

What is Production Management?

PROJECT & TIME MANAGEMENT TOOLS



post production management

Post Production Management

- Class might be titled incorrectly
- It is true that visual effects are a *post* production discipline
- However, the discipline leaks into preproduction and production.



Post Production Management

- Let's say you're tasked with creating a VFX-driven film starring a CGI lead character like THE HULK. In what ways does the VFX discipline impact preproduction and production, in addition to the obvious post?

Post Production Management

- What about a film like SPEED RACER? At what point does the management of “post production elements” such as digital race cars really begin?



Post Production Management

- So VFX production management is the art of managing time, technology, budget, and personnel resources in the service of creating (movie) magic



post production management

To Paraphrase the Syllabus

- It requires an understanding of the production process, and the members of the production team
- It requires an understanding of the budget process
- It requires an understanding of the scheduling process
- It requires an ability to balance art and design with the practical problems of time and money
- It requires an ability to manage personnel in the service of art and design.



Production Management

- Literally, managing a production
- We will look at as many aspects of this concept as we can
- If Introduction to VFX taught you about the concepts of compositing, PPM will introduce you to the concepts of “running the show.”
- We will look at it from the standpoint of the solo artist, all the way up to the VFX supervisor, stopping along the way to understand how the film business works.

Management is a Dirty Word

- Sad but true, in the USA we view “managers” with suspicion
- In our every day life we are managers.
- Those of you who made it here on time today have proven adept at a type of management.
- The scope of management in the production of a typical film, let alone a VFX blockbuster film, is incredible, requiring numerous personnel.

Putting it in Perspective

- Open the document “VESCredits.” This is an official list drafted by the Visual Effects Society of the titles held by workers in the VFX industry
- The Future You is somewhere on this list!
- Also, someone on this list is in charge of everyone else. Now that’s managing!
- Who is the penultimate “manager type” in the VFX world?

Major Roles: VFX

- Visual Effects Supervisor
- Visual Effects Producer
- The Director
- Visual Effects Art Director
- Numerous other leads underneath these individuals



Reducing the Scope

- For now, let's see how management tools developed for business can apply to our world
- First, as a means of organizing and “time managing” our own daily workload
- Then, as these themes can be applied in the service of a larger production.



Time Management Tools

- Time can't be managed, only what you do with it.
- David Allen: “What you really manage is your activity during time, and defining outcomes and physical actions required is the core process required.”
- How important is time management, or in this case “defining outcomes and the physical actions required,” to the visual effects industry.
- Example?

Micro to Macro

- Reminders based on time (clock alarm going off) can alert us when a task is to be done
- Planning or prep based on calendars or appointment books can include setting goals (non immediate)
- Planning, prioritizing, and preparation using tools like personal organizers or PDAs



Prioritization

- The secret to almost all time management techniques is prioritization
 - What needs to happen first
 - What needs to be done first
- In order to prioritize we must have all the tasks delineated. This is usually a list.



Task List

- Your grocery list is an example of a task list.
- Q: Do you use a list for groceries?
- Q: How fast do you shop?
- Q: How do you know when to stop shopping?
- Q: When you deviate from the list, what happens?
- Q: and does anyone's list actually look like the one pictured? Fresh salmon and flowers?

Prioritizing

- To prioritize a checklist, either order them in their proper priority when writing them down or assign them a number afterwards



HULK TO-DO LIST

- Prioritize the following:
 - Model
 - Texture
 - Animate
 - Design
 - Lighting
 - Muscle System
 - Hair Sim
 - Clothing Sim
 - Matchmove
 - Background Plates



HULK TO-DO LIST

- Some of these can be done simultaneously, but maybe:
 1. Design
 2. Model
 3. Texture
 4. Muscle System
 5. Hair Sim
 6. Clothing Sim
 7. Animate
 8. Background Plates
 9. Lighting
 10. Matchmove



