

Beth Beutler's Interview with Chris Edmonds

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Beth: Hi, Everyone. This is Beth with Bethbeutler.com and Hope Unlimited where we help overwhelmed professionals excel, and I am delighted today to interview Chris Edmonds of the Purposeful Culture Group. Hi, Chris.

Chris: Hi, Beth. Thank you for inviting me on.

Beth: Chris is an author, speaker, executive consultant, and musician. I want him to tell you a little more about himself. And in honor of our conversation today I'm actually wearing a particular shirt because I'm talking to him from Upstate South Carolina, Greenville County, which is fairly springlike with rain and warm weather. But my green shirt also has a snowflake and the word "simplify." So tell them, Chris, why a snowflake is appropriate for you and where you're from.

Chris: Well, I live at 8400 feet in the Rockies, outside of Denver, Colorado. We have about 6 inches of snow on the ground. We live on a street called Snowy Trail which is very appropriately named. I was telling Beth we had 4 inches of snow yesterday. It's now 60 and sunny and tomorrow we're going to get 6-8 inches. So we will be ready, set for that wonderful plow job that I get to do. So it is still Colorado Spring up here.

Beth: Well, my shirt also says "simply" and that's appropriate because we are going to be talking about how to use a calendar, but I also need to share with everybody that Chris is one of Hope Unlimited's clients and one of the clients that I do hand-on work for and we're approaching about a year of working together. I have Chris to be very kind, a person who is easy to work with. And we love having you as part of our client family, Chris.

Chris: And it really does shed light on the themes of calendarization, clarity of expectations and who is doing what, when. It can be at the speed of light, and pretty confusing, and we don't want to lose things, and you and I haven't lost a thing, I don't think yet.

Beth: No, I think we've developed a pretty good work flow and that's really great. Well, tell us a little more about what you do and your side interest in music.

Chris: Absolutely. So, I have been in the consulting business of helping leaders with their culture since 1990 so I've been around this for awhile. I also work with the Ken Blanchard Company as a consultant for them. I've been speaking, facilitating, training, consulting for a really long time, and what's really gratifying about it is the ability to help leaders be more intentional about the worker's experience, the employee experience in their organizations. That really drives me. In a book that I released 2 and 1/2 years ago called *The Culture Engine* through John Riley and Sons it's been very gratifying to have that book gain traction on Amazon and elsewhere, and I'm speaking with clients all the time. I'm consulting with senior leadership teams all the time. I'm using that book as a guide, a bit of a journal so to speak, a workbook, and it is interesting because leaders don't really know what to do with culture - they've never been asked to do that so I do a lot of education and then I do a lot of consulting.

And in the midst of all of that - in fact, now we're going to go over here into a studio - you see, this music life is really fun. There's about a dozen or more instruments here. Here's the stage telecaster, and the cool little Rickenbacker mandolin, beautiful little Taylor here so I'm a working musician. I've been doing that for a long time - lost a semester of college back in the 70's, convinced that I didn't have to finish school, I was going to get a record deal. That didn't work. [laughter from Chris and Beth]. And fascinating, 30 years later we got a record deal about 5 years ago so that was kind of fun. The industry has changed quite a bit. We are madly in the midst of learning new songs, We do weddings, corporate events, we do some clubs,

but not a lot any more. We have a wedding coming up and we have to learn new songs which we all whine about, but it's fun, because that's what that audience wants. It all goes back to customer service. If we're not giving an audience what they want, we won't be back.

Beth: That's right. You won't be given a gig. So you can see that Chris is juggling an awful lot - his music life, his travel life, and his personal life. I have a few questions that I'm going to ask him about the subject of calendar especially since this month on the blog it's All Things Calendar. I've got a whole initiative going about calendar and tips.

Beth: So what kind of calendar do you use?

Chris: We're a Mac family so the main calendar is Apple's build-in calendar - it's an Icalendar format. The cool thing about the Apple system and with many calendars. Some use Google calendar, etc. but the cool thing about the Apple calendar is that with my Apple watch - I'm kind of a fan, Beth - I'm sorry, is that with the Macs here in my office and with my iPhone everything is synced very, very quickly and even changes are synced very, very quickly and that's the online calendar that I have. I was just on the phone with our band leader, in fact, who was putting up a huge white board in his office so he and his soon-to-be- bride can keep track of their commitments with each other.

Beth: That's a more organic way.

Chris: It's kind of old school, but she is probably more comfortable doing a "tech" thing than he is, but they have to figure out what works, and my belief is that it doesn't matter what the system is - if it's post-its on a wall, that can work so long as you keep it up-to-date in sharing it.

