

Russell Benaroya: Hey everyone. Welcome to the Stride 2 Freedom podcast. My name is Russell Benaroya and I'm the co-founder of Stride Services, a virtual back office, bookkeeping, and accounting firm serving hundreds of clients around the United States.

This podcast is designed to help small business owners focus on growth and innovation. In other words, focus on those things that inspired you to start your business in the first place. We call it your genius zone. We do our job on this podcast when business owners feel like they have the trust and confidence to build the right team of partners around them that will help them grow. Thanks for joining, let's go.

Okay, everyone. This is a big month of productivity for me. Yesterday, I will admit that I did not feel very accomplished. The reason is that I did a project over the weekend, but I didn't plan my Monday in advance. I was trying to plan yesterday while also trying to produce yesterday. It was a super bad formula, and I felt incredibly inefficient.

Of course, everything happens for a reason. I knew that Alexis Haselberger, our guest today, would set me straight on this issue, which I'm going to ask her to do in a second. Alexis and I met several weeks ago. I was just so excited to talk to someone who eats, breathes, and sleeps productivity. I've struggled for many years to create consistent productivity habits, which I suppose is why Alexis is in business in the first place, for a lot of people like me.

Today, Alexis coaches individuals and groups and teaches workshops all-around productivity. Her client list is fairly marquee. Companies like Lyft, Google, and Upwork have all engaged her so they see something for themselves and for their teams that could up-level their performance. I'm excited to have Alexis bring some of that learning to all of you. Alexis, welcome. Ready to jump in?

Alexis Haselberger: Yes. Thanks so much for having me. I'm excited to be here. I always love talking about productivity.

Russell Benaroya: What happened to me yesterday? What did I do wrong?

Alexis Haselberger: You didn't separate the planning from the doing, which is the problem. It's a really simple way to put it, but I think that we make bad decisions when we're planning and doing at the same time. We're in that emotional zone where we're asking ourselves, "What should I do next?" and we're falling prey to our base level wants and needs.

If you had on Friday afternoon sat down, looked at your schedule for Monday, looked at your task list, did a little calendar blocking, even just a rough plan, now you don't have to ask yourself, "What should I be doing now?" You just execute the plan. Now you don't need as much motivation; it's so much easier. We just make bad decisions in the moment.

Russell Benaroya: The structure is so simple. There's nothing complicated that you just articulated. In fact, this is a structure that we do embrace at Stride for all of our employees and

we promote planning. What is it that has us falling off the rails with such frequency? Is it that we're just inherently lazy? It feels so easy to fail at this.

Alexis Haselberger: Everything is about habits. You probably have heard this terrible stat out there that it takes three weeks to build a habit. It's not true. We feel like we fail at a lot of things because after three weeks of trying something, it's not a habit yet and we're like, "It's just not for me."

This thing of why we fail when we do planning specifically, this is a big one. We often underestimate the value and overestimate the time that planning takes. We tend to think of planning as not real work, when, in fact, planning is probably the most important work that we could be doing. So we get to the end of the day, and we're like, "I'm tired. It's been a long day. I want to see my family. I want to go eat dinner."

Instead of taking those five minutes to make a rough plan for the next day, we just go, and we don't do it. Then that sets us up to be not totally unproductive, but less productive than we could be all day. There's a Brian Tracy quote that says "For every one minute of planning, we save about 10 minutes in execution."

Russell Benaroya: I know we're deep-diving into this really quickly but all of this is top of mind for me. What are the tools that you recommend that people use? At stride, we are big evangelists of Asana for work management and productivity, but I'm sure there are a lot out there with varying degrees of sophistication. What do you like?

Alexis Haselberger: Asana is a great one; it's one I recommend all the time. It's super easy to use, and you can use it with your team. I love that you can say well, "Finance and HR, I'm going to separate that so that not everyone can see it, and other things I can make accessible to everyone."

I also like Wrike. I think it's a little more expensive than Asana but it's something I've used in the past and I've been really happy with for large teams and has similar segmentation. With individuals, I most often recommend an app called TickTick - not to be confused with TikTok. That's a productivity killer. I installed it once, wasted an hour and a half on it, and then immediately uninstalled.

