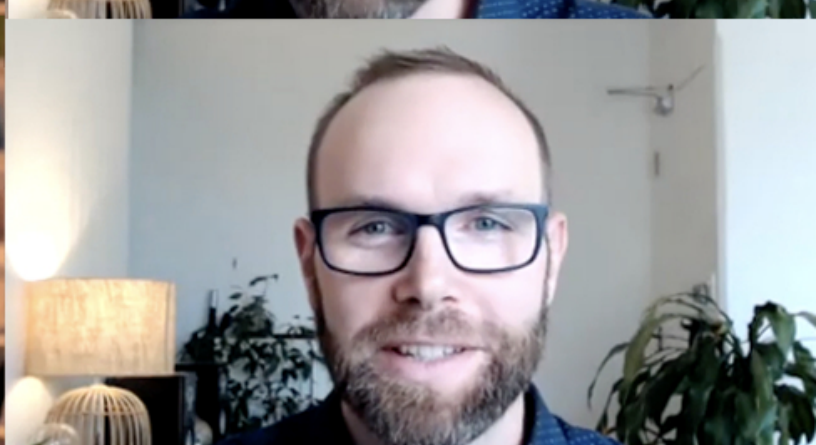
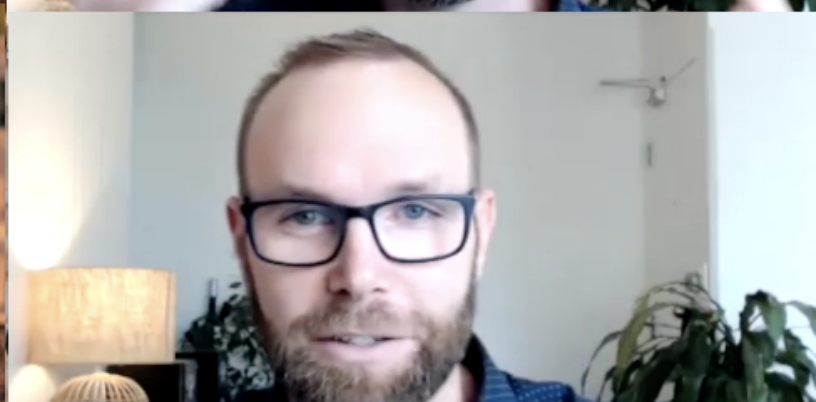




JAMES SCHRAMKO



Async Advantage: Optimizing Your Workplace for Success

Asynchronous communication can boost productivity and freedom in the workplace, as James and VirtualDOO's Lloyd Thompson know firsthand. Discover how.



James Schramko and Lloyd Thompson

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to my podcast. This is episode 1018. And today, we're having a chat with [Lloyd Thompson](#) again there with his cup of tea. Hello, Lloyd.

Lloyd: Thanks for having me, James, always got a cup of tea.

James: That's it. Lloyd has got a bit of an accent there, so hence the tea. Today, we're talking about async communications, it's a really big topic. I've seen people talking about it in terms of how they structure their memberships. I know when we went online, it became a thing. It's certainly one of my favorite things in the world. I love it. And we'll find out why in this episode.

We're going to be covering what is async, and what are the alternatives, when you should use it, when you shouldn't, what's good, what's bad, and all the rest of it. Of course, Lloyd is here because he runs a business called [VirtualDOO.com](#). And he is an expert at [people and systems](#).

So in the course of his work, he's going off looking at these businesses, and he's working out good ways to communicate with your team, because you need these projects to get done. The visionaries got all these ideas where they're like, Get it done. And of course, you're going to need everything from org charts to project management, so forth. But a lot of it comes down to communication. So, Lloyd, why don't you kick us off with this episode, and let's break it down.

Synchronous versus asynchronous communication

Lloyd: Yeah. So if we're going to understand asynchronous communication, then we better first understand what synchronous communication is. And this is more typical to most people, especially if you've come from a corporate background. So synchronous is, it's there at the same time, happening at the same time.

So you might think of in-person meetings, or a live Zoom meeting, or instant messaging on [Slack](#) or teams if you're both there chatting at the same time. Whereas asynchronous would be what's happening at different times. So I'm emailing you and you'll pick that up at another time, or a task management tool like Asana, or Trello, or ClickUp or Monday, there's zillions of these things, where I can assign tasks out to a team, and they can pick that up at a time of convenience.

Then there might be - if you're using a cloud-based product, like Google Workspace or Office 365, there's ways that you can share and work together. And also you can work together live and in person at the same time. But you also might work on those things at a different time. That's asynchronous. So you might be sharing a Google document or a Google sheet or a presentation. So the ways to collaborate where you don't have to be there exactly at the same time.

