

Bonni: [00:00:00] It's a central part of most of our time management systems, on today's show Dave and I share our approaches to calendar management.

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Bonni: [00:00:17] Welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. This is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to increase our personal productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives. And be even more present for our students.

Bonni: [00:00:46] This is Bonni Stachowiak and I'm so happy today to be having my husband join me on the show. And his name is Dave Stachowiak. For those of you that have not been listening for awhile he's back today. Thanks for joining me.

Dave: [00:00:58] I am and I feel like there's an element of Wayne's World going on here because I'm not worthy.

Bonni: [00:01:04] You want to explain.

Dave: [00:01:07] I will explain that I just I every show I listen to with all these amazing guests you've had on I just take something away that I think I can use in my teaching. And usually there's like three or four or five things and I'm having the problem right now I've just been so overwhelmed with so much good information that I don't feel like I'm worthy anymore. I guess I don't live I don't raise the level I don't rise to the level of Teaching in Higher Ed standards now anymore.

Bonni: [00:01:35] Oh wow. I like having you on the show and I know people like listening. But I certainly feel the same way because the host. But it's been fun to watch that.

Dave: [00:01:43] By the way in all seriousness I'm sorry for cutting you off there. It really is like it's a little overwhelming. Hosting a podcast and both of us do because you really hear so many great things from so many wonderful experts in the fields we both care about and it is it is overwhelming sometimes just to think like oh my gosh you're so many things I could start just with this one interview much less the entire show.

Bonni: [00:02:05] And for me so inspiring to to get to talk to so many people that care so deeply about students and about facilitating learning and that's just energizing. So it's both intimidating and energizing all at the same time.

Dave: [00:02:16] Agreed.

Bonni: [00:02:17] I was cracking up because someone was emailing me recently talking about how when I do the part of the introduction that says we can have more peace in our lives and be more present for our students.

Bonni: [00:02:27] The individual said that just challenges me every time because I feel like I can't be more present I'm doing so much already. It's a tough one so I was sort of chuckling to myself as I read that we've all been there trust me. Been there.

Bonni: [00:02:40] In fact on Twitter today I saw a chart that I can look up the source for in a second when you start talking but it was Oh no I actually remember at university UMass was the source and it was looking at the number of hours that are spent in service to the university in mentoring students.

Bonni: [00:03:01] And then there was another category and it divided up by white men men of color white women and women of color. Those were not happy numbers for women and women of color. And a lot of hours spent in university service which is not necessarily typically rewarded in the tenure process. As an example and mentor and student .

Dave: [00:03:23] As in women spend more time with them.

Bonni: [00:03:25] Oh yeah.

Dave: [00:03:26] Interesting.

Bonni: [00:03:26] Now it's something to go and check out. In fact I can put a link to it in the show notes.

Dave: [00:03:31] That would be fascinating to look at.

Bonni: [00:03:32] So we're talking today about our approaches to calendar management. And one of the things we want to start with is just that both you and I Dave are pretty pretty central on this. First one in that we want to use the calendar for its intended purpose. For me it only goes on my calendar if it is something that is requiring me to be somewhere or at least to be on a phone.

Bonni: [00:03:57] It's something that is time based and it has to happen at 3:00. I don't block time out for the most part I don't block time out just to think like oh I am really busy so I need to block this out although I do break that rule. I will look at major assignments that are going to come during the school year.

Bonni: [00:04:16] For example I teach the three sections of the same class this fall and they'll have a major industry analysis that they have to complete. That's a lot of grading time. So I will go in and budget in the grading hours I'll actually calculate out approximately how much time will it take me to grade each paper. I have some history.

Bonni: [00:04:36] So I have a pretty good indication and I will put that in because sometimes that means us having someone watch the kids for longer that week or negotiating with you to say what is here. He looks like that same time. But that's that's that's rare. I might do that twice during the semester on two really intense grading times.

Dave: [00:04:55] I have gone different ways on this over the years and I'm generally in pretty much the exact same place you are right now with making sure I put things in the calendar that only have to happen at a certain time unlike you. Occasionally I'll make an exception.

