all this stuff, the year was a year to separate productivity advice that works from the stuff that didn't, so that's what made it into the book: about 25 of those things that actually help us accomplish more.

That was the biggest mistake I made at the start of this project, I think. Even though I'd been exploring this idea for a decade or so, I really saw productivity, I equated that with how busy we were, how much we got done over the course of the day, which I think is a trap a lot of people fall into. If I wrote 2,000 words in a day, that meant I was twice as productive as if I wrote 1,000 words. I forget what made this bit flip, but there was something that happened in the project where I started to view productivity not as how much we produce, but as how much we accomplish. More than that, accomplishing what we intended to do in the first place, because that's really what we're left with at the end of the day.

The tactics that made it into the book are the ones that actually lead us to, not necessarily just do more over the course of the day,

or become more busy over the course of the day, but actually get more meaningful stuff done.

Pat: I like that. I like that. So, it's almost changing the word "Productivity," like you're just creating products all the time, or coming up with new stuff, or doing things, like you said, to almost "Accomplishitvity," or whatever.

Chris: Yes. "Successilitivity," I don't know what- Because all these words have such an incredible amount of baggage associated with them. Just an inside baseball story: when I was in the proposal stage of "The Productivity Project," I originally called it "The Productivity Playbook," and I kind of pushed back when my publisher said, "No, we want to call it 'The Productivity Project,'" and they had all this experience, but I was kind of averse to the word "Project."

But, when I started talking with people about the idea, it turns out that people weren't turned off by the word "Project," they were turned off by the word "Productivity," because people equate this idea of productivity as something that feels so cold, and corporate, and all about efficiency, and boiling our life down to a spreadsheet. I would argue that nothing could be further from the truth. It's, when the day is done, what is different in the world, or in our work, or in our life, because we lived a day of our life? That's what productivity is to me: it's how much we accomplish.

"Success" is another word that has a lot of baggage associated with it. I think of these people with slicked-back hair with big smiles and Photoshopped faces on their website. That's what comes to mind, but it's really just accomplishing more on a daily basis. I think that's how we're meant to view productivity.

Pat: How can we do that? If I were to ask you, Chris, what are some of the top tips that you share in your book, or discoveries that you've had, the non-BS kinds of productivity tactics out there. What are some of those ones that you have?

Chris: Yeah, the best tips require more work and more effort than these

quick productivity hacks.

Pat: Well that's not what people want to hear!

Chris: No! God! People are turning off! If we didn't turn people off from the Ph.D stuff, people are definitely tuning out now.

One of my favorite rules is a simple one, and it speaks to the idea that what lies at the heart of productivity isn't working faster, or more frantically, or more often, on autopilot; it's working, first of all, on the right things, but working on those things deliberately and with intention. I think that idea of intention lies at the heart of productivity, for the simple fact that not all tasks in our work are created equal. We accomplish a hundred times as much if we're writing a blog post, or connecting with a new customer or a new client, or pitching ourselves, than we do watching Netflix. It doesn't take much mental calculus, but we don't always spend our time in that direction.

That's where intentionality lies in, where when we take that time to take a step back and actually decipher what's actually important on a daily basis, that's when we can level up to become more productive. There's a rule that I personally use every single day called "The rule of three." It goes like this. At the start of the day, you fast forward to the end of the day in your head and you ask yourself, "By the time this day is done, what three main things will I want to have accomplished?"

It works because, first of all, we separate what's important from what isn't. We actually do the calculus in our head, and we act on our gut, because we all know what's actually important. It only takes a minute. We decide what we don't do. We consider the constraints of our day, because productivity is so often a process of understanding our constraints. Some days will be mapped out for us with meetings, and other days will have more flexibility. But it works because it's so difficult to remember what's important. And choosing only three. Not to ramble on too much about this idea, it's so simple.

