

Transcript - Francesco Dimitri - Should you be more curious about how you manage your time?

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Ross D 00:07

Hello, you're listening to the Future Talent Learning podcast developed to help you build your leadership and management skills. I'm Ross Dickey.

Nathalie 00:14

And I'm Nathalie Nahai.

Ross D 00:15

So this week we're asking if you should be more curious about how you manage your time. Whether it comes to applying the next five years of your career or managing the next eight hours of your working day, there are plenty of pre-packaged tools and techniques that promise to help us achieve our goals and get on top of our to-do lists.

Ross D 00:29

But is the practice of time management all that it claims to be? Or is the idea that we can truly manage our time just a story we tell ourselves to medicate our anxiety and maintain an illusion of control?

Ross D 00:40

Here with us to answer these questions we're joined by Francesco Dimitri, business trainer, consultant and award-winning author. Hello Francesco, how's it going?

Francesco 00:49

Hi guys, very well, thank you.

Ross D 00:51

Yeah, it's great to have you here. So just to get us started, I think many of us feel constantly busy. I think especially over the course of lockdown, I think many of us felt like we're overwhelmed and working additional hours. And for some people, the solution to that is time management techniques. But is it really possible for us to manage our time, Francesco? What are your thoughts on that?

Francesco 01:18

I don't think so, I think that metaphor we're starting from is deeply flawed. Because if you consider time as something to manage, it's almost as if time were an enemy or a resource to plunder. So we have this thing, we need to make the most of it, we need to use this resource as much as we can, and as much as we can.

Francesco 01:39

But if we step back a little, we realise that time is literally all that we have. At some point, we are going to die. And I hope the point is going to be far in the future, but it's never as far in the future as we would like to.

Francesco 01:52

So everything we are, everything we have is literally in time. So we need to think about our time differently, rather than considering it just something that we use until it's exhausted. And if we keep a mindset by which time needs to be managed, this is exactly what we are doing.

Francesco 02:10

We're thinking of something that we need to use until we exhaust it.

Ross D 02:14

I was thinking about this in preparation for this podcast and a lot of the articles you'll see around time management, talk about time management in terms of hacks, as if it's something that you are sort of, you're breaking the natural flow of something and finding ways to get around this sort of, this idea that is sort of fixed of time.

Ross D 02:34

And it's like, how can we, what techniques can we use to sort of get more out of the day than is natural? Or, you know, that sort of thing. I think it's interesting.

Nathalie 02:43

And also, I think there's this aspect of when we talk about time management, we're talking about small pockets of time. So dividing time into increasingly tiny chunks, so whether it's days, minutes, hours.

Nathalie 02:53

And it seems to me that one of the things that gets lost is long time, deep time, this idea of how do these things that we're trying to manage on a daily basis fit into or connect with the longer arc of time of our lives, of generations, of ecological or geographical time.

Nathalie 03:10

I kind of wonder what your thoughts are on that as well, like how we conceive of time in these smaller chunks, what does it do to our perception of life?

Francesco 03:19

I think that's very interesting in storytelling, we know that we always have to consider the story as a whole, the story we're telling as a whole, like writing a role or a script, but also we have to consider what's going on at the level of the paragraph or at the level of the page.

Francesco 03:32

In our life, especially when it comes to time management, we tend to consider what's going on at the level of the page, at the level of the paragraph, but we tend to forget what's going on at the level of the story, which is not only our story, but it is the story of our planet.

Francesco 03:43

When I say that we should stop considering time as a resource to plunder, it's exactly the same thing we do with our planet as a whole. We are talking about climate crisis a lot lately, but climate crisis is something that stems exactly from the same perspective, that we can use resources, everything is a resource to use, and we can use those resources until we consume them.

Francesco 04:06

It is a mindset change that we actually need, we need to consider time, the planet, as something which actually is us. It's not external to us, it's not another entity, but it's just us. So time is how we exist in the world, all long term, and how we can leave something to generations after us.