Another one would be Loom. I could be having a meeting with you, James. And that's one way I might be imparting information with you. Another way might be like, I've got something I want to share. Rather than have to tee up a time with you, I might go, I've got an idea for James, I'm just going to record a quick Loom, that's a video. And I'll just shoot you a message, which has just got so, Hey, James, here's a video I made for you.

And I can talk for three or four minutes about some great ideas I've had. And it carries the tone of everything that I wanted to say. And you can pick that up at a time of your convenience. And then there's called Slack, which I just mentioned for synchronous. But that can also be used for asynchronous. And the difference really is the expectations are when someone's going to pick up that message.

So both in synchronous and asynchronous, there's tools that will accommodate both, but the real main difference between them would be the expectation of when someone's going to pick that up. And if we're talking about a good example, let's say of a synchronous work, I've got a team member who's in New York, and we communicate fairly often. But if I'm going to tee up a time every day to chat to him, it's going to be early in my morning and later in his evening.

And I don't want to be doing that every day, you know, getting a crucial meeting spot so I can catch up with him. Instead, we just send each other a Loom video, and we can pick them up at our own convenience, carries all that information. I don't have to sit down, write a long email, I don't have to block out time on my calendar. And that just works brilliantly.

So we've been doing that for a very long time now. And I do that with all my team members. So straight off, that's the key differences between synchronous and asynchronous work.

James: And of course, these options have been around in the world before. I guess back in the old days, you'd write a letter and go on a ship to another country, and you'd wait, and then another letter would come back. It'd be very slow.

Lloyd: That's very slow asynchronous. [laughs]

James: Well, then of course, you know, the telephone came, and then people would actually have conversations. And that would have been amazing to have a real-time conversation. And I imagine some people probably put that up on a pedestal. However, when you talk about Loom back and forth, it certainly sounds appealing.

I'm thinking about this. When you have Slack, when you said that when you're messaging on Slack, I always actually considered that as async communications, because it's actually rare that I'll be expecting my team member to actually respond instantly. Like, it's not like I send the message, and I take a sip of my coffee and wait.

Remember that movie, there was a movie with Tom Hanks in it. And they were back and forth with little email messages. But most people aren't just sitting there all the time, I suppose, you could send it off without the expectation that's going to be instant.

But of course, Slack has huddles. And you can actually click on the button and now talk with your team. We do that every week with the team, we have a 10- or 12-minute huddle. That's actually the only communication we have in my team that's in real time. The rest of it is messages, and we wait. And of course, they are in slightly different time zone as well.

So isn't this fascinating, we've gone from an era where it was quite novel to be able to talk. Remember the mobile phones in the 80s, they came out and...

Lloyd: Huge phone. Massive phone.

James: Yeah, I just wanted a phone, I wanted a phone, and I got a phone, I ended up with a phone. And it was like, amazing. And I actually said to a recruiter at the time, I want a job where I get a mobile phone, where I get to make decisions on the fly. But here we are now in 2023. I actually love async.

And a lot of other coaches do this, too. I've replaced a lot of the live calls that I was doing, the one-to-ones, with Looms back and forth. And I've even asked, and it got provided for in the platform that I use for my website, which is Kleq, K-L-E-Q.com, the audio option like Voxer, you can just hold a button and talk. So now I can audio back and forth.

So there's different modalities, text, audio, we can embed a Loom or a YouTube video. So I'm a huge fan of async. It's really changed my schedule. I'm still able to get all the things done I need with my team. But I don't have to be on call all the time. And they don't have to be on call all the time. I really don't mind when they work so much.

The thinking for and against async

So we've talked about what sync is, we've talked about what async is, we've talked about the fact that many tools cater for one or the other or both. I mean, even your phone, right? You can send messages or you can call. I think more people send messages than call these days.



Lloyd: I think that's the case. I really liked your metaphor that you were talking about earlier when you were talking about how you'd send letters. And now we got to this point where we can do real-time. But I think the real benefit of being out - the real enabler for global working is actually the asynchronous piece, because we no longer need to have the - we're all working the same hours.

You know, it's not convenient for me in Australia to be working one set of hours and saying to the folks in New York, Hey, I want you to align on my hours. It's just not practical. My folks in the Philippines, although their hours are quite close to mine, I don't say, You need to work exactly the hours that I'm working in Sydney.

James: There are some counter arguments to that though. We see news from Elon Musk, right? He insists people come into the factory, he doesn't think you can change the world in your tracksuit pants at home. You have to be in the office, there's no excuse. And that's the way forward, right?

So I've seen it, too. I've worked in real offices with actual people. Before I came online, right? We had 70 people distributed across three different physical premises in my last job. And I could see the beauty of coming together with people and the power of things in real time. I don't want to discount that in any way.

I am saying in our industry, there's certainly tremendous lifestyle advantages and the ability to source talent anywhere in the world if you want to embrace async and you don't require sync. Just on this point, I feel like maybe like Elon Musk, there's still some people who insist on sync when maybe async could work. What do you think about that?

