

Recording, Prioritizing, and Completing Work When Everything's Important

Spring 2023 CITx Redbirds of a Feather session

CARLA BIRCKELBAW FEB 21, 2023 10:59PM UTC

Framing Work

TAUBE, DAN FEB 23, 2023 05:33AM UTC

Where does your work come from?

People, processes, and technology.



"walk ups" now: Teams – ANONYMOUS

Email – TAUBE, DAN

Tech Solution changes; instructors; coworkers; myself – BUSH, VICTORIA

Phone – ANONYMOUS

formal assignments – ANONYMOUS

ISO Mandates – ANONYMOUS

Cherwell – ANONYMOUS

solving immediate problems – ANONYMOUS

Tom H. – ANONYMOUS

JH153 – ANONYMOUS

surprises – ANONYMOUS

Myself – TAUBE, DAN

Procrastination – ANONYMOUS

ideas - realizing things can be improved and trying to make that happen – CARLA BIRCKELBAW

Something I did partway – ANONYMOUS

Desire to streamline processes that are time-consuming and can be better handled with improved tech. – HELTON, MATT

TAUBE, DAN FEB 23, 2023 05:07AM UTC

Where is your work recorded and tracked?

Good, bad, and ugly.

Excel – ANONYMOUS

issue boards in git – ANONYMOUS

OneNote, To Do, Planner. – HELTON, MATT

Onenote, Confluence – ANONYMOUS

SharePoint – ANONYMOUS

cherwell – ANONYMOUS

WorkTracker (SharePoint) – ANONYMOUS

Outside of tickets: OneNote, Teams, Confluence – ANONYMOUS

My tiny little mind – ANONYMOUS

check list in obsidian – ANONYMOUS

to do list – CARLA BIRCKELBAW

Notepad++ "Digital Checklist" – HELTON, MATT

Paper notes – TAUBE, DAN

Thought, "my tiny little mind" was a mind mapping application – ANONYMOUS

inbox zero - anything left in the inbox – ANONYMOUS

Multiple places: git, OneNote, SharePoint, Cherwell, Confluence, Yada yada – ANONYMOUS

Email – TAUBE, DAN

embarrassment for the team – ANONYMOUS

"Mark as Read" can help with inbox clutter! ;) – HELTON, MATT

Often not much. University initiatives sometimes get worked on, we put a bow on it, and then we move on whether it was successful or not. – ANONYMOUS

Teams IM chats – ANONYMOUS

Stress, embarrassment absolutely – ANONYMOUS

Heard of some people using "obsidian" I think? – ANONYMOUS

<https://obsidian.md/> – ANONYMOUS

Work tends to just stay with me, but it weighs on your mind after a while. – SCHEIMAN, CHAD

for home / personal: google keep notes – ANONYMOUS

that begs that expectations were set in the first place – ANONYMOUS

Asana – ERIC GRAB

Extra communication – ANONYMOUS

Asana – GAFF, ISAAC

Asking for help is hard when it involves an area that you are supposed to be the expert in! – ANONYMOUS

Work Performance

Communicate on time if work is not getting done. – ANONYMOUS

TAUBE, DAN FEB 23, 2023 05:34AM UTC

What occurs when work is not completed to expectations?

I also feel like some days you put in your best work and that's okay. Tomorrow is there to improve and complete the work. – ANONYMOUS

Formal and informal.

Management wants to set priorities but doesn't know what to prioritize – ANONYMOUS



TAUBE, DAN FEB 23, 2023 05:43AM UTC

What metrics can reflect performance of work completion?

Formally set or just in theory.

Customer satisfaction – ANONYMOUS

timeline with key milestones for long term projects – ANONYMOUS

Cherwell ticket closures – SCHEIMAN, CHAD

Candy – SCHEIMAN, CHAD

weighted git entries – ANONYMOUS

My to do list gets shorter. – ANONYMOUS

Grimey! – ANONYMOUS

Did the day go by quick? – ANONYMOUS

Escalation – TAUBE, DAN

I worked on it and it didn't break. – HELTON, MATT

The work uncompleted by others lands on me because then it gets done. Sad, but true. – ANONYMOUS

The feeling that you have about the work you are doing. e.g. feeling good about the work you do in turn may help there to be a more positive outcome – ANONYMOUS

rework by someone else later on – ANONYMOUS

Disappointment, confusion – ANONYMOUS

Check marks on my to do list – ANONYMOUS

Delays for the customer – ANONYMOUS

Planner – ANONYMOUS

Seek help to get it done – ANONYMOUS

time saved for you or others – ANONYMOUS

Chocolate, in my case – ANONYMOUS

Project management tools give time spent – ANONYMOUS

stress – CARLA BIRCKELBAW

But time management tools require time to maintain.
– ANONYMOUS

interruptions for work status from multiple directions/PM tools
– ANONYMOUS

Work Hindrances

<https://xyproblem.info/> – JOHNSON, JIM

reliance on others/vendors – ANONYMOUS

TAUBE, DAN FEB 23, 2023 01:50PM UTC

What gets in the way of your work being completed?