Francesco 04:26

If we start considering it this way, we start to realise it's not just a matter of managing time, but of making friends with time.

Ross D 04:35

I love that idea. I think what's interesting is that, thinking of time not as a resource to plunder sounds very appealing, but we do have this fixed number of hours in a day, and particularly in a sort of organisational business context.

Ross D 04:52

We're often trying to think of how much we can produce or what we can do with that time. And organisations naturally want to optimize that. So how do you sort of reconcile those two ideas? I want to believe what you're advocating, but I'm just not sure that it's compatible with modern business.

Francesco 05:12

Well, they're actually one and the same. Seneca said that life isn't short, that we make it short, by wasting a lot of time on things which have no real meaning to us. So in a business context, when we talk about productivity, we should always wonder what kind of productivity are we talking about?

Francesco 05:29

What are we actually producing? If it's about producing just another PowerPoint presentation, which is exactly the same as a lot of PowerPoint presentations produced so far, then yes, maybe some time management tools might help us.

Francesco 05:45

And of course, we are all in this situation every now and again in our life. So when we are in this situation, we might actually

find these tools useful. But especially at senior levels, what organisations really want is people who are able to think. Is people who are able to solve problems, work through crisis, and think long term as well. Being able to secure a long term thriving for their organisation. If that's the mindset that we are trying to build, again, it's much more productive to think in terms of doing something with time rather than using time to do something.

Francesco 06:23

Because it will make us more creative, it will make us less anxious and more effective when it comes to dealing with crisis, such as COVID-19, for example.

Ross D 06:34

Yeah, so to Nathalie's point, I guess one of the flaws of time management techniques or like this, this notion of time management is that it focuses very much on the short term or this idea that we can truly like make a, like a five year career plan, but doesn't account for things like global pandemics or unforeseen financial crises or any of these sorts of things.

Francesco 06:58

Time management techniques have diminishing returns. I'm sure that we've all been there. You start using a new technique, you start using the Pomodoro technique to mention one which I personally like.

Francesco 07:08

So I have nothing against techniques per se. It works marvelously. We are convert. We try to convert our friends. We preach about how great this technique is. A year down the line, it doesn't work for us anymore and we feel slightly guilty because we have been preaching it to our friends and we can't really admit we're not using it anymore or at least we're not using it successfully.

Francesco 07:28

So I'm sure that we've all been there at some point in our life. And that's because the technique is something by its own nature quite rigid and strict, which time is not. So on the one hand, it might be useful for specific project to use a specific technique or for a certain time in our life.

Francesco 07:45

But if we are talking about long-term plans, if we are talking about career, if we are thinking in terms of creativity, if we are thinking in terms of solving problems or living through problems like global pandemic, then another approach is needed.

Francesco 07:58

And it is an approach which doesn't actually separate our work from our life, but think holistically about the way we live and the way we work.

Nathalie 08:10

I'm curious on that point then, we're thinking about time as something which quantifies our lived experience. So the idea is that we have a certain number of hours, a certain number of summers left to live, a certain number of years, for instance.

Nathalie 08:22

And yet we know that if we are really immersed in something which is profoundly engaging, where we're intrinsically motivated and we're in that sense of flow, that the perception, the subjective experience of time can really change depending on our experience of the task at hand or the company that we're in.

Nathalie 08:40

So I wonder if there's also something there about time perception as well as time management and how we can make sure that we are experiencing the most out of the time that we have. Is there something, because I'm kind of curious, and I think that there's something about your approach, Francesco, that speaks to that.

Nathalie 08:58

So yeah, what about bringing in that sense of flow and the quality of time and changing how we perceive it, how that relates, how so, then in an organisational context.

Francesco 09:08

I think that's key. When we say we have a limited amount of time, I want to move back to that because I think it's quite interesting. It is simply not true. I mean, quantitatively, yes, of course we are going to have a limited amount of summers left

to live.