What I like about TickTick is that, even though no one's ever heard of it, it's the best personal task app I've ever used. A lot of companies are not doing collaborative task management, even though I would recommend that all of them should be. If it's just you and you need something, TickTick is really great.

There are certain apps that are very famous out there that I don't recommend because I just don't like them as much. I feel like they're a little harder to get into. I will also say about apps and tools that it is not about the app or the tool. So many times, I'll talk to people and they're like, "I've tried everything." There's an entire graveyard of abandoned task apps on their phone or their computer. It's not about the app.

There's never going to be a perfect app. Whoever built each different app, that was built for their brain, not your brain. You're never going to get something that works 100% exactly the way that you want it to, and that's okay. If something works about 70% of what you need, you will just tweak it along the way. It's much more about the discipline of using an app over and over again or using a spreadsheet.

You can manage all your tasks and projects in spreadsheets. You can sort by multiple columns. If you really want, you could use a bullet journal or something like that. I don't really recommend paper because you can lose it and you got to do a lot of writing and rewriting, and it's not searchable. Well, people love paper, and I'm a paper person too. Everything lives in the task app and paper is just what I'm writing on during the day.

Russell Benaroya: Awesome. You make some pretty bold claims or promises on your websites. You say things like, "Leave work at work and be present at home," or, "Have time for yourself every day," or, "Show up to every meeting, event, and activity prepared and on time," "Be well-rested, focused, and relaxed."

How can you feel so confident making these claims? They sound so amazing. I want that. You obviously have something in your toolbox that you've been able to demonstrate over time is achievable. I'm wondering how you built that toolbox and how you share and communicate it.

Alexis Haselberger: Yes, they are bold claims but I don't claim anything that isn't true of my own life, and also, that I've seen in the people that I've worked with. I am 100% always on time. I get at least two to three hours to myself every day. I don't say that everybody needs to be like me; some people might not want that.

What I have done with my program and what I work with people on is I've developed a framework that allows people to integrate different strategies and layers of productivity awareness, figuring out how they want to use their time, and whether that's in line with their values and their goals. Then layering tools and strategies on top of that over time so that you can eventually get to a point where you feel good about your time.

For every person that I work with, are those things that you mentioned the goals that they have? Maybe not; people have all sorts of different goals. What I do when I work with people is, every person goes through a similar arc, but each person is working with their own individual goals and values for their time. My goal, when I work with people, is to get them closer to alignment there so that when they are looking at how their time is spent, they're able to say, "I feel in control. I'm doing more of what I want to be doing and less of what I don't want to be doing." Over time, I tweak a little bit so that I can get incrementally closer to where I want to be.

Russell Benaroya: This isn't just about how to more efficiently move through my task list. This is re-architecting the way that I prioritize what is important to me based on what I value. You have to get underneath the hood with folks like me and your clients to really design a productivity plan that's suited specifically for them. Is that what I'm hearing?

Alexis Haselberger: Yes, exactly. I start with everyone from a position of let's know yourself better exactly as you are right now. There's no judgment. I'm not going to tell a night person to become a morning person. I don't care what you do with your time. If your goal is that you would like to just be able to binge-watch Netflix after work for eight hours, more power to you.

My goal is to help you unearth what you want to do with your time and then help you get closer to that. It starts with some individualization and then we move through an arc. We tackle task management. We tackle prioritization. We tackle planning, our tools, and habit building and efficiency and focus. We tackle these things in an order such that each person can say, "This tactic is going to work for me based on what I need and this one isn't going to work for me."

It's a similar arc for everyone, but we're taking different things because people are different. There's a reason that getting things done isn't the end-all-be-all for everyone.

Russell Benaroya: How did you decide to make this your career, your profession, your passion pursuit? Where did that come from?

Alexis Haselberger: I was a little kid who liked this stuff. I was the kid who would break out the graph paper at eight years old and break out the TV Guide, and I would make myself a schedule. I would cross-reference to make sure that I was getting the best possible half-hour of TV that I could.