People, processes, and technology.

Lack of effective communication. Others assuming you know what they want/need – ERIC GRAB

The best intentions of others. – ANONYMOUS

Unplanned outages/ emergency maintenance – ANONYMOUS

Other unknown daily issues outside of expected scope.
– ANONYMOUS

Myself – SCHEIMAN, CHAD

Personal life, imposter syndrome, depression, anxiety, self destructive actions. – ANONYMOUS

Other people's emergencies – ANONYMOUS

Work generated from direct messaging team members, due to the historic belief that a ticket would take longer. – JOHNSON, JIM

lack of documentation from people who have previously worked on system/project – ANONYMOUS

constant flow of notifications, messages, emails, physical visits, etc.
– CARLA BIRCKELBAW

Walk-in customers – ANONYMOUS

when another department can't work as quickly as you can
– ANONYMOUS

Disruptions loss of thought process and having to pick it up again
– SCHEIMAN, CHAD

coworkers who do not do the same job as you. So having different work ethics or amounts of work for each day. – ANONYMOUS

Priorities differ – ANONYMOUS

speed of collaboration/communication around content in context
– GAFF, ISAAC

Lack of details of someone's issue. – ANONYMOUS

Lack of a cohesive theme / prioritization for the whole organization
– ANONYMOUS

Everyone wanting their fixes to be an individuals top priority and escalating to management when things may not be as high priority as others in the moment. – ANONYMOUS

Work Productivity

TAUBE, DAN FEB 23, 2023 01:50PM UTC

What needs to change to increase your productivity?



Kudos for the Gromit graphic. – ANONYMOUS

more post its!! – ANONYMOUS

More staff, less work – ANONYMOUS

Trust people to do their job – ANONYMOUS

more use of focus mode tools on the technology – ANONYMOUS

Do not disturb office hours – ANONYMOUS

A respect for the amount of hours in the day vs a work home life balance. – ANONYMOUS

Better focus. detailed expected outcomes. – ANONYMOUS

Be prepared to hand off work to others – ANONYMOUS

more training from the start of employment.. – ANONYMOUS

less passive aggressive complaining about collaborating
– ANONYMOUS

Centralize task management as much as possible. – ANONYMOUS

More chances to delegate and offload tasks completely without the need to keep tabs on it. – SCHEIMAN, CHAD

Clear directions from management and good communication within the team – ANONYMOUS

+1 for better onboarding – ANONYMOUS

Projects aren't aware of deadline/timelines other employees have to work on – ANONYMOUS

task identification / tracking / documentation as close to the work as possible - like git – ANONYMOUS

Better documentation (complete but don't over do) – ANONYMOUS

I said more staff, above. – ANONYMOUS

More staff - sorry that should have been first – SCHEIMAN, CHAD

+1 for centralized task management – GAFF, ISAAC

more people in the right roles for the work we're asked for today as compared to 10 years ago – ANONYMOUS

Competitive pay/benefits to retain staff/talents for key roles. – ANONYMOUS

Agreed. We have a lot of people in positions now who have potential but adherence to existing structure doesn't allow them the room to develop. – ANONYMOUS

investing time to automate tasks (easier said than done, but helps with many different aspects) – MAJEED ABU-QULBAIN

TAUBE, DAN FEB 23, 2023 01:50PM UTC

Do you have any suggestions for increasing productivity of a specific type of work?

Tips and tricks.

Automation of common tasks – ANONYMOUS

Avoid Oracle – ANONYMOUS

standardize the workflow for certain asks so all do it the same way – ANONYMOUS

Suppress teams, email, etc for periods of time – SCHEIMAN, CHAD

Tax the rich. – ANONYMOUS

+1 for suppression of certain types of communications – MAJEED ABU-QULBAIN

open up resources to those of us outside of IT, like Power BI and Power apps – ANONYMOUS

Use faster modes of communication in general. Email requires formalities and re-reading and verifications etc.. – ANONYMOUS

better and standardized tools (ticketing, pw management, etc) – ANONYMOUS

Centralize more of the work backbone so teams are all speaking the same language/using the same methodologies – ANONYMOUS

Put policies in place for standards to back the centralization so it doesn't fall apart as well – ANONYMOUS

and update them! – ANONYMOUS

TAUBE, DAN FEB 23, 2023 03:39PM UTC

What do you consider to prioritize work?

Formal and informal.