Francesco 09:24

If you think back to your past, there have been single nights or single days or single hours which have been much more meaningful, much more important, even career-wise than entire months and entire years, sometimes of our life.

Francesco 09:37

And although we can't engineer moments like that, we can't just decide to have them on tap, we can build a working routine which will leave the door open to more moments like that, to more times like that.

Francesco 09:50

And one of the ways in which we do that is exactly trying to leave the world open to the state of flow that you mentioned earlier. One of the things we should really do is stop complaining about what we do, realise that there are dark aspects to our life and to our work, realise that sometimes we are stuck in routines we don't exactly like.

Francesco 10:14

So we realise that we're not denying the darkness in our working life. At the same time though, we might find it helpful to also focus on what's particularly nice about what we are doing right now, what is interesting, what piques our curiosity, or what makes us at least reasonably happy to go back to work.

Francesco 10:34

We will find out that except for situations which are just excessive, in which case we probably should change our position or career or organisations, in most cases there are things which actually make us curious and make us engaged.

Francesco 10:50

We could start by focusing on them and let everything else proceed from there. But it is a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative approach. It is about finding what's interesting about what we are doing rather than just deciding we are going to sacrifice a part of our time, a part of our life to this thankless task so that we can go on with the rest of our life, which we actually like.

Ross D 11:14

Yeah, I mean, it's like part of the appeal of this like idea of the four hour work week is that you it sort of presupposes that you hate what you do at work and that you want to spend as little time doing it as possible so that you can do what you enjoy in life, which is actually not work.

Ross D 11:33

But if you're doing something that makes you curious and that you find inherently enjoyable, then as Nathalie was saying, that sort of notion of time is this fixed thing, you experience it differently depending on what it is you're doing.

Ross D 11:46

And so if work was more fulfilling, perhaps we wouldn't want to be constantly trying to reduce the time I spend doing it.

Francesco 11:54

Exactly what I don't like the four hours week, exactly for this reason. Because I think it takes for granted the work is a thankless grind. So, and also it frankly doesn't really work that way nobody can really work four hours a week.

Francesco 12:09

It's a different approach we need. I call it an artist approach. Potomai Job is writing novels, writing scripts, writing stories. If you talk to any person working in the arts, it's not a capital letter art.

Francesco 12:22

I hope that's clear enough. If you talk to anyone working in the arts, you will find that they are deeply engaged with what they do. What they do though, what we do though, is not always fun. When you're writing a novel, there are moments which are really frustrating, which are sometimes emotionally dreadful and emotionally draining as well.

Francesco 12:42

But we like what we are doing. We like the process in general. We like the process holistically. Again, to get back to a world I was using earlier on. So we don't hide from ourselves the thanklessness of the task sometimes, but we do enjoy the task.

Francesco 12:58

And we don't need to make a huge difference between work and life. Actually, we let our work feed our life and we let our life feed our work. And that too, this isn't possible with all jobs. Of course, if you are a Deliveroo driver, it's probably really hard to find that.

Francesco 13:15

But everyone who is in a professional career can indeed cultivate an approach like that to their work, which is far more satisfying, both in terms of success. So what we define success in the business world, so both in terms of career, that's in terms of personal meaning and personal satisfaction and mental health.

Francesco 13:33

It's much more helpful that rather than think, okay, my work is a necessary evil. Let's try to make it as short as possible so that I can get on with everything else I like. Again, we are trying not to treat our time as a resource to be plundered, but we're trying to make friends with our time.

Ross D 13:54

I'd like to come back to, you mentioned the Pomodoro technique. One of my colleagues uses that fairly, I don't know if she uses it rigidly, but she swears by it. I, for a long time, have been following getting things done, but I think to your point, I have noticed myself slipping a little bit in the practice of it, and I have felt a bit guilty about letting things slide.