- Pat: No, keep going, please. This is good.
- Chris: Good. There's something inherent about the way our brains are wired, where we're wired to think in threes. We have sayings like, "Things come in threes," and "Celebrities dye in threes," and "Third time's the charm." "Blood, sweat, and tears." "The good, the bad, and the ugly." Even a story, which is a sequence of dozens of events, usually, that happen one after the other, we divide into three parts: the beginning, the middle, and the end.
- Pat: "Back to The Future I, II, III."
- Chris: One, two, three. The trilogies of all shapes and sizes. We award three Olympic medals, grow up immersed in stories like "The Three Little Bears," "The Three Blind Mice." I could go on. We're wired to think in threes, and because this simple rule fits with the way that we think, in addition to being so constrained that it forces us to actually choose what's important. We can actually act on what's important throughout the day when we carve out these intentions, and actually accomplish more this way.
- Pat: Interesting. I like that, the threes. It kind of reminds me of, I use a journal everyday called "The Five Minute Journal," and actually, when you wake up in the morning, you write down the three things that you hope to accomplish during the day, which that, by far, more than any part of that exercise of journaling, has been the most helpful, so I absolutely agree with you. It doesn't necessarily need you to write it down. I think you say, even just really quickly, you can just think to yourself when you start your day, kind of make that a habit or a practice, just what are those three things.
- Now, my question to you is, well, what about the one thing? Some people go into the process of, "Well, let's just do one thing per day, and focus on that." Obviously you probably know the book, "The One Thing," and that sort of stuff. So, how does this work together with that, or is this a different philosophy?
- Chris: I think both have their place. This is, I think, one of the things that

people have to take to heart with productivity advice, is it's not what productivity advice is right, it's about what advice is right for you. One of the things I advise in my book, it's not some three-step plan to bolster my speaking, and my consulting, and stuff like that. It's really, "Here's a collection of things that worked for me. Take what you need, take what you want, and leave the rest," because this is one of the truths about personal productivity, is that because we're all wired so differently, different tactics will work better for different people.

Waking up early is a pretty good example of this. Depending on our chronotype, which is how our energy levels naturally fluctuate over the course of the day, we'll have different peak energy periods throughout the day. Mine happen to be between 10 and noon, and 5 and 8 pm. That's when I make sure I work on my most productive tasks. But other people, maybe somebody who's an early riser, might do their best work in the morning.

It really does depend on the way that we're wired. This is why that experiment to wake up at 5:30 was such a painful experience for me, because there's zero connection between what time we wake up at and our socio-economic standing. What differs between successful people and productive people is what they do with the hours of their day after they wake up that make the difference. I know a lot of people who are operating at a super high level, who get out of bed and struggle to do so at 9 or 10 in the morning, and they work until 1 or 2 in the morning as well. It really is about what advice works for you.

I will say that in practice, we have more things to do over the course of the day than one thing would allow. I'm not familiar with all of the intricacies of the system. I have to pick up that book again. But three seems to be number that works well in your case, in my case, in a lot of different cases. I think where one thing becomes vital is in working towards these ideas in the moment. The most crucial and vital elements of our work simply require more time, but they also require more attention and more energy than the simple, habitual things. Working on just one thing at a time, in the moment, I think is

a powerful strategy, as well.

Pat: I like that, and I think attention is definitely one of the most important parts of this formula of actually being productive, but how do we pay attention to something solely when there are so many other things out there that are trying to fight for our attention at the same time?

Chris: That's the thing about distractions, is in the moment, what we see as distractions are more attractive than the work that we ought to be doing. Firing up Facebook will always be a sexier task to us than, say, writing a report, or doing whatever it is that we need to be doing. Because of that, I think the best possible solution to dealing with these things is to deal with them ahead of time.

How I like to look at the potential distractions and interruptions, or really anything that can hijack our attention throughout the day, is by looking at two different criteria, the first being whether or not we have control over it. There are some things we can control, and other things, like office visitors, that maybe we have less control over. The second thing is whether or not they're annoying, so they're unwelcome, or whether they're fun, and so they're nice reprieves from our work.

You can kind of divide them up into a two by two grid in your head. The things that you have no control over, you can't really change how you deal with them ahead of time, but you can change how you relate to them after they come up. Annoying ones, dealing with them and then getting back on track, and enjoying the distractions and the interruptions that you can't control. That's a difficult thing to do, that's the hardest bit of this. The ones that you can control: annoying ones like email alerts, and text messages, and things of that nature; and fun ones like news websites, and things like that. We can download apps like SelfControl and RescueTime to actually modulate our behavior ahead of time. We can deal with annoying ones by turning off alerts and interruptions, and disconnecting when we do our most vital work.

I think the answer is to deal with these things ahead of time, simply because of the fact that, in the moment, we're gonna fall victim to these things; everybody does. The productivity experts out there, everybody falls victim to distractions because of the fact that they're more interesting than our work in the moment. Does that make sense?