Lloyd: And I think you're hitting the nail on the head there. I think if you're missing async out, you're taking out a huge opportunity. I'm not saying that you should go for async. It's just, there's a lot of things that you can replace with async. And async, particularly in corporations, is not done as much. They're not used to a concept in many cases where you don't have line of sight management, and you're not saying, Oh, this person clocked in at this time and clocked out of that time.



Rather, with async, you're moving to more of a mindset where you're more interested in a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. You're not looking exactly when they clocked in and clocked out, you're looking at value. And this is an alien idea for a lot of people, particularly like command and control managers who've got concerns around, well, what if I need an immediate response from someone? How am I going to get that? Or how do I collaborate in real time? Or how do I share status updates?

They're just not used to that mode of thinking. And I remember, actually, when I was in corporate world, I'd seen the full extreme version of this, where they just weren't using async. And by default, if I'd have just let things be, my calendar would have been absolutely full of meetings. And then at the end of the day, I'll be expected to do my productive work and responses back to, in my hobby time outside of that meeting time. And that's just nuts. You're not going to be productive and get things done.

A solution to boring meetings?

James: Do you think that async solves meetingitis?

Lloyd: I think it's definitely a way to solve it. I mean, there are meetings that you're going to need to have. But there are ways that you can eliminate pointless meetings.

James: You can augment, leverage. Memos. I think Bezos, for example, is a big fan of memos. Do you remember memos in the workplace?

Lloyd: Yeah, I've never quite heard it being put in those terms. But describe what you're meaning there, James.

James: A memorandum. Basically, it's when the boss writes a memo and sends it to all staff. It's basically an internal newsletter. It's a push notification.

Lloyd: Oh like a short, two-page summary or something like that.

James: Exactly. Some places I worked, we used to get, like you could collect a phone book in a week and that phonebook again, it's an old school thing. But they'd write, you know, from tomorrow onwards, we will open at 8:30, not 8:15, or not 9, your lunch will be 40 minutes instead of 60 minutes. Like, it was often bad news, memos.

If you own a property in Australia that's rented out, you'll probably get strata meeting notes, it's very similar to a memorandum. It's like the notes of what's happening, or what Bezos does well is he requires people to read the memorandum before they get to the meeting. So it's like an outline of the agenda and it might have pre work, etc.

And I do the same thing with my own team, when we're having these async communications. For example, we're doing a lot of publishing of videos. I might say, Here's a couple of tutorials on thumbnails. Let's discuss this in next week's meeting. And so I'll signal that this is coming up in the sync meeting.

And then when we go sync, that's when we can have a more creative brainstorm and a real-time agreement. That's when we can say, Here's what we're saying, this is what we've been doing, this is what I'm after, this is the vision. Who's on board? Who's learning what? What's a reasonable amount of thumbnails to be able to put forward per video?

Like a lot of these things, you're going to get further down the path in a real live conversation. Like this podcast, I think it would be really hard to put this podcast together if I did my side and sent it to you, and then you responded and sent it to me, like it will just get blown out. Right?

Lloyd: Absolutely. And I agree with that. If I take the extreme case where I was in corporate, and by default, I would just let my calendar load up full, full, full, full, full. I would have to take some response to that in order to get anything done. And what I would do is I'd first go through and go, Is there an agenda here? Because otherwise, what am I turning up for?

So no agenda, no meeting, decline. Or go back and say put an agenda, then I'll consider coming to this meeting. And then the other thing is, I'll look and say, Is there a clear reason why I'm required? Like, what am I here for? You know, what's the expectation that you want from me? Am I being consulted? Are you just sending me information? Or do you need a decision? I need to know which one of those things there are.

If it's just one-way info, do I need to sit in a meeting for an hour? Why don't you send me a Loom video? So once I've gone through and eliminated pointless meetings, I then go and do the same for my team. Because my team were the people that were producing the real work, you know, the real value. They're writing code or problem-solving.

So I'd go through and say, What is this meeting about? Why are you in there? Do we really need you? And that'd free people up so much more, wasn't ending up doing my work in my hobby time in the evenings, and same for my team. So replacing all of those meetings.

And in order to get to this point where you are able to have asynchronous meeting, such as what we talked about, like Loom, if it's information that's the ideal place where you can replace a meeting with a Loom video or something like that. Then you really need the support of the leadership. And there's nothing like leading by example.

The flexibility of being asynchronous

So corporate's gone full synchronous in many ways. And they just don't know any better way to share information than, let's book everyone in a meeting, and let's not miss a person out who might not be required, let's get them in there. But if done right, then you can have a flexible sort of workplace where people are able to spend time and have deep work and focus and concentrate on things that need to get delivered.