In high school, I was always the kid who was like, "How can I get straight A's and not go to class?" That's my goal: I wanted to get straight A's and I want to be in class as little as possible. I was always making deals with teachers, and in college, the same thing. I always cared about personal ROI on time. That was something that mattered to me a lot.

In the work world, when I came out of college, I started working in startups. I was in the Bay Area. I was working in startups. I was doing business operations in HR, basically, everything that wasn't sales and engineering. What I saw in those environments was lots of people working really long hours, lots of people burning out. People weren't being that much more productive than I was working those hours. I never worked more than 40 hours a week; maybe once a year when we had some really big push or something like that.

Over time, people started coming to me for this. It started being, "Alexis, can you help us build out our customer service engine so that we're not writing and rewriting the same things?" I had a boss who was like, "Can you do some productivity workshops for the team?"

I just started doing that. Eventually, that became the thing that was the most fun for me, and also seemed to have the most impact for other people.

I also have kids. At a certain point in time, I started having my kids, and people I knew started having kids. I noticed that everyone was super stressed out. I was working full time in an office. I was one of those crazy people who made all my baby food and all that. I just wasn't as stressed as other people. So I started thinking not only what am I doing differently, but what are other people that I see being successful in the realm of having a good job and having a fulfilling family and home life, what are people doing differently?

To me, it all came down to systems. I was very systematized. I had plans. I always had like three weeks of meals planned out and stuff like that. I realized that that is something that everybody is expected to know how to manage their time in business and nobody is ever taught how you do it.

I saw that there was a gap there that I could bridge. I could help people figure out the how so that people didn't feel like, "I've had all this success in business, but my personal life has just gone down the tube." Or that feeling of why do I have to work 18 hours a day to be as successful as I am? I saw that there was a gap there.

Russell Benaroya: In a startup environment, people work very hard because we're trying to build something new. There is an impression that the longer somebody works, or the more available they are, the more committed they are, the better they are for a team, which is not necessarily true. How do you advocate for yourself and break some of that thought structure that, yes, I do work 40 hours a week, but I get a tremendous amount done? That's what I'm able to commit to; nothing more, nothing less.

Alexis Haselberger: I think it's hard. I will say that it's easiest to do when you're in a new job. You think that when you're in a new job, you got to prove yourself, you're going to work 80 hours a week. No, you don't want to do that. What happens is that now you work 80 hours a week. If you start to pull back, then people are wondering what you're doing. Why are they not working as much anymore?

So the easiest time to set a boundary is when you're in a new situation. You come out of the gate working really hard for those eight hours that you're there, proving yourself and getting a lot of stuff done, and you build some stronger boundaries.

Now, if you're already in the position where you've been working 80 hours a week and it's not working very well for you, then sometimes using research can help. There's a lot of research out there that shows that there are diminishing returns on working more than a certain number of hours in a day. There's a ton of research out there about how breaks of any length so nights, weekends, even 15 minutes in the middle of the day, increase productivity and creativity. So you can start with some research.

I also recommend using the word experiment anytime we're trying to do something different or new. Nobody wants to be the jerk that doesn't want to let you experiment with something. If we say, "By the way, I'm not going to be available after 6:00 pm anymore." That's going to be harder for your boss or somebody else to hear. If you say, "I've been learning a lot about productivity and I want to do an experiment. I'm not going to be checking my email actively after 6:00 pm, but if you need me, you can text me. I'll be available if you need me."

That's an experiment that's a lot easier for someone to get to behind because it seems shorter, and you can then rehash it later. I think it's also possible to do all these things. I have never once checked email on vacation in 20 years of being in the work world. I always said, "If you need me, you'll figure out how to get a hold of me."

You really have to experiment and see that there aren't as many negative repercussions as you think, and let people know what you're doing, and that it's in the guise of productivity.

Russell Benaroya: Bring me into somebody's life that reaches out to you. What are they struggling with? It might be for them, it might be for their team. Bring me into that place that they're in when it's time to call Alexis.