Beth: That's a great thought. And that is very comforting about people who are a little nervous about trying to do everything "tech." I'm with you - I'm not a Mac; I'm a PC, but the same thing with the synchronization of the global calendar. Years ago I was looking for syncing. I was trying to sync Palm Pilot type-thing.

Chris: Oh, my.

Beth: I do love that I can have it in three or four places and you can add to it in different spots.

Chris: Exactly.

Beth: Now do you mix your personal and your business calendars together.

Chris: I do, and part of that is for the benefit of my lovely bride who doesn't have to travel, but as we have family things that we are doing, she has things that are happening. We have a new puppy who is going to the vet periodically to make sure that the puppy is fine. And if she is down the hill in Denver- we live up in the mountains - and if she doesn't want the new puppy to be by herself then I need to be available. I shouldn't be on the phone. If I'm gone and she's gone, then the puppy has to be cared for so one calendar lets me put the band commitments, the travel commitments, the consulting commitments, the Blanchard commitments, my own writing, blocking time out then that is rather sane and then she has her life and our family is up here so there are a lot of things that she is having to juggle as well - having multiple calendars just didn't work for us so we have one basic platform and it is "knock on wood" working pretty well today.

Beth: I assume they sync - so if she adds something to the calendar, you'll see it and vice versa.

Chris: Exactly. And of course hers are in a different color than my other color.

Beth: Which is great - you like colors - that works great.

Chris: Exactly.

Beth: I love how you said "down the hill." You're talking about Rocky Mountains. We live in the foothills which are also beautiful in their own way - they're certainly not as imposing as the Rocky Mountains by any means, but they're greener. I just think it's a little bit funny about the "hill."

Chris: Yes, down the "hill" is 3500 feet+ for us as you roll down

Beth: What would be a tip to offer our community - if you had to give one tip - maybe you already said it but what would be one tip for calendar keeping?

Chris: What's critical is to make sure that you write stuff down - so that's the first thing. And the second piece is that you keep it up-to-date. So one of the interesting challenges that I face is that the Apple calendar does not have a reminders/task management system built into it. A lot of calendars don't, but there's add-ons. Google has add-ons, there's reminders in the Apple world, that kind of thing. But for me I was a reminder system called Nozbe - it works very, very well. It has teaming ability so if people are responsible for a portion of a task, it doesn't disappear from mine. I can be adding to a task as they add to it - that kind of thing. You and I haven't had to use that, but my wife's calendar focus is her to-do list so she will actually do her "to-do's" as calendar entries. So I'll look at it and I'll go, "Well, you're not gone," so some of it is everybody - especially as you have multiple people using a system whether they have tasks elsewhere or built into the calendar you are going to have to learn to translate what that means for them. You have to be able to kind of pose questions. And I'll say, first of all you spelled 'dogpark' with 3 "r's" and that's not exactly right which is the classic spousal kind of problem - but that's another story, right? But the idea is that you have to make sure that you know what they need, and that you're clear about what you need. It doesn't matter what systems are being used but writing it down, making it formal, and keeping it up-to-date. These are the core things for me.

Beth: Now I'm going to ask - you sound so on top of it with your calendar - can you tell us a time about when you messed up?

Chris: Yes, and the biggest fallacies came from the old dates when we had a calendar that was a white-board set-up, and I could write things in, but if you dry erase and your hand kind of erases something on the next line, and I did something like that committed to travel and that was a major one (and that was probably 10 years ago) because I had say Yes, and by saying Yes, the client begins to write me to make arrangements so we actually had that work out okay.

For me the biggest challenge, and it's kind of an interesting one, because I'm using yet another calendar tool called Acuity Scheduling - and you and I used it to schedule this - well, if in Acuity, which is not built into the Apple system - it's just available through the browser, but it lets you set hours that others can use to set a face-to-face meeting or if your massage therapist wants to set appointments.

And I'm going to get outside here because the housekeepers are going, and we do not want to get in the way of the housekeepers, but for me what was a challenge was that I had made a change in my Apple calendar, but I didn't change it in Acuity, and I had an important client to talk at a certain time, and I wasn't available - I was down the hill, so the challenge again gets to making sure that everything is up-to-date, and that was the challenge that I had. I had assumed that I had updated my calendar. So now it's so funny, because what I do now in my calendar is that every day in Nozbe it says, "Update Acuity."

Beth: So you have a task to update Acuity.

Chris: Exactly - because I know that if I don't update Acuity, I'm going to miss something.

Beth: That just shows how important it is to pay attention. One of my problems is that I have a calendar but not really look at it, but I need to actually go into it and take a look.

I think that you have probably already answered this, but, Would you consider yourself a detailed calendar person, do you have a day at home, do you map out your whole calendar for meetings, or do you have more of blocking time or . . . ?