There's also that flexibility that's going to be there. So like me, I'm going to have plenty of time today to go and take the dog out for a walk, because I'm not in meetings all day. I've structured my work like that, structured my business like that. Same for my team. I'm not going to expect them to sit there and have meetings with me and other folks, they're busy doing productive stuff, because we have an asynchronous way of working.

And there's another thing here that only came to light when I was thinking about this podcast the other day. And as I was talking to my team last week on a web change, it came to my mind that we're actually working quite in a synchronous manner. And that is accommodating the different types of personalities. Like, some people don't want to be on screen like you and I are right now having a live one-to-one.

James: I don't want to be. I mean, I used to do audio-only podcasts. It's just the market requires video, and video gives you so many opportunities for marketing. But I was more than happy to do audio-only podcast for many, many years.

Lloyd: Well, I mean, it's working James. Well, look at your beautiful backdrop.
[laughs]

James: But you know, it's a whole lot of extra things have to happen. You know, the other thing that I've noticed, when I've transitioned, I'll apply this to the coaching that I'm doing just because it works out the same. Earlier in the year, I closed down about 10 one-to-one clients. And that was where we had regular calls in the schedule to talk and coach.

And they were awesome. And they're great. And I did them for a long time, I did them for 13 years. However, I think six or seven of them went across to my Mentor Program, which is in my James Schramko membership. And that provides the ability to have one-to-one async communications. And there's still a weekly group call, I just want to point that, we still have a sync component.

But in between, when they send me a Loom video saying, Look, I'm all on board this strategy, but there's one question I've got that's on my mind, and it's keeping me up at night - and they sort of detail it - I can control the pace of that. So you know, when you're having a live conversation, it's hard to just put your finger on the thing, like, make it faster. I have to wait.

But if I'm watching a Loom, I could speed it up a bit, 1.5, or if they say something interesting, I can rewind, rewind, and play it back a few times, and make sure I really digest it. And the best part is, I don't have to think of stuff on the fly, like my wish was so many years ago for the recruiter.

Now, I actually make a couple of notes. And then I go away and I find things, I research stuff, I look up my old training, or I ask a couple of friends of mine an opinion on something, or I'll just digest it while I go out for a surf. I'll come back, and then I'll prepare a response that's really to the point and punchy. Instead of having to have an 80% answer, I can give them like, 100% solid answer if we've got the benefit of a small amount of delay, to pause, reflect, consolidate.

And it's like that saying, I'm sorry I wrote you such a long letter, I didn't have time to write a shorter one. I can send them just the bullets. I can say, I've thought about this. Here are the pros, here the cons. Here's a link to the training I did on this before. This is where I would go. And then they reply back saying, I'm totally on board. I've got it, thank you. This is a game-changer. Or whatever, something like that.

And then I feel like we're really making progress in between those weekly calls. So, huge fan. And it's given me capacity to be better at what I do. But also, I still work the exact same way with my team. And I think they love having an async environment. Like, their only sync commitment in an entire week is 10 to 12 minutes, for the whole week. That's it in our business.

If you were to go into a sync company, and they weren't doing any async, like are there any other benefits you can think of that you'd point out to them?

Lloyd: Well, I would say more tips that I've got, the tip I would give here...

James: Go for it.

Lloyd: In fact, let me just go back to benefits for one second, is that Harvard Business Review actually showed that by cutting back meetings and moving to a more asynchronous environment, it actually increased productivity. So there's a first sort of case you can put to accompany that, say, Well, if you want to do this, there's a real reason why. You know, we're not just doing it because it's trendy, and people can leave voice notes and send Loom videos.

Yeah, tips-wise. Well, the first thing I'd say, I wouldn't change everything immediately. You're not going to whip off the plaster and say, Old way gone, new way, let's begin. You're just going to freak people out, you're not going to take people on the journey.

James: So you'd introduce it strategically.

Getting off the email and onto messaging

Lloyd: Yeah, gradually along the way. A good place to start is using tools like Slack. So, so many people are doing things on email. And they probably already have some kind of chat channel already, like Teams if they're in an office environment, or Slack. So there are so many things that they can get off email and put into Slack.

And the benefit of doing that is, one, they can organize things more efficiently. So if it's different groups of people, they can put them into different channels. So they are eliminating things that have been quite time-consuming before on threads of communication, that would have taken them a long time to send out in an email, they can just do it more informally on a channel and know that they've already got the right people in there.

Another thing you can do in Slack, is that you can send a voice note. And that's going to convey the tone of what you're trying to mean there or trying to convey. And if someone wants to pick up that note, and doesn't want to have audio, Slack now actually transcribes it, so you can actually click on the message, and you can see what's written.

James: That's amazing.

