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Applying David Allen's *Getting Things Done*: Growing a Technology Business with your Peers

We all know that good partnerships can mean success. Belonging with an association of trusted peers can mean great advances for your company geographically or in new solution areas. Taking best practices when working together can exponentially raise your game. In the IAMCP, we find game-changing ideas and share with our members as they work together. Today, we bring you David Allen.

- Ulises Aguilar, IAMCP Incoming President & Per Werngren, IAMCP Outgoing President



DavidAllen

"First of all, if it's on your mind, your mind isn't clear.

Anything you consider unfinished in any way must be captured in a trusted system outside your mind, or what I call a collection bucket, that you know you'll come regularly back and sort through.

Sharing your goals and sharing actions with your peers can further amplify your productivity"

-David Allen, Getting Things Done

Applying David Allen's *Getting Things Done*: Getting Things Done through Partnerships

Editorial by David Allen

One key component of the principles in "Getting Things Done" and "Putting it All Together" has to do with getting beyond "busy work" and into strategic and proactive planning for your business.

After applying the GTD principles you will already have your day-to-day projects and actions under control. That allows you to graduate to the next level of challenge: you need appropriate "perspective" to allow yourself to work on the important stuff, rather than getting carried away just doing "busy work," or (even more likely) to have your focus determined simply by the latest and loudest stuff.

Countless CEOs have applied some very simple principles to "clear their minds" and focus on the future.

By sharing and discussing your vision and areas of responsibility with peers, your impact can dramatically improve.

Goals & objectives: Reviewing goals and objective with a personal "advisory board" of peers has proven to take you to a new level. The more specific these outcomes, the more power they will have. And you often will access a brand new level of clarity and detail as you communicate and collaborate with other key people in accessing and expressing them.

Vision: What would “wild success” look, sound, and feel like? If you were optimally fulfilling your purpose, and your biggest goals had been achieved, what would your life, your work, and your company be doing – specifically? What would its scope, scale and subtleties be? Are your goals, objectives, and projects aligned in this direction?

Sharing with other partners (in both work and life) at this level can be immensely rewarding. Invariably it creates greater alignment, support, understanding, and innovative ideas as this longer horizon conversations develop collaboratively and even offer clarity to your own mind as you practice projecting your vision outwardly.

Principles & purpose: What business you're in, what you're really about as an enterprise, what's unique about your game, what standards you hold dear, and what's at the core of your motivation – all very powerful stuff to know and share with people whom you consider important to your success.

Share Your Goals and Share Your Responsibility

As part of the principles of GTD, one best practice is to share your goals, outcomes and actions with your peers. This lends itself inherently to shared responsibility. In the same way a personal trainer keeps you on a program by formalizing accountability, sharing your business vision with peers also keeps your business activities focused and on track.

Participate in local discussions with peers through the IAMCP. Regularly attend events and schedule conversations with your “personal board” and tell them what you hope to accomplish in your business by a certain timeframe (and, most importantly HOW you plan to do it). Ask them the same and don't forget to listen to their answer.

Your shared accountabilities are articulated in the forms of outcomes and actions. Try a single sentence around your intended successful outcome for the problem or situation. For example:

Attract at least 12 new projects this quarter from both new and existing clients with an average deal size of \$50K.

IMPORTANT: Write down the very next physical action required to move the situation forward

Arrange a point person in my company to recommend an ISV partner who offers healthcare electronic medical records solutions.

As you prepare your joint planning, you and your partner can both think about both horizontal areas (areas that maintain coherence across all activities in which you are involved) “*Our customer growth spawns from our value proposition of Serving healthcare customers to build trust and value*” with vertical thinking up and down the track of individual topics and projects: “*Sales growth should be achieved through persistent discipline to connecting with our top clients and building a technology roadmap for each customer.*”

Then, on a regular basis, you'll be reviewing your work in 6 areas with your peers:

- 1. Current actions: This is the inventory of next physical, visible actions required to move forward on projects and other desired outcomes, and to maintain important standards.**

Define our unique value prop that is appropriate WW.

2. Current projects: Clearly defined outcomes and the next actions to move them towards closure

Extending our Business to Europe: Open operations center in Madrid

New Customer Acquisitions Initiative: Identify and contact new prospects

3. Areas of responsibility: These are the things you need to maintain at sufficient levels and standards on an on-going basis. Such as...

Drive productivity improvements across support and administration

Win in new product line sales

Grow within our current customer base

Maintain connections monthly with top 20 customers

4. 1-2 year goals: Things to be accomplished to move you toward your longer-term objectives. Such as...

20% growth in revenue

Improve customer growth & retention by 30%

Assign and nurture internal growth & retention staff

5. 3-5 year vision: What would wild success look like? What do you want to be, when you grow up? Such as...

#1 market share in Berlin or energy management industry

Improve customer growth & retention by 30%

Assign and nurture internal growth & retention staff

6. Big picture view: What are you about as a business? Who are your customers? What do they consider unique and valuable about you?

Growing/Shrinking analysis. Where is our revenue coming from? Where are we losing and to whom? SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

Five Stages of Workflow

Part of working together is having an understanding a shared taxonomy and process. There are always 5 stages that emerge in any successful workflow.

1. Collect things that command our attention (anything personal or professional, big or little, that you think should be different than it currently is and that you have any level of internal commitment to changing). **Get it all out of your head with a minimal number of collection buckets and empty the buckets regularly.** Remember, if it's not an opportunity you are positioned to take on yourself, your peers might tackle it if it's closer to their business model. Share the opportunities in the same way you share the goals and processes.

2. Process what they mean and what to do about them

What is it? Is it actionable? YES or NO

What is the next action?

- Do it alone, do it together (define who does what); Delegate it; Defer it; Turn it into a project (anything requiring multiple interdependent steps to accomplish the desired outcome)

Five Phases of Natural Planning Techniques when planning together:

1. Purpose / guiding principles (Why are we doing this? What is our joint value proposition?)
2. Mission / vision / goals / successful outcome (What would wild success look, sound, or feel like?)
3. Brainstorming (How would we accomplish it?)
4. View the project from beyond the completion date
5. Envision wild success (suspend "Yeah, but. . .")
6. Capture features, aspects, and qualities you imagine in place
7. Organizing (identify components, subcomponents, sequences, events, and/or priorities; what must occur and in what order? When do we do these things?)
8. Next actions (Where do we start?)

"If the project is off your mind, your planning is sufficient. If it's still on your mind, keep applying the model until it's clear."

Know when to partner and how to set up the best relationship for getting things done.

About David Allen

David Allen, author of "Getting Things Done", describes a work-life system for managing your time for optimal productivity and increased focus.

Allen, who made Business 2.0's list of 50 People Who Matter, has sold more than 350,000 copies of his book since it was first published in 2001. Business 2.0 calls his techniques "commonsensical, effective and influential." His firm, David Allen & Co., conducts seminars and one-on-one coaching sessions throughout the world.

For more on becoming more productive, see David Allen at www.davidco.com