Deadlines/What gives the best overall impact to the campus for the total amount of work required – ANONYMOUS

Deadlines, blow-back from prioritizing other work, "mental break days" to work on low-hanging fruit that I enjoy, over what management may see as higher priority or more important – ANONYMOUS

time saved for the university as a whole. – ANONYMOUS

end user experience – ANONYMOUS

1. Evaluation of Urgency vs impact 2. Timeline 3. Time to Resolve – ANONYMOUS

Saving my time later on. – ANONYMOUS

He who screams the loudest. – ANONYMOUS

We have started trying to use a shared work priority process – SCHEIMAN, CHAD

what is "my" work vs. things other people are waiting on – CARLA BIRCKELBAW

Impact to the security of systems, or impact to folks to learn, complete work, or teach tends to guide priority. Unplanned work usually always trumps planned work. – MAJEED ABU-QULBAIN

I was going to say, "what is the level of threat to the University vs. my timeline/plan" – ANONYMOUS

Need to balance the buckets... operations, improvements I want, break/fixes, projects others want, compliance (is it really necessary though?) – ANONYMOUS

priorities are aligned with departments priorities. Also based on increasing efficiency / effectiveness – ANONYMOUS

Thought Board

ANONYMOUS FEB 23, 2023 04:33PM UTC

Thoughts

We have to recognize we support each others' priorities, too. So spending time on others' requests helps them move through things that might be "higher" priority for the org compared to what we were charged with. – ANONYMOUS

Sharing the reason we're asking for things helps others to know the speed with which we need their help – ANONYMOUS

any process to follow is better than sitting at your desk, feeling stressed about all of the work from everyone, everywhere and trying to figure out what to do next. That can be paralyzing.
– CARLA BIRCKELBAW

I feel like I burden others with additional work when I find situations where I cannot proceed without their assistance, so I tend to just not do the thing I can't do, for as long as I can, to avoid having to bother them. – ANONYMOUS

Making sure the changes you are making, how they impact other services, and the expected outcomes are all well communicated – ANONYMOUS

Table flipping is a good rage reducer. – ANONYMOUS

Maybe juggling would be a better alternative. – ANONYMOUS

(^°□°) ∩ (—) – ANONYMOUS

We need people to be open to change, listen to ideas, willing to work towards improvisations. It may help us to move in same direction and have same priorities – ANONYMOUS

That relates to the stress and burnout that stems from too much unplanned work being prioritized over planned work. Aside from pushing out the planned work in an attempt to manage those completion expectations and reduce stress/burn for staff members needing to complete the planned work, how are folks dealing with that? – MAJEED ABU-QULBAIN

@Chad - RBAC can help... get permission for a role to have access to something, then people who go into that role should already be allowed. – ANONYMOUS

CCA will have details to share about the Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform for IT teams here soon. We have it, its here, and we are prepping for others to use it. – JOHNSON, JIM

I suspect most have left, but I'm curious what people think of ChatGPT in finding solutions to problems, be it automation or coding, to handle workload? Is it cheating? Do you try to keep your use of ChatGPT (if you use it) hidden when asking for specific help in, for instance, coding? – ANONYMOUS

I'd treat chatgpt like wikipedia. Good idea generator - but then you have to work it, understand it, own it, tweak it. – ANONYMOUS

+1 Ok, same. I don't use it to write entire programs, emails, or other business items. However, I use it a lot when I get stuck or just don't understand how to do something I want to do. It has been so invaluable to me that when the opportunity to pay for consistent access became available, I did not hesitate to take part. \$20 a month, for something that can vastly reduce the length of time required to solve a particular problem, is beyond compare. – ANONYMOUS

RE: ChatGPT - I have been using it myself to proof/frame concepts that I am having a difficult time distilling. With enough time, I can find my way there on my own, but such a solution saves me that workshop time to then define, refine, and expand upon. – TAUBE, DAN

^Yes, thank you! I have been reluctant to admit when I've used it to help solve a problem here because I fear it may diminish my worth in the eyes of my peers. It feels like a cheat but I see it more, as you put it, akin to a distillation of Google searches that would have provided partial solutions that required much more time to hone.
– ANONYMOUS

Indeed. I suspect there is that perspective. It is certainly a problem in the context of academic works and the need (and policy) to cite such use, but I truly believe it adds to your value than takes away. I'm choosing to compare it to the calculator and something like Excel. I truly hope no one thinks we should do day-to-day math/calculations/accounting without either. – TAUBE, DAN

I really like this thought in terms of this topic of work productivity. I think I will take it to Teams for recap of this session and see what others think. Happy to continue here as well. – TAUBE, DAN

True. Thank you for your input, Dan! – ANONYMOUS

Yes, that sounds good, Dan! – ANONYMOUS