Dave: [00:05:07] There's a large project that I don't necessarily have to do exactly between two and five this afternoon but I know that there's a three hour chunk that I need to block to work on this weekends or pick that time as a time to work on it. So I do think there's sometimes a time and a place for blocking the little more time and there are times I probably should do that more actually. But I agree for philosophically I'm in the same place you are.

Bonni: [00:05:29] The next one is that we want to be able to have calendar tools and technology is so great at letting us do this that help us to see the big picture and I thought it might be helpful to people listening for Dave and I to share our set up although I don't want our windows or our outlook friends to stop listening because I was on outlook for many many years on a PC for many many years and are sad that we're about to share with you is really only going to be varied in one way and that is that we both use the Mac calendar system or at least things that are tied into the Mac calendar system.

Bonni: [00:06:03] But besides that everything that we're going to talk about you could do the same thing in outlook on a PC. And so I already mentioned to you Dave and I both have the Mac calendar as our central calendar and what that lets us do unless when it lets you outlook users if you're connected to the cloud is have that show up on our phones.

Bonni: [00:06:22] Let's it show up on different computers that we might use and also for each other to be able to see each other's calendars. And as far as how we view the calendar I view my calendar right now using something called BusyCal that's a calendaring program that runs on top of the Mac calendar and one of the reasons why I do that is because they recently came out with a piece of software that talked about a couple months ago on the show. Busy contacts.

Bonni: [00:06:49] And those two talked to each other and busy contacts and put a note in there. And I can also set up calendars and see what meetings I've had with people in the past or what meetings I have coming up. I liked the way it integrates my calendar and my contacts. I say it hesitantly because there are some exciting new calendaring tools coming out.

Bonni: [00:07:07] I just I'm not as always aggressive about going to switch to the latest and greatest thing but I know there's some cool stuff out there right now.

Dave: [00:07:14] And can I say something about the big picture before we even get to some of the software is I think one key principle of calendar management is to have one calendar and to not have multiple calendars and multiple places and that's not true. Not every industry or organization allows for that.

Dave: [00:07:33] But I think in higher ed particularly I think it's very possible for people to have one calendar system generally speaking and so I think that that's really important and that used to be a lot more challenging. Ten years ago before we had all these things that sync over now it's so easy to sink like it's

really I think it's there's less of an obstacle to getting over that hump of I've been put everything in one place have one system that syncs across to all my devices and if you're not already doing that.

Dave: [00:08:01] If you've got a written calendar for some things that a digital calendar for other things or digital calendars that are in sync together and talk to the person in your life is tech savvy and get those things all sync up it's worth to spend a day half a day a few hours to get that figured out because then it's just seamless so I would really advise whatever system you're on if thinking through how to do that.

Bonni: [00:08:21] One of the things that so cool I was able to discover recently is being able to pull in my university's exchange server into my Mac calendar. And I don't use that as a central calendar so in this case it's primarily for viewing but it used to be if someone would send me a meeting request I'd have to go into my calendar and look at what that looked like and then have a duplicate calendar event. So it would show up on the outlook exchange that I would never look at and it would show up on mine so that I made sure and actually showed up to that appointment.

Bonni: [00:08:49] But now it's pretty seamless because those invitations they're coming into what looks like my central calendar system but it's actually talking back to all those other outlook users so it is nice to have it as far as I'm concerned. It seems like just one calendar but technically in the background it's pulling in different calendars that I might want to interact with.

Dave: [00:09:07] In the old days he needed to have a master's degree to like figure all that out in technology today. You just need the master's degree to sort it up but once it's set up it's pretty seamless so find someone who knows something about it. Get it set up if you don't already have it set up.

Bonni: [00:09:20] And I have on mine as I mentioned the exchange outlook from my university I have my main calendar on which is stored on my Mac and then as Dave said syncs to all those different places and then I have a piece of software which I've mentioned previously on the show called plan book and plan book is how I plan all of my class sessions and it knows on Monday.

Bonni: [00:09:41] Here's any handouts that are going to be used here is any Power Points. Here's the topic of the day. Here's the activities for the day and then that syncs over to my calendar and it becomes so I don't ever put in. Oh

Monday Wednesday Friday I'm teaching this time this time. That automatically sinks over from that plan book software which is really nice.