Ross D 14:16

What you're saying makes me feel a lot better about it. I think there are some things there that are really useful. Dave Allen's, in *Getting Things Done*, one of the things is the two-minute rule. Basically, if there's a small task that will take you two minutes or less, something like that, you should just go ahead and do it because actually the anxiety that will cause you to leave this and just have it piling up in your to-do list is greater than the cost of the distraction of just dealing with it straight away.

Ross D 14:44

The trouble with that though is that if you are trying to do work that requires a deep level of concentration and focus, if you're responding to two-minute requests every half an hour or something, it's very difficult to focus on that.

Ross D 14:56

There needs to be some kind of flexibility in that. I think what you're suggesting is that there is a place for these techniques, but they shouldn't be seen as a strict law that you need to follow in all circumstances.

Francesco 15:09

Absolutely, it's like martial arts, you know, you train the technique when you're training in martial arts, you train the technique, but when it comes to the actual fight, to the actual, I mean, sport fight, you just fight.

Francesco 15:21

You don't, and you use more or less what's kind of useful at that time and at the moment, what really matters is that you have built an understanding of how you are supposed to stand under the time and how you're supposed to fight.

Francesco 15:34

Same goes with, with the management techniques. I'm not saying they're useless. Some of them can be incredibly helpful, but they are not what is going to make the difference. They're going to help us deal with specific tasks, specific times of our life.

Francesco 15:47

But if we really want to have a better work life, again, but a better career and a healthier one, which on the one hand, we are advancing, on the other hand, we are having a better experience and more joyful experience of work.

Francesco 16:01

We need to rethink the way we deal with our time and time management techniques can't help us do that.

Nathalie 16:09

So it sounds like there's quite a deep mindset shift that needs to happen to kind of unhook ourselves from this less helpful methodology and to try and rethink about the relationship we want to cultivate with time and then how to enact that in our

lives.

Nathalie 16:22

So do you have any approaches or strategies that you engage with when you catch yourself perhaps slipping into old habits that you can go, ah, hang on, I've gone down the time management route, let's switch to something else.

Nathalie 16:34

Is there a way that you unhook yourself and an approach that you take to help cultivate that?

Francesco 16:39

There is one question I ask myself when I'm in this situation, which is what is that's strange about this? Because when you look at a situation, even at the more humdrum work situation you are in, there's always something slightly off.

Francesco 16:54

There's always something slightly strange. There's a person whose motivations you can't really grasp. There is a part of yourself which is not quite acting as usual. There is something strange going on with administration.

Francesco 17:06

There is always a particular that you can focus on. If you start focusing on that particular, you might find interesting things unravel from that. If you look for what's strange, for what's unusual, even in the most mundane task, you start realizing that it is not as mundane after all.

Francesco 17:25

And again, there are degrees to this. I'm not saying that by focusing on what's strange and unusual, you will suddenly live in a world in which everything is exciting, new and fresh.

Ross D 17:36

So excited to do my expenses claim.

Francesco 17:38

It's not like that. But when you're able to find, and there's always one, there's always at least one, when you're able to find the grain of strangeness in the mundane, then you are activating the more creative parts of your mind.

Francesco 17:55

Then you are activating the parts of your mind which are really engaging with the problem and which really have a chance to solve it in a way which is even marginally more brilliant than they would if you were just focusing on tasks in a strictly rational way.

Ross D 18:11

You may not have one immediately to hand, but do you have an example of a time that this has happened to you recently where you've been doing something that's been sort of fairly mundane and you've found something you focused on something that's unusual or, you know, followed your curiosity around that.

Francesco 18:26

Accounts, I'm terrible at accounting. It's really, really, really bad at accounting. I was doing my accounts not long ago and I was trying to understand if I could spot some patterns of expense. If my expenses could tell me something about my emotional state at that time.

Francesco 18:50

So for example, do I end up buying more books when I'm bored or do I end up buying more books when I remember being excited, for example, stuff like that. And that made my experience of doing the accounts at least bearable.

Francesco 19:05

But also, it made me understand a few things about the way in which I work as a human being, which might turn out really helpful next time I deal with a client.