Lloyd: So it's a huge time-saver. For me, if I'm sitting down and writing a carefully, formally, grammatically correct email, it's going to take me a lot longer than it is for me to just send a quick voice note to the channel of people that I want to have a chat to about what's important.

James: I think that the transcription thing is amazing. I don't like receiving audios that much. But if it's a coaching student, that's fine, because they like sending it, I'll work around them. But the fact that I can read it, it's great because I don't have to play it if I'm sitting there and there's other people around, or I don't have my headphones, which is, I never have my headphones. They're permanently attached to this podcasting rig.

In our team, we don't use email. Like we're issued one each, but they only use it to log into software accounts, or we have a Google group where we can send support to. But we exclusively use Slack. And that was one thing that was really shocking to me. With the much younger generation, especially in the Philippines, they are all text-driven. They don't use email, younger people generally don't use email. It's just not a thing. It's all messaging.

And the private messaging ratio in our businesses is significant. It's like, whoa, hidden iceberg. The amount of messages one to one, versus a group, is high. And you know what that means? It means relevance. Because when they're not pinging a broadcast channel, this is the number one problem people have with Slack, they think, Oh, I'm just getting alerted all the time. And they just start turning off their alerts or ignoring a channel.

But my team, because we have set the channels up with only the people in them, as per your meeting rule, that need to be there, and because they're doing a lot of one-to-one communications, they're not cluttering up or clouding our airways with nonsense, which is great.

Lloyd: Well, that's a good point, actually. Because when you are going to bring in something, if you are moving to a more asynchronous environment, then having a way to distinguish between what's really important and not what's important is super high priority.

And the way to do that is have some kind of Slack channel that will have notifications for urgent requests, or if it's an emergency, have agreed with the team that an emergency will be dealt with in a certain way. For example, I might text you personally, as opposed to do it in Slack. Then you know, this is the real deal.

James: It's actually what I recommend when people have a holiday. If you're going on a holiday and you think, oh, you know, they're just going to keep logging in and checking the business, don't. But just to have an arrangement with your team member that if there is an emergency, please send an SMS to my phone and say please check Slack, right? And that would be the protocol. So if you don't get an SMS, just enjoy your piña coladas and kick back, because nothing's going on that can't be resolved by the team itself.

Lloyd: Yeah, I completely agree. I think just the other tips I'd like to raise there are, we've already covered one, which is replacing meetings with Loom if they're informational, and the other one, which was leading by example. So if you're the business owner, and you want to start going this way, then you have to do it yourself.

People aren't going to take it seriously. So you're going to have to actually show everyone what good looks like and show people, this is okay to do. It's okay to leave voice notes. It's okay to leave Looms. It's okay to cancel meetings if they're not relevant. So do those.

James: It's okay to leave text messages as well.

Lloyd: Yeah. Good old-fashioned text. Yeah, absolutely.

James: I also like the Slack bot, because it can prompt things. You know, like once a week, it'd say, Go and check the latest training, make sure it's updated in the membership. That's basically an async prompt. It doesn't require someone to turn up at a specific time, but it's going to happen automatically.

Making sure you're understood

Lloyd: So my final tip would be about, if you're thinking of replacing a meeting with a Loom, or just text, is making sure it's clear. So you're going to have to convey, you can't - and this goes for a lot of things actually, if you're assigning someone a task, if it's super vague, they're going to end up having to get on to a live call if you understand what on earth you meant in the first place.

So if it's a Loom video or an audio message, well, it's not taking you long. Why don't you just go into some detail and explain it, and then you've saved yourself a meeting, rather than just putting some super vague text or something short out there. And I've got to say, I made this mistake myself the other day. I left a Loom video for my team, and I said, Hey, I just want to make a few changes on my webpage. And they never put them live, they always send me the sample before it goes live.