Chris: You know, it's an interesting dynamic because I have some of my colleagues who are speakers and consultants who are very, very diligent - now I'm very anal, and I'm very detailed, but the benefit of my business here in the last couple of years is that I don't have a lot of calls that I have to do - I can schedule those so I'm blessed - like I have a video conference that I need to do with a client next week and I can say, I can do morning on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday and it wasn't like, "We're going to have to look out 2 months. So what's nice is that I've been spoiled - I've been able to manage writing, and I've been able to manage calls, and last minute stuff that may pop up without having to do such religious blocking of my calendar, and it works okay. The challenge of course is that I make my wife's work very hard because you can't trust the open slot - right? Because it looks open, I haven't committed to something, but I have a blog that is due by noon, or I'm going to shoot video for 3 hours and I haven't put that in so my wife is actually pushing me more towards being much more obvious about those commitments.

Beth: Well, that leads in great to the question about sharing your calendar - you've already talked about sharing your calendar, but now you're mentioning for her benefit, just the white space on your calendar may not mean that you're totally free.

Chris: Exactly, which may mean and part of the introvert - and my wife and I are both introverts - which is fascinating - we've been married for 38 years which means that I'm trainable, but the idea is that if my schedule is unclear, she has to pose a question - well, if I'm thinking I do the huge, heavy sigh when she taps me on the shoulder and says, "I have a question." I'm in the middle of a thought. But it's interesting - if it were blocked, she would know that it's a time when I'm trying to be creative, or I'm trying to study, or I'm doing research or whatever so even though we have a pretty good routine and a pretty good rhythm, I still drive her crazy. without being specific.

Beth: Well, you've covered several things for us, and I think it has been fascinating. So I'll let you lose with any last word of wisdom about using a calendar. You've mentioned that it helps in a relationship so that's a good thing. Any other words of wisdom? I know, there was one other thing that I wanted to ask you. Since you travel so much, obviously you are not able to control the things that happen in the travel world. I know something happened to you not too long ago you put on Facebook - you had to stay overnight in an airport and you didn't know that you were going to have to do that so how do you change your calendar for the next day so that your wife sees all of that and all those details.

Chris: Very much, and it's interesting because of the cycle that we've gotten into and again it gets back to the rhythm of relationships. I talked to my wife every night if I'm on the road. I don't assume that everything is fine, and she doesn't assume that everything is fine so we do that connection and as soon as there is a bump - if I'm supposed to be home by 10:00 and that means that I will be back here by midnight and all of a sudden the flight gets bumped and I'm not sure exactly where I'm going to be well then that takes time and energy and I have to communicate that and Diane would rather hear it face to face - my lovely wife - which means a live phone call. I can text her, but she may not have her phone on after 6 pm so there's really that commitment of being very nimble and having to inform all people - I call them stakeholders - kind of a boring business term - but there's a lot of family, friends, whatever - I'm not going to be able to do this now and we have to change, but I would say that it is all driven by my very strong hot button which is making sure that I keep my commitments. So as I make commitments I want to make sure

that I'm behind the scenes keeping track of those commitments so that I can make sure that I'm doing what I've promised.

Beth: Well, that's a lovely way to end because, folks, I want to tell you that this is really the essence of what Chris does. I work with the stuff he writes, and he's very much into the idea that you have values and you have a personal constitution of values and what he just mentioned here is that it's very important to him to keep commitments. The calendar obviously is just a tool. Your character decides whether you're going to be on time to meetings, whether you're going to call people when you're not going to be able to make it so these are the kinds of things that make be a little convicting to hear, but sometimes it's important to establish for yourself why do I even use a calendar. It's not because it's the thing to do, but it's because I want to communicate with my spouse or my kids or my stakeholders-I love that term really-people who are important in my life - and I'm going to call them personally, not just rely on the calendar if something changes so as we end this conversation, folks, I think that's a great way to end. The calendar is just a tool; it's not to control you, it's a tool to help you live out what your true values are so think about what your true values are, and if you want some more information about that for your company, visit Chris at - tell them the places that they can connect with you, Chris.

Chris: Probably the best place to go is my main website which is drivingresultsthroughculture.com - all one word and that's where you'll find my research and my posts and my video episodes and podcasts. I'm also on Twitter as [scedmonds](https://twitter.com/scedmonds) and you'll find all those links on my main website.

Beth: Great - well, thanks so much and thanks for giving us such a lovely scenic view in the interview. I know my friends in Greenville County are actually going to be a little jealous of that because they would like to have a little more snow once in a while - I know I would, but in a few short hours when you have tons and snow and cold and we're having nice spring weather, then you can be jealous of us.

Chris: That's right. And it's totally true. We have more "stuff" coming, but it's just the nature of spring up here. Beth, it's delightful to connect with you.

Beth: Well, thanks so much for taking the time to be with us today. You have a great week.