Nathalie 19:17

How do you not get sidetracked? Because if I have to rein my mind in from getting completely diverted down these fascinating but perhaps less useful rabbit holes, if I was going to do that, I'd end up just... I don't think I'd be able to bring my

mind back to the task.

Francesco 19:31

Because they're actually quite useful. The point is that you're looking for what strange in the task you're doing, in the thing you're doing. So for example, to get back to the example of expense patterns, if you start looking for expense patterns you have to look at your accounts because it's only there that you will find your patterns, that you will have a chance to find your patterns.

Francesco 19:54

So it's not about finding any grain of strangeness and interest, it is about finding what is strange and interesting, specifically about the task at hand. That's why you become better at solving the problem itself rather than just going away with fairies.

Ross D 20:13

I think I would be horrified if I actually poured over my expenses and details on how much money I spent on coffee each year, I think would be absolutely mortifying. You promote this idea of messing up.

Ross D 20:27

Would you be able to explain what you mean by that and what it looks like in practice?

Francesco 20:33

When we look at time management techniques, especially some books and some specific techniques, they make it look as if you were managing your time and being friends with your time in the terms I'm trying to use, is a matter of purely rational choice.

Francesco 20:49

You do things, you tidy up your life and good things will happen to you. That's absolute bullshit. You can tidy up your life as much as you can, but at some point something completely unforeseen will come your way.

Francesco 21:04

And you will have duly budgeted for the unforeseen, so you will have a time budget for the unforeseen as well, but something happened which you didn't budget for. So it doesn't matter how rational you are, the irrational is always behind the door, especially in the business world, especially in the world of organisations.

Francesco 21:22

As we well know, again, COVID-19, no one was, I mean, a lot of people were expecting that, but in practice, in the world of organisations, no one was expecting that. We need to leave space for mistakes.

Francesco 21:39

We need to leave space for disorder. We need to leave space for serendipity. Penicillin wasn't discovered through a strictly rational process. It was discovered because one guy went on holidays, he came back and there was some mold on his petri dish.

Francesco 21:56

That's how he discovered penicillin. For example, just to make it practical, there is a lot of talking about the importance of blocking time. And there are a lot of people who say, if you just block time very diligently in your agenda, you are going to be able to get more done.

Francesco 22:14

I'm not sure any human being ever actually...

Ross D 22:19

Yeah, it's like sorry to interrupt, but like Microsoft prompts me to set aside 8am to 9am as focus time. This is the time I'm going to be creative or something. Yeah, it doesn't seem to really work like that.

Francesco 22:37

It's not how normal human beings actually work. It's a purely theoretical construct of the way human beings work. It's a bit like classic economy, you know, Keynesian economies. It's very theoretical, but in practice it's not how we work as human beings.

Francesco 22:53

In practice sometimes your most creative tasks are solved by night in the shower. In practice sometimes you need to let the time you're located on one task bleed in the time you're located to another task, because you are almost there and if you push a little bit more you will get things done, actually.

Francesco 23:11

And that means that the other task is going to be a problem. Yes it is, it's a problem for another day and you're going to solve that when the time comes. But we need to keep this kind of adaptability in our schedule and I'm not saying again that we shouldn't try and block time, I'm not saying that we shouldn't try and create diaries.

Francesco 23:31

Of course there is a usefulness to a well-organised agenda. But what happens too many times, what happens too often, what I've seen happening with a lot of my clients, is that you block time on your agenda, you create a neatly defined agenda.

Francesco 23:45

Then the real world comes your way. The agenda goes bust because that's what it does all the time and on top of everything else you feel guilty and stupid because you weren't able to manage your time as you were supposed to do as all the successful people out there do blah blah blah so on and so forth.

Francesco 24:02

If you look at actually successful people you will see that they were messing up a lot, even more probably than is healthy.