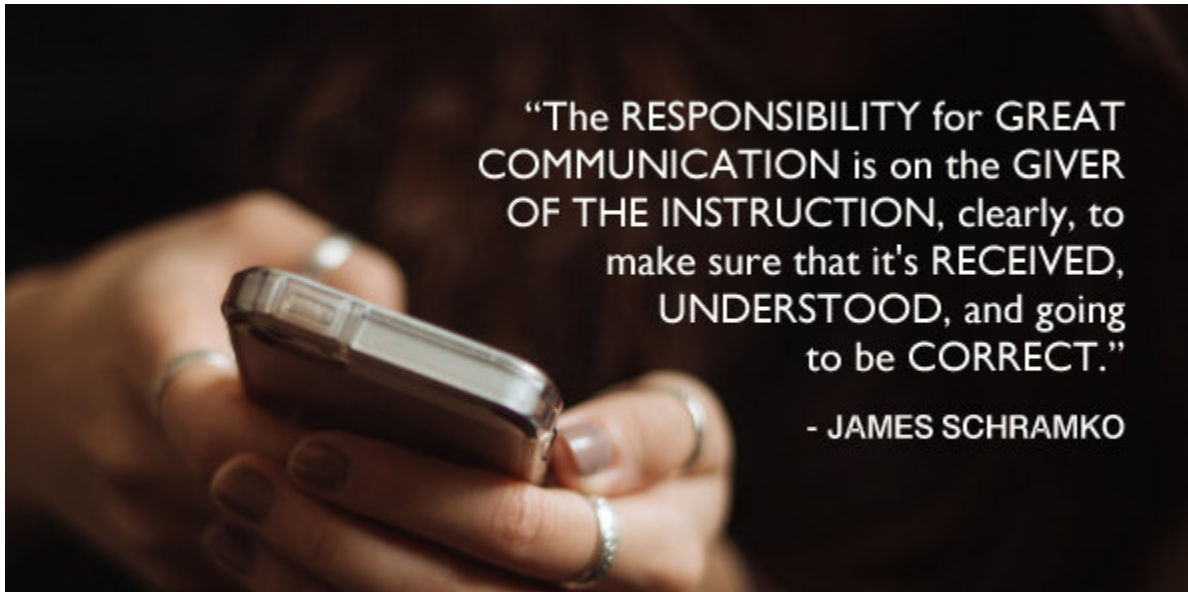
And I said, Can you just make these changes? And I got the changes back. So I had sent this Loom video, I got the changes back, and it's not what I'd expected. And then I said to another team member, I was like, What do you make of this? Is this what you would have done too? And they said, Oh, yeah, yeah, that's what I've done.

So right, well, the problem was me then. [laughs] I didn't explain this very well. So as a result, I ended up saying, Hey, get my team members onto a live video. And that was my fault. That was because I did not explain it clearly.

James: Did you use the screenshare? Or just a video of yourself?

Lloyd: It was a video of myself, but no, no, what am I talking about? I do the screenshare and the video.

James: Because that helps a lot. You know, you can say, This part here, can we change this or whatever? I often put screenshots. I often say, Can we please change this on the website? I'll put a screenshot of it. And then I'll give them the link to the page. So I've had the same thing.



I mean, obviously, if you have a team and you're in business long enough, you're going to get a weird thing come back. Obviously, the responsibility for great communication is on the giver of the instruction, clearly, to make sure that it's received, understood, and going to be correct.

Lloyd: And on that, one simple way that's been around for years, and this has been applying more to tasks, but if you're explaining to someone something, you can say, The following will be true when the job is done. That's called an acceptance criteria. So you can just list a number of things that will be true, and they go, Oh, yeah, check, check, check, check. Done.

James: I like that. It sits with what [Dean Jackson](#) teaches, which is, he's got a, I know I'm successful when, checklist. It's an extension of the Dan Sullivan thing, you know, what would have to happen for this result? It's like the end of it is like, what would be the evidence that this is successful? How would we know if this is working? Could you say that about async communications?

Lloyd: Absolutely.

James: What does success look like?

Lloyd: Yeah, yeah, exactly. Just say that in your message, you know, the following will be true when this is done.

James: So it could be just like, we'll know it's working when this, this, or that happens. I like it. Very good. That's a great tip. So if we get async well, how do we know it's working well? I'm asking you.

Lloyd: Yeah. I think, you know it's working well because your business is running like a well-oiled machine. And people are sleeping well at night. So it doesn't feel like the emergency department where people in different time zones are all working long hours, trying to all cover a common period of time that's a very long period of time that's covering many time zones.

They can just have a couple of hours where they overlap, do their business where they need to talk to each other. And otherwise, people are sleeping, working normal hours, and there's a good balance of synchronous and asynchronous work.

Why async is good for sleep

James: That is hilarious. You know, like, as a result of my podcast with Zac, he had me get an oura ring, right? This oura ring.

Lloyd: Oh, yeah.

James: And it measures your sleep. And apparently, my sleep scores are really high. Like, my friends are calling me the sleep master, because I'm scoring like high 90s. It's like, pretty good sleep.

Lloyd: What does that translate into hours? Or is it REM or something like that?

James: There's a variety of things. But in short, it's kind of like how long you sleep, how consistent you are with the time that you go to sleep, how are you sleeping - light, medium or deep REM, and the heart variance and the resting heart rate and stuff. It combines all of that and gives you a sleep score.

I haven't been wearing it for very long. But in short, I always thought that I'm sleeping quite well. But this confirms I sleep really well. So I think our async must be really in order. That's what it's telling me both in the way we run the team, and the way that I deliver my services. I feel like it's the greatest thing.