PHILOSOPHIES

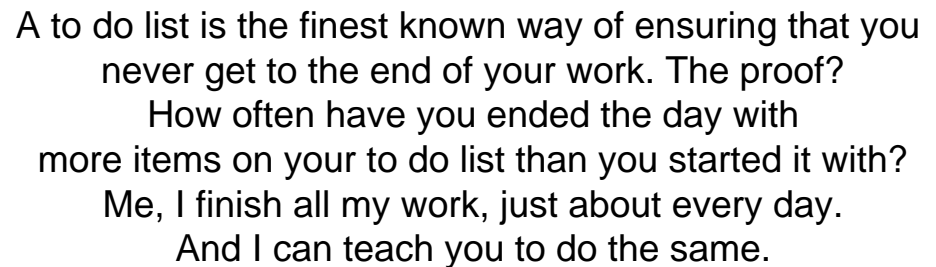
Of Time Management



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Mark Forster

- One author states that you can diagnose where you are going wrong by looking at what you are unable to achieve from a daily list
- The “Closed List” only what you can complete
- Guarantees you can *finish*
- <http://www.markforster.net>



A to do list is the finest known way of ensuring that you never get to the end of your work. The proof?
How often have you ended the day with more items on your to do list than you started it with?
Me, I finish all my work, just about every day.
And I can teach you to do the same.

Check List Risks

- Spend more time writing lists than *doing*
- “Analysis Paralysis” procrastination
- Rigid adherence to list misses opportunities
- Size of an individual line item too unmanageable, such as “Model the HULK.”
- Long term plans must eventually be dealt with and not ignored



Pareto Analysis

- 80% of tasks can be completed in 20% of the time, the remaining 20% of tasks take 80% of the time
- Where have we heard this percentage before?
- By this token the “20%” part should be prioritized, since it accounts for 80% of the productivity



POSEC

- **Prioritize:** your time and define your life by goals
- **Organize:** Things you have to accomplish regularly to be successful (say, family and finances)
- **Streamline:** Things you don't like to do but must (work, chores)
- **Economize:** Things you like but aren't urgent (pasttimes, socializing)
- **Contribute:** pay attention to the remaining things (social obligations)

“Fit”

- Pick the task that “fits” based on location, financial investment and time
- Location based: free time at home vs free time at school
- If you have 15 minutes, pick a task that can be completed in 15 minutes, not five minutes or ten days.
- Time of day: if you have free time at 7 am and 11pm, in which one should you read a book and which one should you do a physical work out?

Stephen Covey

- Author: First Things First, Seven Habits of Highly Effective People
- Four quadrant prioritization (2x2)
- Urgent, Important, Not Urgent, Not Important



URGENT

NOT URGENT

IMPORTANT

Crying Baby
Kitchen Fire
SOME Calls

Exercise
Vocation
Planning

NOT IMPORTANT

Interruptions
Distractions
OTHER Calls

Trivia
Busy Work
Time Wasters

The Seven Habits, you say?

- **Be proactive.** Take responsibility for all aspects of your life
- **Begin with the End in mind.** Visualization
- **Put First Things First.** Prioritize and delegate
- **Think Win/Win.** Mutually beneficial solutions
- **Seek to Understand, then be Understood.** If you understand the other person, your message can be tuned to reach them
- **Synergize.** Teamwork
- **Sharpen the Saw.** Carefully selected recreational activities