Pat: Yeah, absolutely. There's a couple of levels to that. The first level is, "Well, let's see if we can love our work more than our distractions," for one. Are you doing the things that are making you excited, and yes, even though we might have an exciting project, there's gonna be smaller things in there that is gonna feel like grunt work.

I remember when I was writing my book, for example, when I came to a tough moment, Facebook would open up and Twitter would open up, and I would just go back to my security blanket of social media for a while and get those immediate responses and good feelings from interacting with people. In general, I loved writing the book, and I knew what it was for, and I had that drive in me, so those . . .

Chris: It's funny you mention writing a book, because the research on procrastination that I conducted during the project, it showed that there are certain attributes that a task can have—it's fascinating science behind this stuff—that make us more likely to procrastinate on a certain task. There's seven of them: whether a task is boring—I'll try to remember them here on the podcast. Whether a task is boring, whether it's frustrating, whether it's difficult, whether something lacks personal meaning, whether it lacks intrinsic rewards, so it's not rewarding when we do it, whether it's ambiguous, and whether it's unstructured. The more of these triggers that a task sets off, the more aversive we find it, and the more likely we are, in turn, to fall victim to these distractions.

You look at something like writing a book, which anybody who's written a book, or has tried and struggled to get into the process of doing so, you've probably found it, at times, boring, frustrating, difficult, ambiguous, unstructured, all of the above. Doing our taxes is the same. Cleaning our closet is the same. Cleaning the

basement or the garage. The things that we put off the most ... Procrastination is a purely visceral and emotional reaction to something that we really don't want to be doing, so something we're procrastinating on sets off most of these triggers. Disabling the distractions ahead of time becomes all the more important.

I don't know if you're the same, but I wrote most of my book while I was disconnected from the internet, because the same research that shows that we procrastinate on tasks with these triggers, it shows that we spend 47% of our time on the internet procrastinating. Things quite literally, when we're doing our most aversive work, take twice as long when we're connected to the internet.

Pat: I think that's such a small tip that can have such a big impact and reward for people, is just turning off the phone for a while when you're working, or turning off notifications, which you have the ability to do on your desktop nowadays. A lot of people feel and fear that the world's gonna crash the moment they do that, or that they're gonna miss out on something, but then you realize . . . I mean, I've been doing this myself. You turn it off for a couple hours, you turn it back on, and nothing drastic happened.

I have to learn the same thing with email. I was told by my assistant, who I hired to help me crush my inbox, she said, "Okay, let's try something. Let's not answer any emails for 24 hours and I'll show you, nothing bad is going to happen." Because I was so like, "Oh, I gotta answer it quickly, and right away," and so when the emails would come in, that's when I would answer, and she's like, "No, no, no. You can't do that."

Chris: "No, man, no."

Pat: Yeah, and then I realized, "Oh. It's been 24 hours. My business is still running, everything's still fine. People don't expect me, necessarily, to reply right away."

Chris: If you run a team, people start to rely on themselves more if it takes too long to respond. They'll only bug you if they absolutely need

something from you.

Pat: True. I also saw on your site ... I was very happy to read this, because I do this myself, and that is, I have a second device that I only use for my distractions outside of my work computer. Can you talk a little bit about what that means?

Chris: I've got this iPad here. This is something I started doing recently as kind of an experiment, but I delegated this device to be my distractions device. I only have Twitter on this device, I only have social media on this device, I only have email on here as well. I have this long password that's 20 or 30 characters long in the security deposit box in my office here if I absolutely need to check it on my desktop, so I've put it a big temporal distance away from me.

The idea is, if I want to be distracted, that's okay, but I can't be distracted where I do my most important work, because . . . And this is one of the findings from the project, that we have three main ingredients that we combine over the course of the day in order to be productive, and this is one of those things I found when everything was done, it was kind of like a "Eureka!" moment, where I found that every single thing that worked in terms of making me more productive over the course of the day, and actually accomplishing more, fell into one of these three categories.

It's either managing my time (of course, we have to manage our time around those of other people), managing my energy (putting good fuel into my body, drinking caffeine strategically instead of habitually, putting good food and exercise into my body as well), and managing my attention (dealing with distractions ahead of time, interruptions ahead of time, and really developing a deep focus). And a lot of that ties to, I believe, what Cal was chatting about last week, in doing deeper work.