Nathalie 24:10

So when you say messing up, what do you mean by that? Because I'm kind of curious, because all the things you're describing, like blocking out time and then kicking yourself when you haven't managed it, because other priorities come in and the chaos of life seems to...

Nathalie 24:20

What is it with the messing up? Is it like failing to block out and then keep contained the time that you thought that you would keep for yourself or is it something else? Yeah.

Francesco 24:29

Yeah, it's definitely part of it. If a task you're working on is the time you had allocated for one task, it's bleeding on the other task, let it bleed. If you can't allocate a specific time for a task, but you know, because you know yourself somehow that your mind is going to work on that, then don't block any time for the task and let your mind work on that.

Francesco 24:48

Be disordered, at least to a degree, of course. I'm not advocating for total chaos, because total chaos doesn't get things done. But leave a fair amount of space for chaos in both your agenda and in your personal life as well.

Francesco 25:04

If you try to build a perfectly respectable life in which you are very orderly, you just have the right food, you always exercise so that your brain is peak performance, so on and so forth, you will probably turn into Mark Zuckerberg.

Francesco 25:21

Really scary. I don't want to sound bad, but he looks really scared. You don't want to be that.

Nathalie 25:32

Yeah.

Ross D 25:34

I love that idea. And what you're saying in many ways is music to my ears. Um, I think part of the reason that I started using time management techniques was not so much to manage. It wasn't so much for my own sake, but for others' sake, to working with colleagues, they would ask me to do things in a phone call, you know, at the end of a phone call, they'd say, you know, could you, I don't know, write this article or review this thing for me before, you know, before we speak again.

Ross D 25:59

And I noticed that just as it became busier and busier, I would start to forget things and let things slip. And so I think part of

the reason that I find time management techniques useful to an extent is not so much for my own sake.

Ross D 26:11

I think I often do let tasks bleed into the other, possibly to my detriment, but, um, I think it's more about, sorry, I used to do this, for example, as a way of keeping track of, um, you know, Francesco asked me to, to review this, this book, um, I'll add it to the to do list and make sure that I actually do it.

Ross D 26:30

So I'm not then letting you down. So I guess there's like a balance between allowing space for messing up, both in your professional and personal life, but then also not messing up so much that it starts to affect others.

Francesco 26:43

Absolutely, this is why I'm not advocating for total chaos, because if we were living on our own, working on our own, probably total chaos would be better, actually. But we live in society. And again, there was something that Seneca said, and Seneca said that all powerful men, because of course in his own time, all powerful people were men, or powerful men are sometimes are so obsessed with problems coming from others that they don't have much time left for themselves.

Francesco 27:10

Today, we are all like powerful men in Seneca's days, even when we're not that powerful, we still have this problem that we have to deal with the requests of a thousand different people. The power of saying no is quite big.

Francesco 27:26

So sometimes it's war to say, sorry, no, I can't write this review right now. It's just not my problem right now, not in a selfish way. It's just something I can't allow to happen right now. Sometimes we have to say yes.

Francesco 27:39

And in the case, a level of order does help, but we need to keep that balance. Otherwise, we're going to end up doing perfectly competent book reviews, writing perfectly competent PowerPoint presentations, but we will never have time to create something truly extraordinary, to create something truly good and truly game changing for our company and for ourselves.

Francesco 28:03

It's a matter of finding the balance there.

Nathalie 28:06

So when we're thinking about creating the extraordinary, I think some of the things that come to my mind are concepts of perseverance, of being able to doggedly and steadfastly hold a vision of what you want to create, at least in some form, and then dedicate time to that quality time to it.

Nathalie 28:23

What are some of the ways in which you create the conditions for that to happen? Are there certain things like maybe it could be like a ritual you engage in or a specific time of day that you know is just sacred for that specific kind of flow state that you would like to help encourage?

Nathalie 28:40

Yeah, are there certain things that you use or frames of reference that you use that help to block out that time or period so that you can create something truly exceptional?

