

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:04] 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 creates 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.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:00:34] DC: Hey, everybody. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse. This is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse. More specifically, we are here with the Time Management Tips in 20 podcast series, which means I am here with my SO Productive productivity coach, Sarah Ohanesian. Hello, Sarah.

[00:00:56] SO: Hello. How are you doing?

[00:00:58] DC: I'm okay, a little stressed out, a little stressed out. The year started off a little slow. Now, it's picking up a bit, and I am consistently in organization mode. You sent me a little bit of a cryptic email and you said, "Okay. For today's topic, I want to talk about Fresh Start Friday," and that was all you said. So I'm very interested to know what that is, and I will hand it over to you.

[00:01:30] SO: Well, and I think it's interesting as you're saying. The year started off a little slowly, and then now things are picking up. When that happens, we can start to feel a little bit flustered by the end of the week. Like, "I didn't have enough time in my week to get everything done, and now the weekend's coming, and I'm running out the door trying to get to an event for the weekend."

Fresh Start Friday is an opportunity for us to essentially hit the reset button, go through this Fresh Start Friday practice, and get ourselves ready for the week ahead. That's what it is at a very high level.

[00:02:06] DC: Okay. I could have a million questions about how you get yourself prepared. What are your thoughts around that?

[00:02:15] SO: Yes. The big thing, too, and you might be thinking, “Well, why do this on Friday?” My reason for that is a lot of times on Friday afternoons, our brains are a little bit tired. We're physically tired from the week. It's just not a great time for us to be doing high-level critical tasks. You're not in the right headspace a lot of times to do that, and a lot of meetings don't happen on Friday afternoons.

That being said, you might not be somebody who can leave work early, but you can make Friday a really, really productive time. Late Friday afternoons are actually a really good time to do this. Instead of trying to force some of those high-level tasks, use that time to set up your task the week ahead, so hence the name Fresh Start Friday. I love this because it really tees up the week ahead and also, hopefully, puts you into a more calm, relaxed weekend. Are you ready for me to get into the specifics of what it is?

[00:03:11] DC: I am but first I want to ask if what you're going to say next covers the fact that you might have to go back through all your emails and figure out what you didn't do and all those meetings that, well, who took those notes and where are they and things like that. Are you going to cover that?

[00:03:28] SO: Absolutely. That's actually –

[00:03:29] DC: Okay then. Please take it away, Sarah.

[00:03:32] SO: Well, that actually is step one, and it's really four steps. My goal of Fresh Start Friday is something that can take you about 30 minutes as you get started. The more you do it, obviously, the more optimized this process is going to be for you. The other thing I should point out before we get into critical steps is this can be done on pen and paper. I know you use Todoist. I use Asana as my task management software. For those of you that can't see, she's making a really crazy face at me right now but –

[00:04:01] DC: Because you only let me use my to-do list for Todoist.

[00:04:05] SO: Yes. Well, because some of us do have a wonderful task management digital software, some people don't. I don't want this step if you don't have that. If you're not as optimized and proficient as this as Deborah is, this is something you can still do in pen and paper. So don't let the system hold you up is my point.

[00:04:20] DC: I just want to interject that I use a free Todoist account, which everyone else out there can do as well. It's limited by the amount of boards you can set up, but that has not stopped me from having a few different task lists, a current to-do list, a dream list, and an inbox of things I need to do today, which is just how I have it organized. Anybody out there who doesn't have one, just try it. Sarah made me try it, and it really has changed my life from going through notebooks of paper looking for notes from four meetings ago. Links in the show notes. Go.

[00:04:58] SO: Perfect. That is ideal. If you're on a digital tool, this is going to be a lot easier for you. Again, don't let that stop you from the practice. Here's the practice. The very first step of this is to get clarity around all of your tasks. We've talked about this in some previous episodes before because you just mentioned earlier. We are those meeting notes. My week became a runaway train. I feel kind of out of control with all the stuff that piled up throughout the course of the week.

This is the time to just calmly gather everything together and get it into a place where you can get it out of your head. Get all the different pieces of paper you might have, all the notes organized. Get them into one location. Again, that key is really getting clarity around what do I have to do and why does it matter and getting those things into one spot, getting clarity around all of your tasks. I'll pause there. Do you have any questions on that one?