I love that idea: bringing more focus to what's in front of us in the moment. It's an idea that's been around for thousands of years in terms of mindfulness practices, but it's something that the world that we live and work inside of today pushes us in the other

direction, even though it's never been more important, that we need to focus on one thing at a time. Those three ingredients—time, attention, and energy—we need to manage all three more deliberately, and having a second distractions device where we only do certain work on that thing, we can be more deliberate about managing our attention that way.

It's probably the more difficult one to manage, isn't it? It's kind of easy to get into a routine, relatively speaking, to eat better and to exercise, and we occasionally fall into those. But managing our attention in order so that we can be less distracted over the course of the day, and less interrupted, that's kind of the difficult one, isn't it?

Pat: Yeah, it is. It's funny, I imagine people listening to this and going to their spouses and saying, "Hey, Chris said I could get a second device so that I can . . ." Anyway, I'm curious. Do you go so far as to schedule your distractions? And this is something that Cal had talked about before on the podcast, and I'm curious to know in terms of what you do and when you do it, how much are you using your calendar?

Chris: I use my calendar throughout the day simply to get events out of my head. Whenever something is time-specific, it goes in the calendar, so I usually block off the hours of 10 to noon and 5 to 8 pm so that I can have that time to dive deeper into my work. But, I use the calendar quite a bit.

Pat: Are you scheduling distractions as well?

Chris: Email, especially.

Pat: Oh, okay. Yeah.

Chris: I only check my email once a day, because ... it's kind of a luxury to be able to do so, but when you're self-employed you gotta take advantage of these luxuries. I check my email everyday at 3 pm, Eastern Standard Time, because that's when my energy levels naturally dip, so I work on a task that is less important. I have a VIP

email for the people that I work closely with throughout the day, but it's really ... managing our attention, it's the more difficult ingredient to manage, and it's been a process over time. I've relegated the distractions that will derail my focus to the distractions device, but for the ones that occasionally serve as interruptions, I've learned to compartmentalize those.

Email is a good example of one. Phone calls and interviews are another example, where I like to batch those together. It's not always possible, but whenever it's possible, I do. Really, I do deal with most of these things ahead of time. Meetings is another one. I think one of the most productive things that we can do is, whenever we're invited to a meeting, question the value of that meeting relative to the other tasks in our work, because it takes an hour to attend a meeting, and if we do deep work on a daily basis, that takes valuable attention away from other things because we're worrying about the meeting ahead of time and transitioning out outside of it.

Questioning the value of these things ahead of time . . . I never attended a meeting without an agenda, simply because an agenda to a meeting, I think it's valuable to see the agenda as a pitch for your time and attention. Seeing a podcast that way, thanks for listening to this one, Pat, and I thank you, but in every further episode, whether of this show or future ones, look at the description and question, "Will this be a valuable use of my time and attention?" Podcasts, Netflix episodes are the exact same way, so I think that really is the best strategy that we can deploy, is to question the value of these things in the first place.

Pat:

I love it, and I love how you are making this more of a human approach, like you said a while back, that a lot of this productivity advice we hear all the time feels cold, and it's very corporate. You actually have a TED talk that you did in Liverpool about making productivity more human. How else might we make productivity fun for us, instead of a challenge or something that we have to do because nothing's aligning in our lives right now?

Chris: I think that for somebody looking at that statement on the surface, like, “How can we make productivity more fun?” It seems like the most paradoxical thing in the world, doesn’t it? But I think one of the most valuable things that we can do is to keep a list of everything that we accomplish over the course of the week, and over the course of the year, because it’s the nature of our brain that we remember the things that we’ve completed less than the things that we have in progress. As a consequence of that, we find ourselves worried of everything that we have on our plate and forgetting all of the accomplishments that our productivity has led to.

This is kind of another paradoxical thing about productivity, is the idea that you want to become more productive, in a way, implies that you’re not entirely satisfied with where you’re at already. It was a tough thing to rectify in the project, because it’s kind of a “Holy crap” moment where I thought, “Why don’t I just be nice to myself in the process instead of just pushing myself like a robot to get more done?”

Accomplishments listed is a fantastic way to do that. I recommend keeping one ... look back from January all the way through today, at the things you’ve accomplished so far, and then keep that list running through the rest of the year. Anniversaries you’ve had with your partner ... I was gonna say “Partners.” Maybe you’re in that situation where you have multiple partners.

Pat: Maybe it’s the anniversary of your business partners in your business that you started. Maybe that’s what you meant.

