

Episode 306: 4 AI Tools for Modern Managers to Skyrocket Your Productivity

**The Transcript is Auto-Generated and May Contain Spelling and Grammar Errors*

Mamie Kanfer Stewart 00:00

AI is getting a lot of attention these days, but so many managers I speak with aren't sure how to take advantage of it. So today I am sharing four AI tools that managers and their teams can use to skyrocket their productivity. And in the extended episode available to members of podcast plus, I share a fifth tool that I can't imagine living without. So let's get to it.

Mamie Kanfer Stewart 00:50

Are you a manager, boss, or team leader who aspires to level up and unleash your team's full potential? You're listening to The Modern Manager podcast, and I'm your host, Mamie Kanfer Stewart. Each week, I explore effective strategies and provide actionable insights that supercharge your management abilities, optimize team performance, and foster a healthy workplace culture. Become a rockstar manager and help your team thrive at themodernmanager.com/more.

Alright, jumping right in tool number one is a task generator. There's one by Goblin Tools called Magic To Do. And Any.do which is the task manager also has this feature built right in. In essence, task generators enable you to type in one task and have it automatically break that task down into smaller steps or a series of tasks. And this provides a starting point. So you can more quickly put together a project plan. And after using a task generator a few times I have to say they're actually pretty good. And they've even suggested tasks that I would have overlooked if I were just brainstorming the plan and coming up with it from scratch. Now, I think this is especially helpful when taking on a new project or a new responsibility. Or for a team member who is new to that task, it can help ensure that you are they don't miss any steps and are thinking ahead to what else needs to get done. And the benefit is not just speeding up the process of creating your project plan. So many of us procrastinate when we are not sure where to start, or when a project feels overwhelming. And so when you enter a task into this task generator, it instantly gives you a series of tasks that you can start acting on immediately, making it much easier to get started or to get unstuck. I also want to mention that Goblin Tools is a collection of small, simple and single task tools that are really thoughtfully crafted to offer support to neurodivergent individuals facing tasks that may seem daunting or challenging. They provide a number of other tools that you might find helpful, including a task estimator that can

help you figure out how long a task will take. And all their tools are available for free, so I highly recommend you check them out.

Mamie Kanfer Stewart 02:20

Now the second set of tools are generative writing tools. These generative writing tools are AI powered tools that make content creation easier. They simplify and speed up the writing process by using algorithms to generate high quality, customized content. Now, whether you're writing blog posts, or product descriptions, or marketing copy, or emails, or anything else, these tools can elevate your writing skills. Personally, I use Jasper.ai. But there are a number of similar tools including Copy.ai, Writer and Type. And if you Google this, you will find so many more. And one of the things that I appreciate about generative writing tools is that many of them have browser extensions that allow the tool to show up everywhere online where I type. So I can use it to help me write emails. And I can use it to help me write the script of this episode. It's really super simple to use. And for people like me, for whom starting with a blank page feels intimidating or hard, just finding the right words to something, it just takes a long time. And so these kinds of tools, they just help you get over that hump and give you a starting point so that you have something to edit. It's basically your personal ChatGPT. And I say personal because they can be personalized to sound more like you or like your company, if that's what you want. And that's just nicer than having a generic chat GPT. Most of these tools either learn to write in your voice over time, or you can give it instructions or prompts in the settings so that it really has a sense of your style. So it literally becomes like your personal writer extension. And then when you need to write something, you can either tell it what to write, or you can write a draft and then have the tool improve it. That's what I like to do. And just like with magic to do, it's not going to be perfect, but it gives you something to work from, which can save you so much time and energy and just getting started set of tools.

Mamie Kanfer Stewart 03:58

Number three is AI meeting notes. Again, there are many different tools to choose from including Zoom AI, Companion, Fathom, Otter, Parrot.AI, and these tools. They capture your meeting conversation in a way that makes the ideas and the next steps more actionable and more accessible. Now let's be real for a second. Most people do not take notes or capture the takeaways during a wrap up at the end of a meeting. And even if they do it is even fewer people who ever look at those notes again, even though there is a ton of value there AI meeting note tools record and transcribe the meeting for you, allowing you to tag a moment in the conversation that you want to highlight, or some will even automatically generate chapters for ease of skipping through. They'll generate well organized meeting notes and takeaways for you or you can add your own. And while each tool is slightly different, some of the features you can find are things like real time transcription, where you can see what's been said which is Super helpful if you show up late to a meeting that's already started. And some even offer real time