Francesco 28:52

In my experience repetition and ritual help immensely. So it's not about finding a specific hour, it's not like saying that if you wake up every morning at six and you whip some good ideas out before six thirty, you know, you're going to be, but find a time that realistically you can keep and keep it.

Francesco 29:13

Even if it's only a matter of two hours a week, even if it's only a matter of one hour a week, even if it's only a matter of half hour a week, just keep that time. There is a suggestion I always give to people who want to write books and say, just, you know, just block some time and this is where blocking comes for writing and write.

Francesco 29:29

The problem becomes when you start being obsessed with that, when you realise that if you are missing that time, then you start thinking you don't really stand a chance. You start thinking that you're doing things wrong and your enthusiasm, fizzles out.

Francesco 29:46

So by all means, the power of repetition is strong. So do create routines in your agenda, but be ready to change and discard them or just ignore them sometimes when it is necessary. I'd like to add that this is something I actually practice.

Francesco 30:03

I am quite busy, I live between two different countries. I have a good career as an overlist, I have a good career as a business consultant, I work in two different languages. I do lots of things with my time.

Francesco 30:16

I don't just sit idly and think about Seneca and all the philosophers. It's quite practical advice, the advice I'm giving. We were talking about ritual as well. I think ritual is incredibly important.

Francesco 30:31

Ritual can be as small as lighting a candle. I light an incense stick every morning. I am new age, but only when I'm writing a novel, only when I'm working on a novel. If I'm working on something different, writing something different or working with some client or working on some training, I will either light an incense burner, which has a different scent or a candle, which has a still different scent.

Francesco 30:57

So I have created different scents, I have conditioned my mind to react differently to different scents. I could never say this is what works, because some people would find the entire thing horribly cheesy and frankly ridiculous.

Francesco 31:13

And if that's your case, then go with it. It's about finding something that works for us. There are people I know who start their day by repeating a mantra. And it works for them. I would feel ridiculous if they were standing at my desk and repeat a mantra.

Francesco 31:31

But find a small ritual which creates, marks a gate, so to speak, creates a gate between the rest of your life and the time of your life in which you really need to focus. That helps a lot. Whatever the ritual is, it doesn't really matter.

Ross D 31:46

Great! I think that's a good point to move on to our wrap up. So Nathalie, what will you be taking from this conversation and applying in your life this week?

Nathalie 31:59

I think I really like what Francesco said that we do not have a limited amount of time. So in fact, like time stretches or our perception of time stretches. So I'll be looking for opportunities this week to leave the door open to that state of flow that we were discussing.

Nathalie 32:12

Ross, how about you?

Ross D 32:14

Yeah, I'm reflecting on what Francesco said about completing tasks in the moment. I think we're all slightly guilty of jumping from task to task to task and then they mount up. So I think I'll be thinking about completing the task I'm working on and letting other tasks be a problem for later.

Ross D 32:27

It's probably going to be quite difficult, but I will give it a go. Now let's turn to our regular feature one thing I learned this week. Nathalie, would you like to get us started?

Nathalie 32:42

Sure, so mine's a bit nerdy. I was looking into flight decarbonisation processes that actually do what they say and because I'm going to be travelling to London. And I found a really cool company which I'd heard of before but didn't realise it offered the service.

Nathalie 32:59

It's Climeworks, which is a Zurich founded but based in Iceland, decarbonisation company. And I found out that actually to go to London it's quite expensive. It costs something like £165.30 to decarbonise 190kg of CO2.

Nathalie 33:17

So that's what I learnt this week. Yeah, so now I'm going to pass something on to my client.

Ross D 33:24

So, uh... How about you? Well, what makes their approach different? Like, where does your £160 go?

Nathalie 33:31

So they've got a technology which creates physical rock from the carbon that is sequestered from the air and then it gets placed underground. So they have a very robust methodology of being able to assess actually what the carbon output is from a specific flight.