Chris: Yeah! That’s exactly what it is, Pat. That’s exactly what I meant. Not your three wives. Put anniversaries on there, certain work accomplishments that you’ve had, big milestones, so that you can look back on this list at the end of the week, if you keep a weekly one, at the end of the year, or occasionally at this yearly accomplishments list, and really pat yourself on the back. This is, I think, one of the best attitudes we can have as it relates to our productivity, is to never truly be satisfied with where we’re at, so to always strive to accomplish more. Which is healthy, but only when

we invest in our happiness along the way.

I love your journaling practice; it's something that I do as well. Every morning, think, "What three things do I want to accomplish today?" Every night, think, "What three things was I grateful for today, that happened?" I do this with Arden. As we're falling asleep every night, we think, "Okay, what three things are we grateful for? In the world, in our lives, in each other?" A lot of research has been conducted, that this really does train our brain to look for patterns of positivity around us.

So much of our work trains us to look for the negatives. We get rewarded in work for looking at problems, and putting out fires, and solving difficult tasks, especially when we're leading a team of other people to do so. I think that becomes critical, recalling things we're grateful for, journaling about positive experiences we've had, keeping accomplishments lists of everything that our productivity leads to, working with more intention, and actually slowing down.

Slowing down, I think, it's kind of paradoxical, because we think of productivity as doing more, more, more, faster, faster, faster, but I don't think that's true when we do work with our brains rather than with our bodies. When we did work in the factory in an assembly line with our hands, that might have been true. The harder and the faster we worked, the more widgets we produced in the same amount of time. But today, when we have these other ingredients, like our attention, which is so vital; like our energy, which is so vital.

Actually, taking time to slow down, work with more intention, whether every moment or in general, kind of quiet things down a bit by disabling the distractions that we have control over, setting these intentions for the day, thinking about what's important before we start working, it's a more human way of looking at productivity, and it actually fits with the way that our brains work, where when we're kinder to ourselves, we become happier, and we can become more productive at the same time.

Pat:

Love it. Love it. Chris, thank you for that. There's one more question I want to ask. We've been talking a lot about productivity this month,

it was sort of the theme of the month here on the blog and on the podcast, so I think people . . . Okay. They understand that they have to be productive, they have to understand what their next thing is and make sure that they're getting the results from the work that they're putting in and being smart about where they're putting their time, but at some point, enough has to be enough, right? In terms of, "Okay, let's try and get even more productive. Let's shave a tenth of a second off this task, let's get more" . . . I feel like productivity is like you're painting, and the question I have for all the painters out, if this is a good analogy, maybe it's a terrible one, we'll see.

When you're painting something, how do you know when you're done? How do you know that's the last stroke? In productivity, how do you know you've done the last stroke so you can then stop worrying about all these productivity tips, and hacks, and tricks, and tactics out there, and start actually getting in the rhythm, and getting into deep work, and actually accomplishing the things that you want to accomplish?

Chris: It's so surprising how few people know what they want. I think that's a question you have to ask yourself before you invest in your productivity. What are my values? What do I actually care about? But not in general, not, "Oh, I want to make a lot of money and I want to have a good fa . . ." But what are your values? Do you care about connecting with people? Do you care about helping people? Do you care about meaning? What are your deeply-held values?

You can Google things like "List of values," and I have an exercise in my book before I get into the productivity tactics. "Why are you doing this? If you invest in your productivity, and you become so productive that you actually get two more hours of free time every day to spend as you please," because that's, I think, where productivity is designed to lead to. That's how I see it fitting into my life.

Productivity exists so that we can carve out more time for what's actually meaningful to us, because if you look at how the average American spends their time, we spend a third of our day working, we spend a third of our day sleeping, once we account for the household chores, and eating, and keeping up with social

commitments, we only have so much time left at the end of the day. If you had two hours of free time every day to spend as you please, how would you spend that time? Why aren't you doing that already if you can make money doing that, because chances are it'll make you quite a bit happier than you are already. Why not approach things from that direction instead?

I think the value in productivity is that we only have so much time, and everybody's heard this. The way that I've started thinking about this on a daily basis is, we look at how the average American spends their time, and let's say, for the ease of math, we each live until we're 90, which is a pretty good life. If we spend a third of our day sleeping, we live until we're 60, essentially, because we spend a third of our life sleeping. If we spend a third of our day working, our lifespan essentially becomes 30. If we take time to do chores and things of that nature, maybe our lifespan is 10 years, at the end of the day. Really, how do we want to spend our time?