Alexis Haselberger: A really common profile that I have is a tech executive or a director-level engineering person. They are in a large company or maybe even a small startup but they have realized that they have about 35 hours of meetings a week, they get about 300 emails a day. Every night, they're going home spending an hour or two with their spouse or family, and then they're getting back online and working until 1:00 am. Then they're getting up and doing it all again the next day.

They're usually people who are pretty successful in their careers, but they've gotten there by brute force. They have gotten there and they have worked harder, and they are at a point where they're like, "I don't know if I can do this anymore. On the outside, it looks very successful, but on the inside, I'm at a breaking point." That's a lot of times where people come to me.

You'd think people are coming to you if their lives are a total mess. No. Their lives aren't a total mess. It's just that there's a mismatch about what they want and what they're able to accomplish. Usually, there's one part of their life that's really going off the rails.

Russell Benaroya: It's almost like you become a therapist. Some degree in psychology might be helpful as well as your productivity expertise?

Alexis Haselberger: Well, I'm not going to say therapists because that would be an issue. Sometimes, people come to me and they're like, "I just need you to make a schedule for me and I'm going to follow it." Those are people that I have to turn down because that's not what it's about. There's not the perfect schedule out there that you just need to follow.

We're talking about long term habit change here. We're talking about the way you've been handling incoming messages for the last 20 years, how do we do that in a different way? How do we remove distractions from your environment? It's not about, there's just this answer that I could give you on a piece of paper.

Russell Benaroya: I know you do some one on one coaching work, but you also do group coaching for teams? How do they differ? I'm most interested in understanding, in a group dynamic, how do you navigate a group experience?

Alexis Haselberger: There are two different ways I do group. One of them is within teams within companies. I did it for an entire company of eight people. They all come together; we do it at the same time.

What's interesting about this dynamic, especially for a team, is that you start to learn about each other. One, we have a shared language around different productivity things and we know what

we need, but also you start to see, Bob isn't doing it wrong. He's just different than me. It's just a different way that people are approaching these things.

I think there's a lot of compassion that comes into the group dynamic. One, we're able to help each other out because any company, the people that are there are going to know their tools and the way they use them more deeply than I'm going to be aware of. There's a lot of additional availability of people to say, "I've been scheduling it this way with these clients. This has been working really well for me." There's also that compassion where we're saying, "Sue needs accountability for things whereas Bob over there needs pro-con lists." When we talk about things, we're going to talk about them in that way.

I have a client. She's the CEO of a company in New York. After we did all this know-yourself-better stuff, she actually said, "I need to bring some of this to my team." One of the things that we talk about is whether you're a satisficer or a maximizer when it comes to decision making. After she learned about that dichotomy, she was like, "I need every project team in my company to have one satisficer and one maximizer always. That way, I can be sure that we're not going down in the weeds too much, and that there are people there to keep each other in check."

There are some interesting tweaks you can learn once you have a shared language and a shared understanding of this stuff. People are going to pull different things out of it. When we're talking about planning, not everybody's going to be doing it exactly the same way. They're making their own version of that as we go along and they're understanding the importance of that. So, later, when somebody says, "I can't meet right now because I have to do my end-of-day planning for tomorrow," the other person says, "I get that."

I also do it from a group dynamic of people who don't even know each other. I'm starting a new group of that today. That's fun too because people can feed off each other.

Russell Benaroya: Can you explain what a maximizer and a satisficer is?

Alexis Haselberger: Sorry, I'm stuck in my own language here. Let's talk about decision making. A maximizer is somebody who wants to be able to review all the options before making a decision. They're always striving for the best possible decision. You know this person; maybe you are this person. This is someone who you're going to buy a new pair of headphones for recording this podcast; you got a spreadsheet, you got to learn stuff on Amazon, you're spending a couple of months making sure that you're making the best possible purchase so you don't regret it.