GTD: getting things done

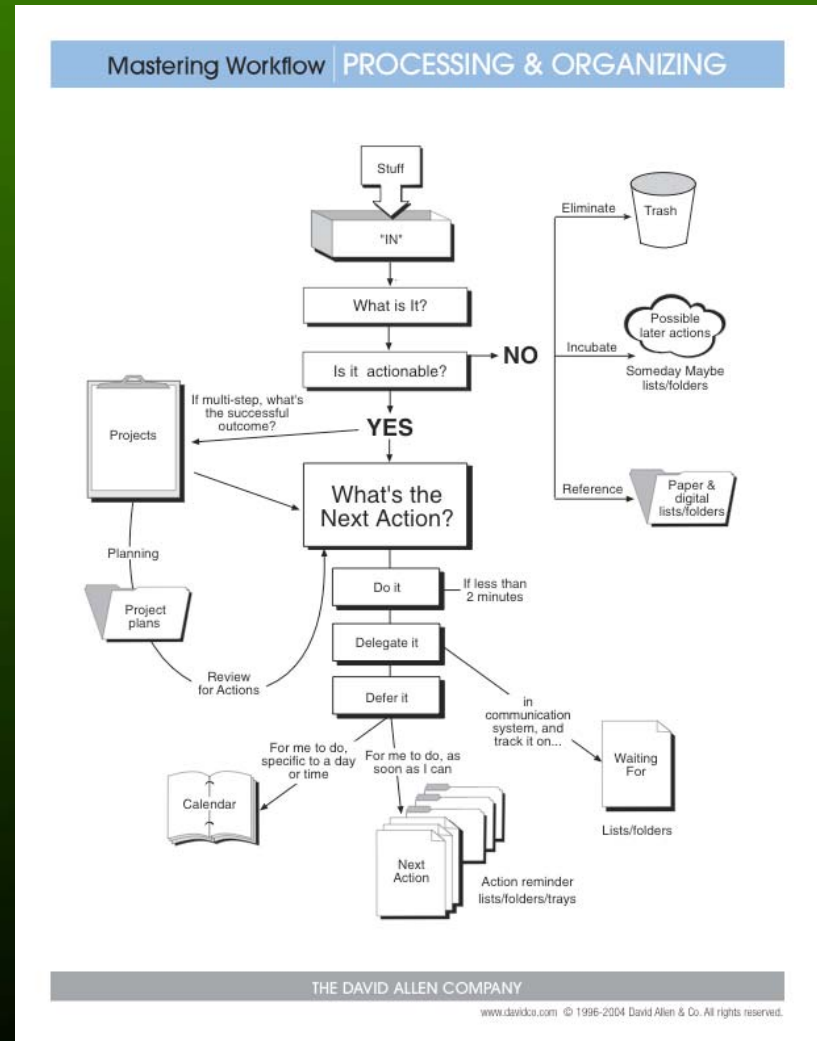
- David Allen (<http://www.davidco.com>)
- Move tasks out of the mind by recording them externally
- Mind doesn't have to remember them, it can concentrate on doing them
 - A workflow process
 - Six levels of focus
 - Natural planning method



Workflow

- Collect
- Process
- Organize
- Review
- Do

See “Workflow_Diagram.pdf”



COLLECT

- Tasks go into a “bucket,” a file folder, PDA, etc
- Empty them regularly



PROCESS

- Start at top
- Deal with them one at a time
- Never put anything back in, either:
 - (less than two minutes?) Do it
 - Delegate it (are you really the best person to do this?)
 - Defer it
- Doesn't require action?
 - File for reference
 - Throw it away
 - Incubate for possible action later

ORGANIZE

- **Next Actions:** what's first?
- **Projects:** things that require more than one action to complete (clean the floor versus install a new roof)
- **Waiting For:** if delegated
- **Someday/Maybe:** not right now
- Keep a written calendar free of anything that doesn't have a drop-dead deadline
- Quality of the filing system paramount: must be easy and fun

REVIEW

- At least daily
- If you are a procrastinator, just deal with the list IN ORDER, forcing you to deal with unsavory items.
- “Tickler File” holds items that should be reviewed weekly



DO

- See “Workflow_Advanced.pdf”



GTD Exercise

- **Apply the GTD workflow to the following problem.**
- STAGE ONE: Collect. Write down all the things that could be done to make the workstation you are seated at a better place.



GTD Exercise

- STAGE TWO: process. Starting at the top of the list, deal with the items one at a time. Can it be done in two minutes? **Do it.**
- Nothing back “in” the bucket unless you can:
 - **Delegate or**
 - **Defer**
 - At the school, fixes will either be the domain of the **facilities** or **technology** department



GTD Exercise

- How many items could you actually do yourself?
- How many are dependent on facilities (chairs, tables)?
- How many are dependent on technology (new computers)?
- Did you properly delegate those items?
- Were there any wish list items, like a window office?
- Did you defer those?

Make a “Hipster PDA”

- In-class exercise



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Homework Project

- Pick 3-5 of the short David Allen articles on “Getting it Done”
- If you want, print them out
- Read them, and note which techniques sound like they could be applicable to you, given your current lifestyle
- As you read, underline or note passages that you agree with for later reference
- Determine if this workflow is applicable to a VFX project, and if so, write up a paragraph how you would apply it in practice

Homework Project

- In particular, you might want to address:
- how the concepts of **delegate** and **defer** might work in a production environment
- What could be used as a **tickler file** or **bucket** for VFX

