You're listening to You've Got This, episode 419.

Welcome to You've Got This, a weekly podcast for higher education professionals looking to increase their confidence and capacity for juggling the day-to-day demands of an academic life.

I'm your host, Dr.

Katie Linder.

On this episode, I want to talk about the power of archiving.

Now this is something that I've been thinking about a lot recently and realizing that I do not do this enough.

I've been trying to build it in a little bit more when I have a little bit of time here and there.

I wanted to talk a little bit about how I'm doing that and why I think it's important.

Recently I was dealing with, well, I should say all the time, I'm dealing with a lot of projects on my plate.

Recently I was really thinking about the load that I was carrying and all of the different kinds of things that I was trying to move forward at the same time.

I picked up a book on something called The Para Method.

This is a book that's written by Thiago Forte.

You might be familiar with this person because he's also written a book on building a second brain.

His area that he trains in and talks with people about is this concept of knowledge management and how are you tracking your notes and making sure that all of this stuff stays organized.

The Para Method is basically something that breaks down your online organization into four categories.

He calls these categories projects, areas, resources, and archives.

I'm not going to go too far into what all this means.

The book is relatively short.

You could probably read it in one sitting.

I'll link to it in the show notes if you want to take a deeper dive.

What I'll say is actually that all the components of Para don't necessarily map onto my preferred way of working.

It was helpful to read it, but I set some of that aside.

The thing that I did really hook into though that he talks about is this idea of archiving.

Basically what he talks about is you have these projects, you have these different areas, you have these resources, but you basically want to think about the things that you most need at hand at any given time.

If it's something that is no longer serving you or you've wrapped up that project, you should put it into an archive folder.

I think that when I'm feeling most overwhelmed, it's even hard when I feel like things around me are cluttered, physically cluttered.

This applies to my digital environment as well.

I was really interested and intrigued by this concept.

I thought how much of my stuff is really in a place where I need to archive it digitally when I go into my different platforms and see what's there.

After I read this book, I started to go through my digital areas and think about what did I no longer need to have at my fingertips.

I started with Asana.

This is the platform that I use to organize a huge part of my digital life.

I have all of my projects, all of my tasks.

I track so many different things in the system and this is what I have literally up on any computer or my phone, my iPad.

This is what I have up all the time.

It's how I'm really managing my life.

The way that I've organized this part of my digital life is to categorize things into what Asana calls teams.

Then I have projects within those teams and then I have tasks within those projects.

There's this hierarchy of how they set up the organization within the system of Asana.

I started at the teams level to make sure that all of my larger buckets still make sense.

Generally, I was like, "Yep, this still makes sense."

I had actually done some work on these larger buckets over the winter break and I'd reorganized some things.

Basically I think about what needs to be a larger bucket if I have multiple projects that need to sit within that area.

That's what constitutes one of these buckets for me.

Right now in Asana, just to give you a sense, I have eight of these larger buckets that are all housing a number of different projects.

I left those alone.

Those team level things were fine.

Then I started to look at the projects that sat within the teams.

Through this process, I was actually able to archive four to five projects.

I also was actually able to combine a few projects that had a few tasks sitting within them that I wasn't really using that structure of that project anymore.

I could move those tasks into another project so certain things could be deleted.

Now within each of these teams, I have maybe sometimes as small as two projects, sometimes as high as I would say five or six projects.

There's one team in which I track all of the people who are in my coach training program.

I feel like that's an outlier.

That's like 90 projects that sit within because I have one for each person who's in the coach training program.

But in the rest of these teams, it's basically like five or six projects that I'm trying to track and I was able to kind of clean that up and it felt really good.

This took me about 30 minutes to do.

It was so satisfying because I just felt more organized and focused when I came out on the other side.

It really did also remind me that I often will kind of create things that kind of serve me in the moment.

They might serve me for actually quite a bit of time, but if I don't constantly revisit that stuff, sometimes it does kind of like age out and I'm just not really using it in the same way anymore.

And then it's just kind of sitting there and it doesn't really serve a purpose.

And so cleaning up that digital space and archiving that makes a lot of sense to me.

Okay.