Dave: [00:10:02] Yeah and I keep it really simple with my calendar I keep I've tried more advanced things I keep coming back to just the plain old calendar app that's on Mac and I have found that that's really just a great interface for me it's simple. I don't use Planbook or anything. I'm only I teach adjunct so I am only ever teaching one class at a time and there is an accelerated program.

Dave: [00:10:22] So usually it's just four or five class sessions so I haven't found it's worth the time of the investment to have a larger system blesh probably look at Planbook can just use it for the templates I know there's some really cool things out there that you use and I think if you're doing two or three or four classes at a time that's that's like a son in the essential category.

Bonni: [00:10:39] One of the things for being able to see the big picture is that we each can see each other's calendars and we also have it happens to be technically set up on my calendar as a as a on the Mac system you can just set up different calendars and mynahs called kids.

Bonni: [00:10:54] But we have a calendar for the kids and it's a different color than our two calendars are so you can really see if there's any holes in the kid's schedule and also visually be able to see what's happening with them and how many blocks of time are they with other people how many blocks of time are they with us. It's just a nice way when we need to get a big picture.

Bonni: [00:11:14] And then when the weeks are coming up that are going to be crazy we can be more proactive about oh well it's funny now. It's not funny. It saddens me. I don't think I'll be able to go to our son's first day at preschool because that is our first day of teaching where I teach. But that's something we can plan for and that's something that I'm sure we'll have you take lots of pictures and I'll get to do other stuff with his preschool too.

Dave: [00:11:35] But to your point we know that two months in advance and we'll plan around that and we've already got the schedule set for that morning in August. Yeah we're on iCloud as a family so that we can really easily just click on and off to see each other's calendars and things and take things off and send invitations to each other and it is really hard for me to.

Dave: [00:11:53] It's like I'm so used to that now I don't even think of any other way to do it. But if I think about that system not being there like how people did

that 10 years ago before all the calendars thinking and keep family schedules in place like it is it is really hard for me to imagine as a writer family without having access to that information all in one place.

Bonni: [00:12:11] The other thing I do. So far we've been talking about calendars that sync to each other and calendars that we both write to as and making an appointment and read from. So we're doing both things writing and reading the next kinds of calendars. I'm going to share briefly about are the kinds that we subscribe to. I mentioned our son's preschool he's about to start.

Bonni: [00:12:33] They have a pretty nice calendar system on their website that you can go up there and say I won information about this theater events or the musical programs I he grows then he'll have other things that he'll he'll do there but in this case I want the preschool calendar and I can create a custom calendar that I can then subscribe to which is nice.

Bonni: [00:12:55] The other thing I do is I do all of my blogging and podcast planning my editorial calendar is in a project management Web site called a Asana. Really great tool and I can subscribe to my calendar within Asana. I'm able to see in my calendar what episode is coming up what's the number who's the guest if I know if I don't know yet it'll just say the number but not not the guest filled in any blog topics that I have planned out which I'm just barely dog paddling.

Bonni: [00:13:24] If you look on this side margin of the Web site you'll see podcasts podcasts blogs podcasts podcast blog. I've not been quite on my weekly weekly blogs as I like to do but it's summer. It's summer.

Dave: [00:13:35] I have no complaints. The interviews have been amazing.

Bonni: [00:13:39] And the last one I subscribed to is just the U.S. holidays and that just helps me see what's going on as far as holidays.

Dave: [00:13:46] I have the same thing at Dale Carnegie we have subscription or base camp project management system and by the way all these calendars like I think another best practices just to have it set for whatever you need on a daily basis. Like for example my work calendar where all the projects I don't need to see all that in my calendar all day long.

Dave: [00:14:03] So I just have a subscribe but I don't have it viewable but whenever I need to see something I just click on it it shows up everything the

calendar. See what I need to see and then I click off it. So I think that that's helpful if you have short calendars with others or you have subscriptions to calendars.