[BREAK]

[00:05:52] SO: I'm Sarah Ohanesian, Founder of SO Productive, a productivity, training, and consulting company. Teams I work with get more done. The 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.

[INTERVIEW RESUMED]

[00:06:38] DC: Is there any advice you can give for people to recognize like, “Okay, this is probably not going to get done this week. I should make a note or put this somewhere so that I don't forget to put it on my Fresh Start Friday list.”?

[00:06:56] SO: Great. That actually leads us to step two which is to get those things organized. A lot of times, once we get that clarity, we're like, “Okay, I do have 75 notes. I've got all this stuff. I've got some goals coming up from next week. What meetings do I have next week?” Now, we've got to really process that information and think about, “Okay, I actually have to now decide when am I going to do this stuff, who on my team might need to be involved in this stuff, when is this due, what's a priority.” That's the second step of this is to get all those things organized.

Again, if you're in a digital tool, this is a wonderful time to do that because – Deborah, I'm sure you've got tags, custom fields, whatever it is that your tool calls them. But it's a way to essentially tag those tasks and getting them organized for the week ahead. The key here, and Deborah mentioned it earlier, it's getting everything organized in one trusted location because what happens throughout the week, a lot of our desks get messier as the week goes on. This Friday is an opportunity to just, “Okay, I'm just going to get everything organized in one spot, so it feels a little more manageable.”

It's actually – I know, Deborah, you've been through this step. It seems a little silly because you're not actually getting the work done. The act of organizing it and having everything in one spot, for me, it definitely helps me feel better. I think you've had a similar experience.

[00:08:16] DC: Yes. I mean, what I do is I go to my Todoist list, and I reorder things. I think I am doing what you're saying. I don't do just on Fridays. I have to do it every day, pretty much if something got missed or if I add something, and I know it has to get done before something else. Being able to reorder things is awesome on there. I have to say I didn't know you could tag

things different. So I'm going to look into it a little more. I was just so happy to not be writing things on paper anymore that I haven't really dug into all the features of the tool. Now, I'm interested in that.

Okay, what is the next step after gathering what you – for whatever reason didn't happen this week that needs to happen next week?

[00:09:01] SO: Yes. Then we have to really set those priorities. We have to think about what are we going to take action on next week, and here's the key. If you gathered – kind of bit off more than you can chew this week and you're like, “Oh, my gosh. I collected notes, and I've been in all these meetings, and I got all these to-do items,” you might have to really have a realistic moment with yourself to say, “What am I capable of actually producing next week?”

Here's the key. Which of those things are the most important? Which of those things are the most valuable? Which of those things are actually do? Which of those things are going to make an impact on the company? Where I'm seeing a lot of this happening with clients is there's too many things on their plate and not enough hours in the day to do it. This moment of, “Okay, I need to decide what I'm going to work on and when I'm going to take action on that item and physically get that into my calendar for next week,” that act is a real kind of moment of do I have enough time to accomplish all the things I think I can accomplish and really being realistic about that.

If you're like, “There's not enough squares on the calendar. I can't get all this stuff done,” this is an opportunity to say, “All right, I'm going to have to go back to my client or my boss and just talk through this.” But you're essentially taking all the pieces of the puzzle and figuring out how is this going to fit in next week. Or if not, I'm getting ahead of it and I'm anticipating I'm going to be maybe two weeks out on this particular item. It's a real exercise in planning the week ahead, and being realistic about it, I think, is key.

[BREAK]

[00:10:39] DC: Calling all fierce, fabulous females, Girls Who Print is waiting for you, and our global mission to help empower and connect the women of print is stronger than ever. Join our

10,000-member and growing women-only LinkedIn group. Connect with us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Celebrate Girls Who Print Day and find out who wins our annual Girlie Award. Join our ongoing initiatives, online events, in-person conferences, and global mentoring program. Visit Girls Who Print for information on how to get involved and get empowered. Links in the show notes.

[INTERVIEW RESUMED]

[00:11:18] DC: I think it's a good time to bring up the elephant that we love to eat one bite at a time, instead of the whole elephant. Adding things to this Fresh Start Friday list that are realistic that you can accomplish in the following week is also super important. Just as an example, I need to have a meeting with this person, right? Instead of putting on your calendar set meeting with somebody, put on your calendar get in touch with somebody. That's a manageable thing you can do versus set a meeting which might keep moving on your to-do list.