translation, which can help for team members who prefer to access the conversation in a different language. Some automatically insert what's being shared on the screen into your meeting notes, so you can see what's being referred to. And some enable you to easily search through the transcript, and then jump right to that point in the video to rewatch that part of the discussion. Now, when it comes to productivity, not only is this great for meeting notes and engagement, but one of the things that I really love about these tools is that people don't have to attend the meeting to get access to what happened in the meeting. And I don't just mean that you can share the notes with anyone afterwards, but that they can literally watch the clips of the meeting to get up to speed. So often, if we are not in a meeting, we have to rely on other people to fill us in. And then we either get their version of a meeting, or we don't get anything at all and are left in the dark. And that means that sometimes we attend meetings that aren't really the best use of our time. But when your team uses one of these AI meeting notes tools, you can share clips from the meeting so that people can actually hear the original conversation, rather than either read a transcript, or have to scroll through a whole video to find that moment that they're looking for, or just read a bunch of notes that may or may not feel like they have enough context. Now they don't have to attend the whole meeting for that whole hour, they can just watch the 10 minutes that are relevant for them, and enabling them to be more productive with the rest of their time. Now, before you jump into a meeting notes tool, make sure that you check the privacy controls and make sure that they meet your organization's standards. And make sure you talk to your team about using this tool together since it will be recording everyone who's there.

Mamie Kanfer Stewart 06:39

The fourth and last tool is an AI powered planner. There are a few of these including Motion and Reclaim. But again, there are more coming up every day. And now first off to be clear. A planner tool is one that brings together your tasks and your calendar so that you can better coordinate your activities and get your work done. I absolutely love planner tools in general. And I have been doing this type of activity on paper. And then using digital tools for almost a decade, having a single view of what I need to accomplish today is my number one productivity strategy. I think everyone should be using a planner tool. But for the sake of this conversation, I am going to focus on planner tools that have an AI component, which is not the case for all of them, but some have. And in full transparency. I use Aki flow, which is not an AI planner. And for me, that is preferable because I have daily rituals that basically serve the place of AI. But for many people, the power of AI takes planners to a whole new level of ease and productivity. Basically, planner tools, pull in your calendar, so they know exactly when you're free and when you're busy. And they also pull in your tasks from any task manager you're using. So it knows exactly what you need to get done. And then the tool schedules your tasks on your calendar during your available hours based on the priority of the task, how long the task will take to get done, when it's due, and so on. If you have the discipline to add in all your tasks and include all the details like due dates and duration and priority, you can basically stop thinking about task management and just let the AI do it for you. Now, this takes a real commitment to the system. Because if you don't add in all your tasks, or you put them in, but you don't give it the right details. Maybe you

skip over the duration part and it's set for a 15 minute default, but that task is actually going to take an hour, well, then it can cause more frustration than benefit. But for people who are into the details, or who can build up that habit, the AI planner can keep you on top of everything. So you not only save time not having to plan your day, but you also save the brainpower of not having to think about what to do.

Mamie Kanfer Stewart 08:41

Lastly, I have to give a few caveats and reminders. First, no AI tool is a replacement for doing your own thinking, we should never assume that an AI tool is going to give us something that it's 100% ready to go. Instead think of it as giving you a first draft in just seconds. Second, anytime you use a tool, you need to be thoughtful about what you put into it, what prompts you give it what you ask it to do, what information you provide, and so on. It's only going to be as good as how we use it. And then of course, there's always privacy and security issues. So do your research. Talk to your IT folks. Make sure you're using a tool that's reputable and approved by your organization.

Mamie Kanfer Stewart 09:19

As you know, the world of AI is improving and expanding by the minute. And while it can seem overwhelming to stay up to date on what tools exist and then find the one that's right for you and then actually learn how to use it. These tools can truly help us and our team members optimize our time and elevate our abilities. So I encourage you to take a little time to explore adding one of these tool types that I mentioned into your team's toolbox.

Mamie Kanfer Stewart 09:42

Now this week in lieu of a traditional guest bonus, members of Podcast Plus get a behind the scenes look at my personal task management system. I share all my tips and tricks for how I capture tasks plan my day and use Asana and Aki flow to keep myself organized and on track. And of course how I use AI to make it even easier for myself. And members of Podcast Plus get the extended episode where I share one more AI tool that I personally cannot live without. To get this guest bonus and the extended episode, become a member of Podcast Plus by going to themodernmanager.com/more. All the links are in the show notes and they can be delivered to your inbox along with this week's episode mini guide. So if you haven't yet subscribed to my newsletter, get on the list at themodernmanager.com. Thanks again for listening. Until next time.