A satisficer is the opposite of that in some way. A satisficer says, "I may have a very high set of criteria, but as soon as I find something that meets those criteria, I'm going to act on it." If they're buying a car, a maximizer is going to have Blue Book alerts up. They're going to be spending a year doing this. A satisficer is going to go, "I want a blue car. I want it to be a Honda. I want it to have 50,000 miles or less. I want it to be \$10,000 or less." As soon as they find something that fits those criteria, they're just going to act on it.

Now, it's not only about purchasing things. It's about how we make all sorts of decisions, project decisions. How much information do we need? Satisficers are very much about good enough; don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Maximizers are very much about, "No, I need to make sure this is the right decision."

Neither of these is a better place to be. There's value in both of those positions, but you got to know which types of decisions fit the bill. Maximizers will often be standing in line at the grocery store looking at all of the cereal and spending 10 minutes deciding what cereal to buy, versus a satisficer will just go in and buy it, whereas a satisficer might not make the best decision about the next job they should take. You might need to lean into your maximizer for that.

So understanding where you naturally fall so that if you're a satisficer and you need to make a really big decision, maybe you call in some reinforcements. Maybe you ask your spouse or a friend, "What am I not looking at? Where am I going wrong here? What am I missing?" If you're a maximizer you say, "I'm going to give myself 30 minutes to research this and I'm going to pick the best possible thing after 30 minutes." You can start to give yourself limits and direction instead of going with your base level instincts.

Russell Benaroya: So if you have a maximizer and a satisficer that are on the same team, or maybe your spouse is one way and you're the other, awareness, shared language, and some agreement around when does maximizer have more relevance or importance in a particular set of decisions is important?

Alexis Haselberger: Yes, exactly, or just being able to be like, "Wait, are we thinking about this correctly?"

I have this client who had a brilliant idea. She was a total maximizer. She's like, "I figured out what to do about this." I said, "What?" I have just delegated all decisions that aren't very important to my husband because he is a satisficer and he won't spend time on them. She's like, "Anything that I know is not worth my time but I will spend time on, I just delegate that to him and he makes a decision and I'm fine with it." I thought that's brilliant, as long as he's willing to do that."

Russell Benaroya: We have our newsletter going out today and you're in it. There's one in particular that you made, which was, "Don't check your email first thing in the morning. Get a piece of work done before you turn your brain on to that task orientation." Could you talk a little bit more about that and any other low hanging fruit of just do this and you'll free up some time?

Alexis Haselberger: What do most of us do in the morning? We get our coffee. We open our laptop and check email. For 90% of people, that is the morning routine. Or worse, you pull your phone off the bedside table and you start scrolling through emails.

What this does is it puts your mind immediately into reactive mode. Because we're social creatures, we want to get back to people. We saw that email, we want to respond to them. It's a good instinct. What happens is that now we're completely derailed, and something that I call "letting the day happen to you" happens to us.

We start with email messages, we react, and we are at that all day. We're doing some work here and there but more messages come in, they never stop, it's never going to stop. By the end of the day, we look at our task list, maybe for the first time, and we say, "I didn't get anything done on this list." I know I've been working all day. I haven't been screwing around. I've been working. What happened?

It's not only the culprit of email and Slack, but it's often that we get into this reactive mode. I call email and Slack other people's priorities. Sometimes they align with your priorities, and that's great, but you want to be the one in control there.

If you can just start the day by delaying that reaction, and hopefully you've done a little planning the night before so that you know what the most important thing to get done is, and do that, maybe spend an hour doing that and then start doing email, you're already ahead. Now, you've already gotten that important thing done. At 6:00 pm you're not like, "I need to stay another hour at the office because I need to get this thing done."

It doesn't matter when you get back to people in this realm. If you get an email from someone who responds at 9:00 am versus 10:00 am, who cares? Nobody notices. The amount of stuff that you can get done in that hour in the morning is huge for your day. Plus, it starts you off on the productivity of; I've already got something done. I've got some momentum. I'm going to keep going.

When it comes to other low hanging fruit, just turn off all the notifications on your phone. I would say the only notification that I can fully get behind is the meeting notification, especially since now we're all working at home and we don't have the visual of people standing up to go into the conference room to remind us that there's a meeting. Keep your meeting notifications on. Other than that, turn them all off.