Then I turned to my Dropbox folders and this is the way that I organize a whole other major section of my digital life.

And these were a bit more disorganized and there was also way more volume in my Dropbox folders.

I have similar to Asana, what I would call eight larger buckets or areas of focus.

And then I have subfolders within each of those and those eight larger buckets or kind of focus areas are not the same categories as what is in Asana.

So I will just say there's not alignment across and I think that's okay.

It's not necessarily meant to be aligned, but just to note, I've got eight different kinds of things that I'm looking at in Dropbox.

And again, these larger buckets stayed the same.

So what was kind of interesting is when I looked at both of these different platforms, the larger themes and buckets that I've been organizing things around is still making kind of logical sense in my brain.

But the stuff within them is the things that tend to get kind of messy and disorganized.

So I went into these larger bucket areas and I created an archive folder within each of them.

And then I started dragging files in there that I no longer really needed immediate access to.

And it was not really surprising to me how much stuff was in this kind of file system that was just sitting there.

And what I found was I often will go into these folders on like a very regular basis.

And there's a few things that I'm accessing like very consistently, but there's a lot of stuff that I was just ignoring like, and, and even that mental energy of ignoring the files because they weren't sitting in an archive folder, like that's still taking a little bit of attacks.

And so by doing this process of kind of creating this archive folder and just dragging things in there, it's just kind of a little bit out of sight, out of mind, where I don't have to be kind of constantly filtering through and seeing what this stuff was.

And I was able to create a more focused set of files.

Now the other thing that this really served a purpose for in my Dropbox set of folders was there were certain things that I kind of hesitated on in terms of is this ready to be archived or not.

And it kind of forced me to do a little bit of a deeper dive into these folders than I had in a really long time.

Like I had a folder called like professional development and I had a bunch of different like readings and you know, other kinds of resources and things that I had collected over time.

And when I really started to think about what was in there, you know, I opened a few different things and I kind of like looked into see the themes that I was kind of looking at.

And it was all stuff that I was kind of interested in, but not that I needed to be like actively researching right now.

And it was enough for me to know it was going to be available in this archive folder at a later point if I really wanted to get into this and I could kind of remind myself that's what's there.

So Dropbox is now somewhat more organized.

I will say there's probably a little bit more work that I could do there, but again, I only took about 20 minutes.

I was like, okay, I'm just going to do this like fast and furious.

What are the things that I can just kind of move around in these different eight areas and call it good.

Now the nice thing about doing this at a relatively high level of your folder system is you're not going into all of these different areas and figuring out the archive.

You're just going into kind of the highest level and saying, okay, what are the literal like whole sections of folders that I can move into the archive?

And that was something that was really, really helpful for me.

Now another area that isn't one that I have, but I would imagine is one that you might have or that people in general might have, which is like a note taking system.

I don't typically have that.

I mean, when I'm taking notes, it's usually tied to a project, which means that it's like in a sauna or it's in Dropbox.

Like I, that's what I use for kind of collecting this kind of stuff.

But if you have something like one note or obsidian or, you know, one of these note taking platforms, I would also consider going in and doing an archive there too, because I think that sometimes again, we just like a mass, this really large amount of information and stuff.

And like I found, for example, this document when I was going to Dropbox and it was like the early stages of how to do a chat GPT prompt.

And I am like way beyond that now.

I, at the time I needed it, I needed the notes, but now I don't.

I mean, I understand kind of how that functions and so I could just delete that.

So even as you're going through the archive, you might also like the archive is like the quick and easy way of doing it.

But if you wanted to spend a little more time, you could probably actually call out a bunch of stuff that you just don't need anymore.

Now with digital space being as cheap as it is right now for me, it's easier to just archive it and not kind of take the time to go through and like really kind of call out the stuff that I don't need.

But if you really wanted to do that in a note taking platform, it might be something that could be kind of interesting to you.

So I want to encourage you to think about the power of archiving and to consider your different digital platforms and where this might be something that could be helpful for you.

Of course, I would love to know if you are already engaging in archiving, what that has been like for you, or if you decide you want to try out archiving, what that might look like for you, you can always email me at hello@drkatylinder.com.

I always do love to hear from you.

Thanks for listening.

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