Dave: [00:14:16] And a lot of organizations do have subscription calendars stuff will see you can literally have it all in one place on your phone or tablet. It's really easy.

Bonni: [00:14:24] Then there's even for people that are into sports or that kind of thing you can actually subscribe to calendars that are your favorite sports team.

Dave: [00:14:31] That's cool.

Bonni: [00:14:31] Course we no examples of this.

Dave: [00:14:35] This is not a family that is heavily sports intensive. If you had not picked up that already.

Bonni: [00:14:39] So the next one is to make it easy for your students and other stakeholders. One of the other great things that technology allows us to do is make it easy for someone else if I have someone who's going to be a guest on the podcast. I use a service called Time Trade.

Bonni: [00:14:56] And I can just send them an invitation link and they click on that link and it tells them a little bit about the podcast interview structure what's it going to be like a very brief introduction and then they can go in and pick exactly what times they want. I have it pretty far out into the future because I have some podcast guests who are very gracious.

Bonni: [00:15:15] But they're working on a book deadline and they might want to schedule two months out. They can schedule as far as make sense in their calendar and then what it'll do is it'll send a confirmation e-mail back to them that has a calendar invite if they just open it up and click say they will go into their own calendar system and then it also goes into mine have blocks of times each week that are available as potential podcast interviews.

Bonni: [00:15:40] If I were to say set a dentist appointment during one of those blocks of time time trade sinks back and forth with my calendar and we'll no longer offer that time to potential podcast guests. The other thing that I love is if a podcast guest signs up for one time even if five minutes later five seconds later someone else tries to sign up for that time it will not offer that time up again.

Dave: [00:16:03] I also use time trade both for students but also even more for podcast guests myself and for professional calls and so I just sudden people to link. And it totally shouldn't to say totally but it cuts out 90 percent of the back and forth on oh this time. Good for you. Let me send you my times my schedule's like it's just that it just seems to me like such a waste of time over email when there are systems like time trade to use so I'd really encourage it. It's very inexpensive for in fact there's a free version of it isn't there where.

Bonni: [00:16:35] There is. It restricts the number of meetings per week that it'll allow you to schedule. Last time I checked I believe it was 5 which wasn't enough for us to have that beefy as upon our. But yeah for some people that might get them.

Dave: [00:16:48] To get you started at least to try it out. I think it's what fifty dollars a year. The one we use which when you think about it over a month in a month for a month isn't really that much fun. Sure cuts out a lot of time every week of scheduling.

Bonni: [00:17:00] Dave mentioned office hours. If you were to go to my website there's an opportunity for students to sign up for office hours there and I have different types of time trade appointments set up because some conversations that students want to have are just really quick so there's a 15 minute office hour appointment. There's a 30 minute there's a 60 minute and then I also have one that's if they want to share a meal we have an on campus cafeteria.

Bonni: [00:17:24] Sometimes it's just nice to get out of the office and have a conversation in a more casual way so we can go and they can actually sketch a time knowing that I'd be available to head over there and share a meal that way.

Dave: [00:17:34] Nice. So you give them the option of like how much time they want to set limits just goes into your calendar automatically.

Bonni: [00:17:41] Yes that is a limitation of time trade at least it took some time for me to adjust other scheduling software that I've used in the past. It asks the person scheduling how much time do you want with this person.

Bonni: [00:17:53] And that was kind of nice that they only wanted 45 minutes than they would just eat at that time. Time trade. It's a block of time that you're the person who sets it up says because it's an hour. A series of our appointments.

Bonni: [00:18:04] So I just have a series of our appointments Lane on top of a series of half an hour appointments. And it's smart enough to figure out that they won't double book those either it's pretty neat.

Dave: [00:18:13] I think it's a really good way to do a students when you have a block of office hours for me for professional things generally. I'm the one who wants to set like how much time it's going to be so I'll just send the person the link for whatever like if I decide I want this to be a 30 minute call I just one of the 30 minute link and if it's sasti or whatever so it works. The great thing is you can use it either way. It's really really cool that way.

Bonni: [00:18:31] The next one is to support collaboration through scheduling tools. So number 3 we were talking about hey set up an appointment with office hours or set an appointment for a podcast interview.

