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[JOURNAL] Getting Things Done by David Allen

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GTD work flow

Submitted by Brittany Fridenstine-Keefe

So we are inspired by a great mid-season Symposium in early February sponsored by Dance/NYC. Hopefully we all made new friends at the kick-off party at the Rubin's K2 lounge, but now what? When thinking about the assignment of a book report in conjunction with the Symposium I thought it best to find a resource that can take great ideas and energy into a tangible reality. How many times has inspiration been squelched by lack of planning or even knowing how to plan?

David Allen's Getting Things Done is a great book to help you take those lists and projects and turn them into actionable tasks and eventually a completed project.

One of the great finds in the book includes a six level model for reviewing your life. David Allen defines his levels of analyzing your path utilizing an aerospace analogy as follows:

- 50,000 + feet: Life (mission).

- 40,000 feet: Three- to five year vision.

- 30,000 feet: One- to two year goals.

- 20,000 feet: Areas of responsibility.

- 10,000 feet: Current projects.

- Runway: Current Actions.

Through this analysis he guides the reader to define what their purpose either in work or personal life is. It becomes clear that a when assessing both 10,000 feet and below tasks simultaneously with loftier 50,000+ feet perspectives an actionable and satisfying path emerges.

Then the book offers some very pragmatic ways to "do" by establishing a system of gathering-reviewing-delegating-referencing-deferring and creating action plans. A basic tenant of the system includes that if there are "to-do" lists stored in your brain, then there is wasted mental capacity. Therefore he suggests creating a series of projects that correspond to your 30,000 feet and under goals. Each of those projects is then distilled into actionable tasks.

Another handy tip is a tangible calendar called a "tickler" file. It serves as a date specific file for thoughts, advertisements, and future agendas. Think of all those postcards and brochures for performances or travel itineraries that are days away; just throw it in the tickler and deal with it at a more appropriate time.

The book also offers a system for organizing email with folders so that your email inbox is not always full and important things get lost at the bottom. Without being overly dramatic I can state that the "two-minute" rule changed my life (and no it is not a time-out). The two-minute rule theorizes: if a task takes less than two minutes, complete it now! There are also numerous GTD (as it is lovingly termed) business apps and software programs, many of them free! For more info search GTD or go to http://www.davidco.com/index.php.

Most of the system is fairly common sense, but having direction so clear and concise makes getting things done possible. I have put the system to work and can attest that I am getting things done. I feel much less overwhelmed by the lists that are pressing and therefore more free to make choices to do other things with my time like have coffee with my friends from the symposium, going to see a dance performance, or even taking a dance class!