There's a quote that I love. I believe it's from Annie Dillard in her book "The Writing Life," where she says, and I quote this often in my books, several times, but, "How we spend our days is how we spend our lives." How you spend each day filters up to create a meaningful life, or . . . And I think productivity in itself is not a worthwhile goal. I say that as somebody who's been obsessed with this idea for years.

I think we have to have a bigger goal than productivity. Productivity is the process through which we achieve our biggest ambitions, our biggest goals, whether it's inspiring millions of people, whether it's changing the world in other ways, however it is that we want to make an impact, I think productivity exists to help us get there.

Pat:

I love it, Chris. Thank you. Thank you so much for that. It reminds me of a video that I saw from Gary Vaynerchuk. I think he posted it on Facebook and Instagram a couple times. He's in a car, in . . . there filming this moment, and he rolls down the window and this woman's there, and she's like, "Oh my gosh, it's Gary V," like, "Let's take a selfie, let's take a picture." And she goes, "Okay, but before you go, gimme some words of inspiration, motivation, what do you

have to say?” And he goes, “You’re gonna die.” And everybody’s like, “What?” And she’s like, “Thank you,” because he’s like, “You’re gonna die. Get whatever you need to do done before that happens.”

At first you’re kind of shocked, and then at second, you’re like, “Wow, why am I wasting my time? Let’s get productive so we can do the things we want to do, because one day we’re not gonna be here anymore, so let’s make that impact, let’s leave that legacy.” I think that goes perfectly along with what you said. But obviously that’s Gary V’s style, and this is your style, and I think that kind of covers the spectrum there.

Chris: Yeah. Not to get all hippy-dippy on you here, but I love going on meditation retreats. That’s one of the things that I do, because medi—We talk about focus a lot in terms of our productivity, and meditation simply allows us to bring more of our attention to what’s in front of us in the moment. It’s backed up by neuroscience. The science shows that in any given moment, we only bring 53% of our attention to what’s in front of us, and so half of the time we’re thinking about what we did wrong, and what we have coming up next, and we’re fantasizing, and we’re not there. We’re not actually where we need to be. Our mind is wandering off when we’re taking a shower; it’s already in the office even though we’re taking a beautiful, relaxing shower.

Your story reminded me of a meditation retreat I went on a while back. It was a New Year’s retreat, and there was a death meditation, and it sounds like such a dark idea, doesn’t it? You think of somebody in a cape coming to take your soul away or something.

Pat: A Dementor.

Chris: Yeah, a Dementor! That’s exactly what came into my mind. That’s a real death meditation, isn’t it? But we’re gonna die. How do we want to spend our time? It’s that simple. What’s valuable to you? What do you want? What do you want to accomplish? I think productivity exists to allow you to work towards those goals on a daily basis.

We were chatting around the definition of productivity, where

it's how much we accomplish. But it's kind of like a micro-accomplishment, isn't it? When we're perfectly productive, we accomplish a lot on a daily basis. What that does is it filters into these weekly goals that we have, and the monthly goals, and the yearly goals, and the overall goals that we set for ourselves. It's one thing to set a New Year's resolution, which you may have already broken. "I intend to lose 10 or 15 pounds." But it's on a daily basis, and on a moment-by-moment basis that we actually act towards what's important and what's valuable to us.

I think that's where productivity lies. We all know what we want, some of us more than others; we're all equally lost in that regard, maybe. But how we act towards it on a daily basis, and I think that comes down to the intentions that we set, how well we focus in the moment, and how productive we are.

Pat: Perfect way to end the show, Chris. Thank you so much for that, and for being here and spending time with us today. Where can people find your book and more information from you?

Chris: It's available wherever books are sold. Go into a book store, it's there. It's on Audible, we did a fun audio edition. If you happen to speak another language, it's being translated into a number of fun languages around the world.

Pat: Nice, congrats.

Chris: Thank you. It's wild, because right now . . . this is gonna sound like the largest humble brag in the world, but it's kind of how my days are comprised right now. But it's a best seller in Taiwan and Korea right now. I'm finding I have these calls scheduled at 6 am so that I can do interviews with these various countries. I'm exhausted, and I probably need to manage my energy a bit better, but I'm having a blast.

It's available wherever you can find books. My website is alifeofproductivity.com, and I write a weekly column on there. I'm also on Twitter when I'm on that distractions device, at "Wigglechicken" is my Twitter username.