Bonni: [00:18:43] But on this one it's the idea where you have seven other people on your committee that are all supposed to get together. That's crazy because what happens is if you all were on the same calendar system it gets a little easier yes if ever.

Bonni: [00:18:59] If your university requires that everyone uses outlook or requires that everyone uses google calendar then we could go and create an invitation inside of outlook or create an invitation inside of Google calendar and see what people's availability are.

Bonni: [00:19:14] So we have the sense that with academic freedom we've translated that into I can use whatever technology tool I feel like by the way myself. I'm speaking tongue in cheek a bit because I tend to be someone who uses tools that aren't campus wide. That makes it difficult to know when people are available.

Bonni: [00:19:30] There are a couple of services that I've really enjoyed using to get people with varied schedules to find out when the best time might be to schedule a committee meeting. I also use this for students who want to sign up for final presentations and so I'll have a link of their presentations are 15 minutes. Here's a list of 8 15 minute presentations on this day on this day and they can go sign up. The first service is called doodle.

Bonni: [00:19:58] By the way David I'll have a link in the show notes to all of the tools that we're talking about at teachinginhighered.com/55 and doodles just

great I can put in the different times that are available. People can go up there and say yep this works this works this works but this doesn't work. This one might work there's actually a if it has to be this time I can make it happen. And that way you can really tell what people's preferences are.

Dave: [00:20:23] I love doodle. I use it all the time when we're scheduling conference calls at work because even if you have everyone on the same system with schedules you know not everyone puts stuff into digital calendars or even if they do they don't put everything at all like Oh yeah.

Dave: [00:20:37] But I needed to be somewhere else this morning even though my calendar is open. So doodle is nice because it's like OK for this specific time for us to get together. Here's let's all decide at a time saves so much email.

Bonni: [00:20:48] There's another one that I haven't been using quite as long but I like quite a bit because of its user interface and that's called TheBestDay.com. It's similar to doodle. Here's a few different days. Tell me which one is the best one for you or which ones you could make. The reason I probably lean toward the best day or the only reason I would use it over doodle is that it has an extra question that you could ask.

Bonni: [00:21:11] And the example they give on the website is what could you bring to the potluck. Oh so you've got your here's when we could get together for a potluck and then here's what I could bring. So you have an extra question that you want to ask doodles not probably the best tool but the best day will do it for you.

Dave: [00:21:29] Hummus is what I'm bringing.

Bonni: [00:21:30] Good pita chips to or just just hummus.

Dave: [00:21:33] Maybe some avocados person could live on hummus and avocados.

Bonni: [00:21:40] Were different.

Dave: [00:21:41] Yeah I have embraced the Southern California culture fully.

Bonni: [00:21:46] Number 5 review and reflect when we talk about approaches to Callendar as Dave mentioned right up front. There's lots of technology we can use. There are lots of ways of automating things but if we don't really take a

step back and think about and reflect about how we're spending our time that's where we're not maximizing what our calendaring tools could possibly do for us.

Bonni: [00:22:11] Dave and I both do on a pretty decent regular basis what's called a weekly review. And this is drawn from a number of time management theorists. Over the years but one of the famous ones is David Allen in the book Getting Things Done.

Bonni: [00:22:26] And he talks about you actually has a process written now about the Weekly Review and I've got that in my task manager of each one of the things and one of the things in the Weekly Review is looking back to last week and I can go and look at what meetings happened what classes happened and it's just a way for me and my mind to see what I might have missed.

Bonni: [00:22:46] Closing some of those loops I forgot I made about this about our faculty development and I need to make sure and follow up on that I forgot to capture that while we were in the meeting. And then I also look forward to the next two weeks. I have found that the next week isn't quite enough I need to look out two weeks because sometimes that early second week is going to be not enough time if I wait until the next time I do my weekly review and then at my monthly review I also look at next month's calendar.

Bonni: [00:23:14] It's just a nice way for me to be reflecting on how I'm investing my time and is that the best way and it's been in our last podcast the last episode. We talked a little bit about there was a recommendation about an article of if you do a lot of different things just be okay with that and it was sort of the opposite of essentialism.