The reason for this is two things. One, there's a study out of UC Irvine, several years ago, that showed that when we get interrupted or distracted, it takes us on average 23 minutes to recover from that. Every time you get a ping, that's a distraction. Every time you get a notification, 23 minutes out the window. You can instantly make time by doing that.

The other thing is I think we really need to change the culture of responsiveness. We can still be responsive to people, but people don't need a response in 30 seconds. When you send somebody an email, are you expecting that they're going to get back to you in 30 seconds?

Russell Benaroya: No, but I do expect promptness.

Alexis Haselberger: What does promptness mean to you?

Russell Benaroya: Same day, 24 hours.

Alexis Haselberger: That's the thing. You can't just turn off all the notifications and then have no plan for how you're going to get back to people. I think that batch processing emails and Slack messages is what you need to do. Instead of just being at the beck and call, maybe

depending on people's roles, maybe 24 hours is reasonable, maybe three hours is reasonable, maybe one hour. Actually putting time on your calendar, I am going to process emails at this time; thinking of email not as the backdrop to everything, but instead, as an actual thing that you do during the day.

For me, I have three blocks a day that I block off 30 minutes at a time. I call it email/quick tasks. All I'm doing is processing emails during that time. Or I'm responding to somebody or follow up with somebody, something that is related to email. In that way, I'm always getting back to people quickly, but I'm doing it on my own schedule.

Russell Benaroya: What do you think about time tracking?

Alexis Haselberger: I think it's really important. Time tracking is something that I have all of my clients do when we first start working together. It's actually the first assignment that I give them to track for an entire week from the moment they wake up to the moment they go to bed, no judgments, just tracking. This is usually the most onerous thing I ask anybody to do because it's a real pain to do, to keep track of what you're doing all day long, but it's how we get real data.

What happens is we're just bad judges of time because time is a subjective thing. We all know that time flies when you're having fun, or when you're doing something boring, it feels like it's taking forever.

Yesterday, I was working on a product and I was working on a deck. I was in a total flow state. I looked up and it had been an hour and a half and it felt like 10 minutes because I was really into what I was doing. I think time tracking is really important because it's only when we get that actual data that we can say, what's surprising about this? What did you have a visceral negative reaction to when you looked at this data? How much sleep are you actually getting? People always overestimate the amount of sleep that they're getting.

When people do this, almost always, they have some aha moments around this. I had one guy who is a tech exec at a big company. He realized he was spending four hours a day on YouTube and Reddit in 15-minute chunks and he had no idea. He thought it was half an hour that he was probably spending. I had another guy I was working with who was an attorney. He just felt like he never spent any time with his kids. He actually realized, in the time tracking process, he was spending three times as much time with his kids as he thought.

It's not that it's always bad; it's just that you get more accurate. It's because he loves spending time with his kids, so the time went so fast. He just didn't realize it. I think time tracking is really important. I personally do it maybe once a year for about two to three weeks just to see where I am. Am I working more than I want to be working? Am I still getting enough sleep? What am I doing?

This month, I'm engaged in time tracking just for my business. I'm not doing personal time tracking right now. I'm just doing time tracking of my business. I've added an additional column that says, "Who could do this? Is it something that only I have to do? Is it something that I could

offload to my virtual assistant? Or is it something that I need to find somebody else to outsource to right?"

I realized, as your business grows and needs change, especially when you're early in business, you're just doing all the things. Sometimes you don't really raise your head above water to be like, "Should I be formatting this MailChimp email?" I think it's really important to do some time tracking every once in a while just to recalibrate.

Russell Benaroya: Is there a time tracking app that you like to use? I happen to be using the free version of Harvest. What do you like?

Alexis Haselberger: I never use an app. I recommend Toggl to people who want to use an app because it's free and it's easy. I personally just use a spreadsheet. What I find is that it's like the story of technology in a lot of ways. It seems amazing, I want it to work, and it relies on me remembering to push a button. If I don't push a button at a certain time, now I have to go back and make a bunch of edits to something.

