



On Time, On Task, In Control: Using Technology to Support Planning & Time Management

Arizona Fifteenth Annual Transition Conference
August 24, 2015 - Scottsdale, AZ

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Who is Shelley, and what is TechPotential?

Technology for learning & executive function challenges

- Certified AT Professional (ATP), Rehabilitation Eng'g Technologist (RET)
- 28 years AT experience

Former director of assistive technology at Stanford

- Helped create Schwab Learning Center at Stanford (for LD & ADHD)

Assistive technology services throughout SanFran Bay Area

- AT Assessment, Training, Support, Implementation
- Professional development for schools
- Classes & workshops
- Online consulting and tech assistance

TechPotential short for "Technology to Unlock Potential"

- My philosophy on "why use technology"

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Executive Functioning Challenges

Executive Functions: mental processes required to manage oneself and one's resources to achieve a goal

- Take place in frontal lobe of brain
- Needed to function independently

"Producing challenges" vs. "learning challenges"

Not related to intelligence, but to how you use intellect

Multiple functions are in play

- Solutions depend on specific executive function challenge, task, and environment (context)

EF challenges can produce great frustration and anxiety

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Popular Executive Function analogies

- CEO of a company**
 - Better analogy: executive management team
- Orchestra conductor**
 - Actually multiple conductors
- Coaching staff of football team**
 - Multiple specialized coaches
 - Analyze situation, strategize, execute plan, evaluate, revise

What are the "Functions"?

Activation	• Get started, maintain effort, finish
Attention	• Direct attention and shift focus
Working Memory & Retrieval	• Mentally hold and manipulate info while completing task (interim steps, rules) • Retrieve info from memory
Organization	• Organize materials, info, and workspace
Planning	• Prioritize & sequence actions to achieve goal
Sense of Time	• Estimate time, awareness of time passage
Cognitive Flexibility	• Change view or adapt approach as needed to fit circumstances (schedule, problem-solving)
Self-Regulation	• Inhibition, impulse control, emotional control
Self-Monitoring	• Evaluate self, adjust behaviors as needed

Popular Student Accommodation: PATASEF

- Parents And Teachers As Surrogate Executive Functions
- Common PATASEF features:
- Did you remember to...
 - Do you have your...
 - Did you turn in the...
 - Do you have everything you need to do...
 - Aren't you supposed to meet with...
 - You haven't started your month-long project? It's due tomorrow!
- Pros:
- Usually personalized to your needs, semi-reliable
- Cons:
- (please feel free to make your own long list)

PDA = Personal Digital Assistant



Basic idea: technology as digital secretary

- › PDA term coined by Apple 1993 (Newton)
- › Popularized by Palm late 90's (Pilot, et al.)
- › Refined by Apple 2006 (iPhone)

Our goal: replace parents & teachers with PDA-like tools

- › Greater independence
- › Less nagging
- › Reduced frustration and anxiety
- › Everybody's happier!

Good News and Bad News

Bad news:

- › Technology alone cannot fix time, attention, organization, and other executive function problems

Good news:

- › Coupled with proven and thoughtfully-selected strategies, technology can greatly improve performance and productivity

Goal:

- › Use technology to support or enhance strategies



Basic Executive Functioning Supports

- › **Externalize!** – out of head, into “real world”
- › Make visual or tangible
- › Break into smaller manageable parts
- › Impose structure, framework, routine
- › Be explicit – step-by-step vs. “clean your room”
- › Provide strategies & models, all taught by adults
- › Remove supports gradually as strategies and routines are internalized
- › Recognize and understand how you think, process, respond (metacognitive)

Need tools to support each part of process

Parts of an effective time & task management system

- Basic organizational structure - define a place for everything
- Quick and easy way to capture information in the moment
- Dedicated daily planning time
- Master planner - track all current tasks and status (overview)
- Planning tool to break down large tasks and projects into manageable chunks
- Make time real, tangible - not abstract concept
- Alerts, reminders – “forget with confidence”
- Buy-in: the belief that this is worth the effort

Not all students need all of these parts

- E.g., younger students may only need basic planner for simple daily assignments, timer to increase time awareness



Organization: A Place for Everything

Without designated “place” for materials or info, they won’t be organized and won’t be findable

- 6-Second Rule: If it can’t be placed in 6 seconds, it likely won’t be

Need pre-defined places for:

- Action items
- Appointments
- Reference info (for future use)
- Papers
- Fleeting thoughts and ideas
- Materials needed for active assignment or project

If you find you need a “to be filed” folder or a “miscellaneous” box, you need to define a new “place”



Inbox – collect “stuff” as it enters your world



Inbox is a temporary holding place for “stuff” to process

At a minimum:

- Email inbox
- Physical inbox or folders for papers, etc.
- Personal device or notebook for capturing info in the moment

Example personal capture devices

- Reminders app on iPhone
- Voice memo app
- Camera (e.g., assignment on whiteboard)
- Small paper notebook (digital tech not necessary - just capture the info)



Dedicated daily planning time

“Daily” and “Dedicated” - very important!

Process “stuff” in inbox - 3 possibilities:

- Needed for current task => Move to appropriate “place”
- Save for reference later? => Move to appropriate long-term “place”
- Don't need => Toss it!

Decide when to act on tasks

- Can I do it in 2 minutes or less? => Do it!
- Can I do it in one sitting? => Decide when, how much time needed
- Do I need to complete this in parts? => Break into manageable chunks (see later)

Review status of current tasks

- Need to make changes?

Master planner - digital calendars, to-do apps



Advantages over paper system

- Alarms, alerts
- Sync between all devices - computer, mobile, Web-based
- Access anywhere - more likely to be used

Tag & filter tasks by various criteria

- Tag tasks with a context (e.g., calls, at computer, 5-minutes, creative mood, person involved, location, class, project)
- Filter by “what do I do in this context?”
- Show only tasks to be done “here & now”
- Limits info overload so “to-do” list doesn't become a “not-done” list
- Tackling like-tasks together increases efficiency, less overwhelming

Getting from “To-Do” to “Done”

“To-Do” lists and calendars typically show what needs to be done and when, but not how to...

- Manage workflow
- Prioritize
- Use time efficiently

Planning use of time

- “Due” dates vs. “Do” dates
- Setting priorities: How long will it take? vs. How much time am I willing to devote to it? (i.e., how important is it?)

Other ways to look at task completion:

- Visual task board (Kanban board)
- Task management apps (filter by topic, due date, class, etc.)
- Visual task management apps (Droptask, Trello)



RescueTime

Software "automagically" tracks:

- Time spent on websites
- Time spent in applications

Bird's-eye view of time usage

- User ranks apps and websites as productive or distracting
- Watches usage, sends alerts

Benefits:

- Increase awareness of how time spent
- Internalize good time management skills



Alerts and Reminders

"Forget with confidence"

- Tell "digital secretary" when/where to remind you
- Idea: checklists for transition times (e.g., before leaving school, upon arriving at work)
- Idea: Pebble Watch linked to iPhone, Android reminders (discreet vibrating alert, message)

Remind me WHEN

- Specific day and time (alarms)
- In X minutes or hours (countdown timer)
- At fixed or random intervals (alert to stay on task) e.g., WatchMinder (discreet vibrating alert)

Remind me WHERE

- Location-specific reminders (grocery store, Home Depot) - uses device's GPS system

For more information & other AT resources...

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For more info on technology described herein, visit the AT Toolbox:

www.TechPotential.net/ATtoolbox
