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## Book Review:

# Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity by David Allen<sup>1</sup>

Review by John Horvath



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**H**ave you ever felt overwhelmed in managing a never-ending project list, an inbox that never seems to be empty, a list of next steps that needs to be prioritized (and then re-prioritized), a vacation that needs to be planned, etc.? These are all examples of “stuff” that we are actively managing in some way on a daily basis that consume our energy and possibly increase stress.

The concept outlined in *Getting Things Done* is about reducing any open loops on your mind and capturing them in a trusted system. If you ever wondered what a life would be like knowing what to work on, and when, and not feeling buried by all the important projects that *must* be done, then *Getting Things Done* is highly recommended.

This book was recommended to me about five years ago and I just had the pleasure of reading it a second time during a team book review. The system is based on two key objectives: 1) capturing all the things that need to get done—now, later, someday, big, little, or in between—into a logical and trusted system outside of your head and off your mind; and 2) disciplining yourself to make front-end decisions about all of the “inputs” you let into your life so that you will always have a plan for “next actions” that you can implement or renegotiate at any moment. The end state is knowing which action/project should be tackled next based on: how much energy you have, the time you have to do it, priority, and context (can’t make a phone call if you don’t have a phone).

The book is divided into three sections. The first is where you learn the “2-minute” rule to effectively decide on 1) the next action and 2) what to do with it. Going through an example here really helps to illustrate the value of his “Decision Making flowchart.”

The second section is all about “doing.” This requires a bit of work and commitment, and the end results are worth it. Throughout this section, suggestions are provided on how to set up an

ideal workstation. You will be left with a system to process all the open ends and more importantly, have a clear mind. The book also suggests setting up a weekly review to keep your system current and process any new item “inputs.”

The final section offers best practices around managing agreements and other techniques to be efficient.

I was super excited to do this book review with my team recently and witness one of my teammates moving from an inbox of 2,000 emails to fewer than five. No matter what level you are with task management, this book can provide some helpful techniques for improvement. Enjoy the book, and if you are interested in more information, check out the blog: [www.gtdtimes.com](http://www.gtdtimes.com). ●

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Penguin Group, 2001, 267 pages.