Bonni: [00:23:35] So it's kind of depends on your personality and what you're striving for but I think Dave and I with two small children at home. We're looking for ways to narrow our focus and do the things that are really important to us and be good about saying no to the things that aren't going to bring life to our family and aren't going to be really serving our true central purpose of where we find meaning in our work.

Dave: [00:23:57] I'ma right there with you on that are much to add. I think the only thing I'd add is I did a podcast maybe about six months ago on that whole process of the weekly reviews I'll see if I checked the link for you because there's some documentation in there that might be helpful for people too.

Bonni: [00:24:09] And we will probably be doing the episode you and I on at some point in the future on that.

Dave: [00:24:14] Very good. Excellent.

Bonni: [00:24:15] Well that would be. I'd love to put it in the weekly in the Weekly Review. I'd love to put it in the show notes for anyone who wants to get extra credit points for that. I say sarcastically.

Bonni: [00:24:24] This is the point in the show where we talk about recommendations and I very rarely do this is to recommend something I haven't actually used myself. So instead I'm going to recommend that you read about other people's experiences with this new software tool.

Bonni: [00:24:40] It's called Sunrise and Sunrise is yet another countering viewing system that will that will display your calendars in different ways. But it comes with a custom keyboard on your phone. And so what happens is you download this custom keyboard which is called Sunrise meat and if you wanted to set up a time to meet with someone you just click on this little keyboard it pulls up your calendar and you say we could meet here here or here or this time this time or this time.

Bonni: [00:25:09] And then they get to pick which one they want and then it sends an invitation to both of your calendars or in your case it goes right into your calendar. I have not used it. It's been quite intriguing but I'm forcing myself to hold back because again trying not to do too many technology things at the same time. But I have included in the show notes a link to a fast company article and also the chronicle the proff hacker blog.

Bonni: [00:25:33] They wrote about the tool as well I'd suggest that you check out both those links watch the video. It's pretty impressive and might be a good tool for you to incorporate into your calendar management.

Dave: [00:25:43] Interesting. I will check it out. Speaking of calendars my recommendation is an app called fantastical which is for the iPhone and iPad and you can also get a version now on the Mac. There's a full calendar version. I actually am not. Everyone loves the mac version of the calendar and I'm just not a big fan of it. I don't know I'm just used to clicking certain ways that the Mac can I keep coming back to the standard Mac calendar program.

Dave: [00:26:10] But on iOS if you got your iPhone and you're working off that during the day which of times I am really great thing about pant testicles are so many different ways you can view calendars including just didn't list it. It's hard to explain but it's a lot better than just the builtin 1 on the iPhone or the iPad and the other thing that it's really good at is quick entry. So you can dictate to it or you can just type like OK meeting Thursday at 1:00 and you can type that into the field and books it. I mean it's really great with understanding just just everyday language and putting an end. And it just looks at it.

Dave: [00:26:46] It's amazing. So I would recommend fantastical for the iPhone the iPad if you're either using either of those devices. I think you'll like it.

Bonni: [00:26:55] Dave before we all start tapping our toes with the closing music is there anything else you want to say about approaches to calendar management. Before we close.

Dave: [00:27:03] I think the biggest thing is having everything in one place. So whether even if it's paper and pencil. It's more about how you're using your system versus what the system is. So have it all in one place and use the technology tools if you're on technology to get things thinking and discipline yourself to do it. And if you do that I think you're well ahead of the game of a lot of people.

Dave: [00:27:24] Thanks once again to Dave Stachowiak for joining me on today's show being recorded on a lovely Sunday afternoon.

Dave: [00:27:33] Speaking of weekly reviews, we are going to go through our weekly reviews in a bit.

Dave: [00:27:36] Absolutely. And things were listening that you have any feedback for the show you can do that at teachinginhighered.com/feedback. As always if you have not subscribe to the Weekly Review where you get the all the notes and links that Dave and I talked about and also an article most weeks on teaching or productivity that is at teachinginhighered.com/subscribe. Thanks so much for listening and I'll see you next time.

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