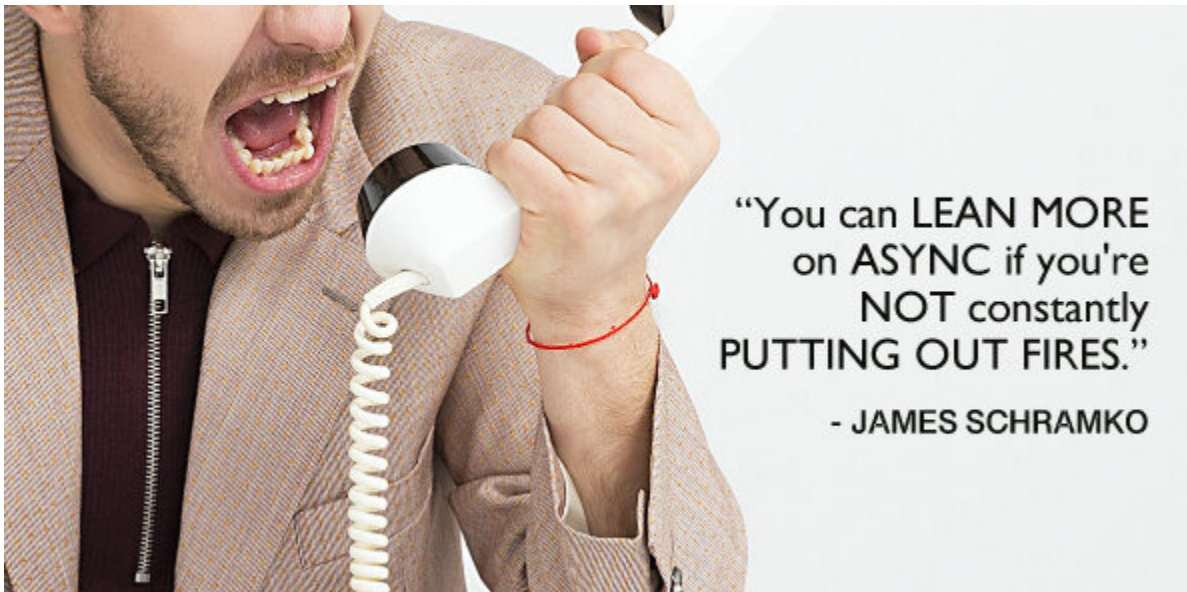
And I know there's other coaches out there, too, they're really sort of championing this and shouting it to the rooftops, like they don't do any sync component whatsoever. If you want any sync component, it'll cost you \$30,000. It's all async. But I do think it makes a lot of sense for the student and for the teacher. And it makes so much sense for an online business, if you have a team that's not in your office, if you have an office, async should be on the diet.

Lloyd: Well I think there's a couple of things to say there. One is, although it might have sounded a bit off-topic to talk about sleep, it's totally relevant. In fact, I listened to an expert from NASA who was looking into improving productivity. And the number one thing she found was that if you increase your sleep by 10%, you'd get more productivity by more than 10% in terms of what you're doing, because you're just being able to process things so much faster, decision-make, etc.

James: Totally on topic. I mean, at this point in the year, like just for context, it was about February, where I unwound my one-to-one calls with 10 clients. And some of those, I think, five or six of those, were early morning calls on my Tuesday and Wednesday, which just ruined my day. And that's what broke the camel's back, because in the northern hemisphere, United States, the only time that's really suitable in Australia is in the morning.

And I already had my weekly call. They can't do Monday, because that's their Sunday. So that's out. They can only do Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. I'm not working on Saturday, and I don't work Friday or Thursday anyway, with calls. So I only had Tuesday and Wednesday. So I ended up with a seven or a 7:30 slot.

And I'd often have to get up a bit early for that, earlier than my natural cycle. Or get up early, get prepared, and then go and do work, and then deal with my family. And it wasn't ideal. And when it really came to the crunch was when I spent two months in the Philippines, which was two or three hours earlier. So I was starting to get up at four in the morning. And I'm like, Okay, I'm done. Thirteen years, I'm out.



So async has allowed me to continue to deliver a high level of service without having to compromise on that sleep or the routine. And like, literally, it's a game-changer. But my team and I have been like this forever. I'm super comfortable. Because the other thing, and this is, again, it's related, you can lean more on async if you're not constantly putting out fires.

If you run your business like a chaotic visionary, and sh*t hits the fan on a daily basis, you need sync because that's basically like, you're up against the limit. And you need like, it's an emergency, you need to deal with it now, you need all hands on deck. And that just wears out your team. It wears out the adrenal glands on everybody, they start to leave, you have to replace them.

That's where you come into it, Lloyd, because you're that shock absorber between a highly-strung chaos visionary who's running around with a lighter and matches, let's face it. And you've got the team there, Why does this person run around with lighters and matches and kerosene? Well, why can't we have a week to do something instead of an hour, you know?