Nathalie 33:48

Because you know, a lot of places will say, I don't know, pay five quid and we'll plonk it. And it's a little bit kind of finger in the air and see what happens. But there's is very rigorous. So I think that's kind of the thing that drew me to that was, okay, this seems like it's a little bit more tried and tested.

Nathalie 34:04

So yeah.

Ross D 34:06

Cool. Well, mine's actually kind of related to that. So I'm gonna jump in next. I was gonna come to Francesco, but I'm gonna jump in next because it's on the same theme. So I found out recently about this alternative web browser called Ecosia.

Ross D 34:19

Do you use that? Nathalie's giving me a thumbs up. So, well, so the cool thing about Ecosia is that 80% of their profits go to nonprofit organisations focusing on reforestation. So planting trees as we were talking about.

Ross D 34:33

So, what I've learned is not about Ecosia specifically. I actually found out about Ecosia months ago. What I've learned or realised this week is it's very hard to change your behaviour. I'm so wedded to the existing browser that I use is that the simple thing of changing my default browser to Ecosia from Google Chrome is more challenging than I thought it would be.

Ross D 34:58

So it's just a sort of realisation that actually changing behaviour need to be quite proactive about it. And although I know that this is out there, I haven't actually switched to using it yet. Persistence is key.

Ross D 35:09

I think I just need to do it. I mean, well, this is a kind of like, it's a kind of getting things done task. It's actually something that would take two minutes just to switch my default browser, but I haven't done it yet because I've been letting things bleed into each other and I'm messing up too much possibly.

Ross D 35:24

Francesco, what have you learned this week?

Francesco 35:28

I feel humbled by you guys, mine is much more... I learned that originally we wouldn't carve pumpkins for Halloween, but turnips. Now this is apparently uninteresting, but I am a bit of a folklore buff, so I like folklore and I like to believe I know a few things about folklore, but this particular piece of knowledge which apparently is very well known among folklore buffs had completely escaped me.

Francesco 35:57

And I find this interesting because I wonder how many things we don't know that we don't know in fields in which we think we have expertise, maybe we don't have one. And yet there are apparently obvious facts which completely escape us, such as the fact that originally we would carve turnips rather than pumpkins at Halloween.

Nathalie 36:19

But aren't they quite small and fiddly? Like pumpkins make it much easier to cut.

Francesco 36:23

They're also incredibly hard apparently. A friend of mine tried to carve a turnip the other year apparently. She says it's incredibly hard to carve. It's really not easy, probably that's why we have been switching to pumpkins.

Ross D 36:36

Is that something we've imported from America, do you think the pumpkin thing?

Francesco 36:41

Well, it's possible to an extent, but the practice of carving pumpkins has been present in Europe, in mainland Europe for many centuries. We had, even in some towns in Puglia, we had the habit of carving pumpkins for at least a couple of centuries. So it's really difficult to say.

Ross D 36:59

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Nathalie 37:00

So there we go. Didn't expect to learn that new thing today.

Francesco 37:05

That happens when you let things bleed one into the other. And you know how useful that might turn out to be in some parts of your life.

Nathalie 37:15

Let the chaos in, huh? .

Francesco 37:19

Let the little chaos in. Just a bit. Just a bit.

Ross D 37:22

Francesco, before we wrap up, is there anything else you want to mention? People are interested in finding out about you. Where should they go?

Francesco 37:29

As I say, I'm a novelist, but I also write non-fiction and there's a book I wrote a couple of years ago which I have been teaching about as well, which is called *The Sense of Wonder*, and it's a book on how to reconnect as adults and grown up with our sense of wonder and curiosity.

Francesco 37:44

So it's a book about how to be more engaged in what we do and how to become more curious about our working life and our life in general. And there are a few ideas there which I have been expressing here today.

Ross D 37:57

Amazing. Well, we'll post a link to that in the show notes. And that's it. You've been listening to the Future Talent Learning podcast with me, Ross Dickey and Nathalie Nahai. I guess this week was Francesco Dimitri.

Ross D 38:11

Until next time, bye for now.