Maybe that's not the best example, but that's what I mean. If you can't do the whole thing, then what is one or two steps of that biggest picture you can do in incremental steps to get them off your to-do list, which is the goal here?

[00:12:17] SO: Exactly. I was speaking with someone this morning, and he said, "Every week, I have these things that just come over. They come over to the next week." Deborah, I know you've mentioned this as well. We all have this from time to time. I think –

[00:12:28] DC: I have a separate list now just for those things because, otherwise, they're just going to keep moving. You told me to make a list of just creative ideas that will happen when they can happen. It's been very helpful.

[00:12:40] SO: It could be that they can happen when they can happen, and you can put them on the back burner. But it might be something that actually is important. It does need to get done. So this opportunity of taking this time on Friday, one of the critical things to think about is what are some of those items that you're moving from week to week to week. If you're seeing some of those key tasks every Friday, this is your moment to be like, "What's going on here?" It

could be that, to Deborah's point, it's too big. The piece is too big. So you've got on there rewrite the employee manual. Way too big. Instead break that down into bite-sized pieces.

This Friday opportunity, the reason for Fresh Start Friday is to say, "What's still on my plate? How could I break those down into smaller actionable bite-sized pieces and actually get a small part on the calendar to get that on my space for next week?" That's it, Deborah. Then the final step of this is just declutter your workspace because one of the things I love is that when you walk in on Monday morning, you've got your priorities outlined for the week, your calendar's ready to go, and you've got a nice decluttered workspace. You're less room for distraction, ready to start the week, really strong on Monday. I hope that gives people a more relaxing weekend as well.

[00:13:53] DC: It does. I can say that for myself, besides reordering my Todoist list, I have to say I actually do that in the morning, not the night before. I don't know why. I just do. The night before, I do not leave my computer unless my desktop is clean. I cannot come back to my computer the next day and see screenshots and docs. Everything has to go into a folder or I'd literally lose my mind. I feel like that's my clean desk. So when I turn on my computer, it's a blank canvas, at least as far as the desktop screen. Then only what I stick up there is in my face.

Now, mind you. It is a nightmare by four o'clock because I'm just dumping things and saving attachments all over the damn place and putting proposals and invoices wherever else I've got coming through all day. But I make sure I do that. How do you make this a habit, or what happens if you kind of start and then you stop? I mean, I know we talk about this all the time, but I'm assuming there's no penalty other than you're like, "It's Tuesday," and you're like, "Oh, my God. I'm overwhelmed again, instead of organized."

[00:15:09] SO: Yes. There's no penalty, although you can pay Deborah and I. If you miss a week, we'll take a donation on that.

[00:15:15] DC: Oh, my God. I will bring –

[00:15:16] SO: You can donate to Girls Who Print in Africa.

[00:15:18] DC: Yes. That is totally true. Sarah and I will bring anybody who wants us to over missing things on their to-do list.

[00:15:27] SO: There's no penalty, but I would love for you to think about this as a gift to yourself because the more often you do it, the more optimized, the easier this is going to be. It's just a great gift to yourself. I hope that's enough of a reward for you. Also, it goes back to everything else. Just get it on the calendar. Just say, "At three o'clock every Friday, I'm going to do this because my reward is I go into my weekend with a cleaner mind. I've got a plan for next week, and that feels really good." Making this a consistent behavior is, obviously, really important.

The reason it's called Fresh Start Fridays is because if you miss a week, it's okay. It always is an opportunity for a fresh start because I think a lot of us can feel we get overwhelmed. The desktop is piling up. The paper's piling up. We've got too many things open. If we never take a moment to reset, to get a fresh start, it's not going to get better on its own. That's the point of it. If you missed one, if you didn't do as well with it last week, every Friday, it's an opportunity to get that fresh start, get your space cleaned up, get yourself optimized and ready for the week ahead.

[00:16:29] DC: Sarah and I have discussed how to prioritize, how to get things off your to-do list, how to potentially get help from others or delegate so that you have time to do the most important tasks, the things that you have to get done. Go back to any episode of Time Management Tips in 20 and get that information. Make sure you connect with Sarah. All of her information is in the show notes. Thank you so much, Sarah, for your time and being very productive on this podcast. Until next time, everybody, time management long and prosper.

[OUTRO]

[00:17:08] 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.

[END]

Mentioned in This Episode:

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

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

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

Todoist: <https://todoist.com/>

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

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