Why can't they just tell us what they want and measure it out instead of diluting us with 30 things at once in a meeting and then leaving us, and then we're like, we don't even know exactly what they wanted, and they wanted it by yesterday. I'm exhausted even talking about it. But I feel like it would be a good litmus test. If your business can't run with a good dose of async, it's probably because you're too highly strung.

Where sync has its place

Lloyd: Yeah, there is a place for synchronous and asynchronous. And you definitely can't run full async. You can't do that. And in fact I really liked your way of putting that. I'd say, the more you can do async is actually a sign that you're running a well-oiled machine. But even to get to that, I still think you need to have a few key rhythms that are sync, which is, and I'd just like to bring them up actually.

James: Go for it.

Lloyd: So one-on-ones. So when you're going to catch up with people in your team, you still need to have that relationship. And you want to listen to their goals, and it's not something that's really going to go well over just text. Just like, listen and understand what they're doing and have that relationship with them, and being able to look them in the eye.

James: On that one, like I like to do that face-to-face. I met with my team about three times a year in person. There's no replacement for that. You know, whether you go to events or whatever, that face-to-face, one-to-one connection, in person, is the highest level possible.

Lloyd: And actually, I used to be, I mean, I'm a systems person. So I naturally like to be systemized. But one feedback I got early in my career, it really helped me, was like, Lloyd, you keep doing these very structured one-on-ones, it's going to have these 10 things in there. But maybe every now and then, do one of those as completely unstructured.

Just go and have a coffee, and just listen. And you'll discover the 11th thing that you weren't expecting. And so now, I actually have that 11th thing meeting, which is no structure. Let's just have a connect, what's happening for you? What's happening in your life?

James: You went on my unstructured Maldives experience.

Lloyd: Oh, it's fantastic.

James: You like that, where we don't have like a roll call and a timer clock out. So many great things come from that if you can pull it off, having unstructured.

Lloyd: Although, if you're one minute late for the boat, you won't be on the boat, and they'll just discover that.

James: Yeah, you miss out.

Lloyd: Just go back.

James: It's totally optional. But when the boat goes, the boat goes.

Lloyd: So, one-on-ones. That's a sync meeting.

Tough conversations. Like if you're going to give someone a performance feedback, or underperformance feedback...

James: Don't do it via text.

Lloyd: Yeah. Hey, buddy, by the way, you know? Don't. You want to see the whites of the eyes and understand what's happening. You've already mentioned another one, like if there's an emergency or a blocker of something, that's time to get who's required, like who's really required.

James: Yeah, all hands on deck, you know, missile inbound, yeah.

Lloyd: All relevant hands on deck. [laughs] But get them in, get them onto a live Zoom, or bridge or conference until the issue is resolved, like a data breach or website down. That's totally relevant for sync.

But then there's a couple more, just run normal rhythms for the business that I would normally do synchronous.

So we've talked about what I do, you know, we're director of operations. So I think it's important to have that Director of Operations connect with a founder or business owner or visionary every week, in a live, understand, make sure they're on the same page. What are the priorities? What are we going to do? Can we talk about any issues? Really important to make sure they're aligned, and they got things prioritized. And what you were saying earlier about, they might want to spin 1000 plates. But really, we need to do one, two, and three in that order. So, super important meeting.

Weekly team meetings. So I like to have a weekly team meeting with my team. And in a business that we're serving, that might be what it takes to understand the reds and greens across the different departments, you know? And when I mean reds and greens, it might be the numbers in the scorecard, your sales numbers are a bit low, that's a red, or your operational numbers' reds and greens, if you know what I mean.

So I think it's important to have a weekly connect, I do that synchronized. And then other things, just like a monthly town hall or something like that, just to make sure that everyone in the business knows who everyone is and what's happening for them. It's good to have those. It can't all completely be over text, or no one builds that real rapport and relationship.

James: Yeah, that makes so much sense. Great topic. I'm a huge fan, async, with a bit of sync thrown in there. And Lloyd, as always, great discussion, VirtualDOO.com. Lloyd helps visionaries get their visions completed with their team, their people, their systems. You're also doing an audit these days. If someone wants you to come in and have a poke around, see what's going on, and then you report to them what they've actually got. That's a thing?

Lloyd: Absolutely, yeah, people and systems audit. If you want to see if that's right for you, just reach out to me, Lloyd@virtualdoo.com. And we can have a chat and see if that's right for your business, and what we can offer, and what we can discover.

James: Thanks so much, Lloyd. Until next time.

Lloyd: Thanks, James.

A high-angle, top-down photograph of a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark blue t-shirt and large black headphones. He is sitting at a rustic wooden desk, focused on a silver laptop. His right hand is on the trackpad. To his right, another silver laptop is open, displaying a webpage with a green image. A smartphone lies on the desk between the two laptops. In the background, there's a white mug and a bag of carrots. The floor is made of dark wood planks.

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