I actually just jot down on a piece of paper and then pop it into a spreadsheet that I made that has a pivot table. It does all the data for me. I use a really low tech way of doing it because, for me, it's a little easier. It's funny, most of my clients get all excited about the app, and then I would say 90% of them just revert to the spreadsheet.

Russell Benaroya: That's hilarious. What's productivity coaching look like during a global pandemic? What's different for employers and employees? How are you guiding differently?

Alexis Haselberger: I've been getting a lot of interest from companies about how do we work productively from home? I've been doing a lot of workshops and webinars on that. It's something that's certainly top of mind.

It's not like I need to change my curriculum or flow or anything. These things apply to life, to work, whether you're working at home or not, but I think that there are different things happening in each zone.

For instance, our distractions at home are very different from our distractions in the office. If you are used to thinking, "My main distractors are dinging and pinging of my phone, and I already turned those off, so I don't need to worry about distractions anymore." Well, now you're in a house with your kids and your spouse, the siren call of the linen closet that always needs to be reorganized right this second. So we need to think about these things differently.

I think, also, something that's been happening a lot is that I've been doing a lot of coaching and communication throughout this. What's happened for a lot of people is that the expectations aren't clear about what's being expected of them now that they're in this new environment. So a lot of people are working longer hours because they're not sure what the deliverables are, and they want to make sure they're still seen as people who are working hard.

There's a lot of work that I've been doing with people about, from an individual perspective, how do I communicate? How do I get expectations when they're not being given to me clearly? Then there's a lot of work that I've been doing with companies around remote management and around how to set clear expectations, and around boundaries, and rituals, and transitions. That's another big area right now.

We've lost all of our standard boundaries. Everything has been obliterated. Your computer is now in your bedroom, and that's where you're working. The tendency to just go on there at 10:00 pm and start doing some email is high. I work with people a lot around how do we reset boundaries for this new environment? How do we create an actual transition between those periods of time? What does an after-work transition look like when you're walking from your tiny desk to the kitchen or wherever that is? We used to have a commute where we'd decompress, and maybe listen to an audiobook.

It's a lot around communication, a lot around boundaries, and resetting that stuff up. It's all the other stuff too, but I think those are really important right now.

Russell Benaroya: So valuable. I saw on your site that you offer an initial call or free consultation to anybody that's interested. Is that, in fact, the case? Can I put that in the show notes to give people a way to get a hold of you?

Alexis Haselberger: Yes, 100%. I offer a 45-minute free consultation to anyone who thinks they might need some help in this area and is trying to decide if working with someone might be the right thing. I always provide a little bit of value there anyway. Even if we don't end up working together, I want to make sure that it's a good use of everyone's time.

Russell Benaroya: One last question for you. As a productivity guru, what area of productivity are you working on right now in your life? Are you trying to tackle anything in particular?

Alexis Haselberger: Yes. For me, the challenge has been, as my business has grown, it's a lot around outsourcing and delegating right now. As I've grown, I've been able to hire a virtual assistant. That struggle of, I've got a part-time person. Does it make sense to make that jump and get a full-time person? What are the things that I'm telling myself only I can do but that's not really true? I need to get maybe some outside opinions to say, is this something I really should be doing?

That's where it is right now. It's recalibrating because as my business has grown over the past couple of years, I've gone from having a lot of time to working full time again. Is that something that I want? How do I do that? Then thinking about, how do you scale? I've online courses now and I'm doing more group coaching and thinking about, how do I move from individuals into groups, still being able to serve people, but also not taking up as much of my time?

Russell Benaroya: So valuable, Alexis. Thank you so much for joining us today. We wanted to talk about productivity and also embrace reality on how hard it is to implement it. This idea of planning while also doing is super hard. Disconnect those two, think in advance, and then execute; that is such a terrific takeaway.

It's so great to learn from you today. My hope is that the listeners take action, either getting in touch with you directly or putting in place some of the nuggets of knowledge that you passed on. I can't thank you enough. On behalf of myself and everybody that listens to this podcast, thank you, Alexis.