- Pat: “Wigglechicken.” Tell me about that.
- Chris: “Wigglechicken,” because I’m a professional productivity expert, so what other username would I choose? No, I think it was ... do you remember Neopets? Did you ever participate in Neopets?
- Pat: Were they sort of like ... digital pets that you could feed and raise?
- Chris: Yeah! It’s like, Neopets.com. I played this site way, way ... a decade ago. Maybe 15 years ago. I think the name of my first Neopet was “Wigglechicken.”
- Pat: That’s so good.
- Chris: So before any of this productivity stuff happened, I got that username, because I was an early adopter to Twitter. Now I do productivity stuff and I don’t want to give it up for some reason so I’m @wigglechicken, but my professional one is @aloproductivity, where you can find my posts and stuff like that.
- Pat: Nice. Nice. I had a Digimon, which was like a key chain version of that.
- Chris: Oh man! Yep, those were great. They hung around your belt or something?
- Pat: Yeah, I think I killed my first few, and then I stopped because I wasn’t good at it, or whatever.
- Chris: Pat, Pat. And now you have a family! God help us all.
- Pat: Yeah. Everybody’s healthy and happy, so I’m good.
- Chris: Oh, good. That’s good.
- Pat: I’d rather have it be that way than the other way around. Yeah, man. Chris, this was a lot of fun. Thank you for coming on. I appreciate you, and all the best.

Chris: Thanks, man. Thanks for having me.

Pat: All right, I hope you enjoyed that episode with Chris Bailey, again from alifeofproductivity.com. You can get all the links and the resources mentioned in this episode at smartpassiveincome.com/session258, and one final message from me related to productivity.

Don't forget your "Why." Why are you doing all this work? Why is this even something that's important to you? And the reason why I want you to think about that is because when you're so deep into your work, when you get into the trenches, when you are in the tools, and you are in the software, and you're talking to people, and you're trying to grown, and scale, and make things work, it can be very, very easy to forget why you're doing what you're doing. If you forget why you're doing what you're doing, you're gonna not want to do it anymore.

You need your "Why" in order to move forward and break through those barriers that are gonna try and hold you back. Just keep that in mind as you move forward. For me, my "Why" is very easy to find, because it's you guys. I see it in not only the numbers, and the ratings, and the reviews—and thank you for that, by the way—but I also have hand-written notes that I look at every single day before I work, or whenever I get into a weird moment in my productivity and I just don't want to do anything, I look behind me. To those of you who have seen my office tour, SPI TV episode number two, I give you a little tour of my home office. We'll put a link in the show notes for that as well. You can see a wall where there are pinned a number of hand-written notes from the SPI audience. I actually don't have enough wall space to include all the notes that are coming in.

That is why I do what I do. That's my metric, or barometer, to allow me to realize that I'm actually doing meaningful work, and that I am making a difference. So, I want you to find your "Why," and make it easy for you to remember, whether that's a post-it note on your desktop computer, or a sticker on your laptop, or whatever it is, I don't know, but find it, make it easy for you to remember, and just keep going.

I'd also like to give a big shout-out to GoDaddy for sponsoring today's episode. You obviously know or have heard of GoDaddy. That's where you can go and register domain names; they also have a lot of other tools to help all of us who are building life-fulfilling independent ventures, just giving us the tools, the insights, and the people to transform our ideas into personal initiatives of success. They're the largest technology provider dedicated to small businesses, the largest domain register with over 62 million domain names, which is insane. I think 60 million of them are mine.

No, I'm just kidding, but I do have a lot of them, and I do get domain names to host on my server, I do get domain names to forward to different parts of my website, and it's just super easy to use, and obviously very economical. You can actually get a 30% discount if you use my code, which is "Smart30," at checkout. GoDaddy.com, use the code "Smart30" for 30% off new purchases. Check it out. Thanks.

And finally, once again, I just want to thank you so much for all of your support. I look forward to serving you in next week's episode, where we're gonna be talking with two experts who have done extremely well on YouTube, and how to actually get started and set up your YouTube channel from scratch. We'll be doing that together.

Until then, keep moving forward, and keep taking those big, bold actions that are gonna help you in your business and in your life. Cheers! Take care. I'll see you then.

Announcer: Thanks for listening to the "Smart Passive Income" podcast, at www.smartpassiveincome.com.



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