

HCI P1: Interview Notes

▼ Interviewee 1: Tristan Jenks

- **Major:** Industrial Engineering (Junior)
- **Planner:** Digital (Google Calendar)
- **Usage:** Uses Google Calendar daily to manage school schedules and personal tasks. Has been using digital planners since freshman year but transitioned fully to Google Calendar after trying a physical planner.
- **Duration:** Has been using this method for about a year after finding a paper planner difficult to keep up with during freshman year.
- **Frequency:** Updates the digital planner on a daily or as-needed basis. The ability to quickly add or modify tasks makes the digital planner more flexible for his schedule.
- **Convenience:** Finds digital planning very convenient, especially for adding recurring events like classes, deadlines, and meetings. Paper planners, while initially helpful, proved inconvenient as they were not always accessible, and he couldn't sync them across devices.
- **Challenges:** One of his main frustrations is that Apple Calendar doesn't sync well with Google Calendar, which means that assignments from Canvas don't integrate smoothly across all platforms. As a result, he often has to manually enter events from Canvas into his Google Calendar.
- **Platforms Used:** He uses a mix of Google Calendar, Apple Calendar, and Microsoft Teams. Each serves a specific purpose, but he finds managing multiple platforms difficult. Google Calendar is his primary tool for academic and recurring events, Apple Calendar is used for general reminders and tasks, and Teams is used for work or group project meetings.
- **Ideas for Improvement:** Tristan suggests that a tool or feature that could sync Canvas directly with Google or Apple Calendar would save a lot of

time and frustration. Additionally, integrating Microsoft Teams with Google Calendar could help consolidate meetings and assignments in one place.

- **Task Organization:** For school, he begins by looking at his Canvas assignments and then prioritizes tasks based on due dates. He blocks time specifically for homework and academic tasks on Mondays and Wednesdays. For personal tasks, such as social activities or errands, he schedules them in the evenings when he has more flexibility.
- **Handling Larger Tasks:** When working on larger projects, such as group assignments, Tristan breaks the work down into smaller parts. He also sets up team meetings in advance, often using Teams to coordinate these deliverables.
- **Adjustments during Busy Seasons:** During high-stress periods, such as midterms or finals, he adjusts his priorities based on which tasks will have the most impact on his academic future. He focuses on high-stakes assignments first and de-prioritizes less critical tasks.
- **Essential Feature:** Tristan needs a planner that breaks down his week into manageable sections and makes it easy to add tasks or events quickly. He values a clean, intuitive interface that simplifies task management.
- **Motivation to Switch:** While he doesn't love Google Calendar, Tristan would switch to a planner that is fully integrated with his devices (both phone and computer) and that simplifies cross-platform task management. He would like to see something that merges the best features of Google Calendar, Apple Calendar, and Canvas.
- **Other Tools Used:** Tristan also uses Handshake to manage job-related tasks, but he hasn't found a way to integrate this effectively with his other calendars.
- **Frustrations:** Tristan is frustrated by the lack of automatic syncing between different platforms, especially Canvas and Apple/Google Calendar. He often finds himself overwhelmed by manually managing different calendars and assignments.

▼ Interviewee 2: Yasmine Atari

- **Major:** Neurobiology (Junior)
- **Planner:** Combination of both paper and digital, but primarily uses digital (Canvas Calendar).
- **Usage:** Yasmine has been using a combination of both paper and digital planners since she started college. She uses digital planners like Canvas for academic tasks and a paper planner for personal or non-academic tasks.
- **Frequency:** She updates her planner as needed, typically when she receives new assignments or has personal tasks to manage.
- **Why a Mix of Both:** Yasmine prefers using a digital planner because it automatically syncs her academic schedule through Canvas. All her class assignments and deadlines are posted there by her professors, making it easy for her to stay organized without manual entry. However, for non-academic tasks (like personal errands or social plans), she enjoys the tactile experience of crossing off tasks on a paper planner.
- **Platforms Used:** Yasmine primarily uses Canvas for her academic needs and does not rely on additional platforms like Google Calendar or Apple Calendar for school tasks. She mentioned that Canvas is sufficient for managing her coursework because everything is already integrated, but she likes the flexibility of having a paper planner for personal tasks.
- **What She Likes about Canvas:** Yasmine appreciates the ease with which Canvas displays due dates and assignments. The automatic integration of course information allows her to see exactly when tasks are due. She enjoys the visual simplicity of Canvas, particularly its calendar layout and the ability to view a full month of tasks at a glance.
- **Paper Planner Preference:** Yasmine finds that paper planners are useful for non-academic tasks because she can carry them around and cross things off as soon as she completes them. This sense of accomplishment is satisfying to her.
- **Task Organization:** She organizes tasks by type and by class each day. For academic tasks, she relies heavily on Canvas to keep her structured. For

personal tasks, she has no specific system and tends to write things down as they come up.

- **Handling Larger Tasks:** For larger projects or assignments, Yasmine doesn't break them down into smaller tasks. She simply writes the due date in her planner and adjusts her study sessions accordingly as the deadline approaches.
 - **Adjustment during Busy Seasons:** During high-stress times like midterms or finals, Yasmine plans out specific study sections in her planner and allocates time for those tasks. She does not go into detailed planning for personal tasks during these periods, instead focusing more on school-related priorities.
 - **Essential Feature:** The ability to immediately cross off tasks when completed is a feature she absolutely needs, whether it's in a digital or paper format.
 - **Motivation to Switch:** Yasmine would be motivated to switch to a single digital planner if it allowed her to separate school and personal tasks while still having the ability to turn one calendar off and on depending on her focus.
 - **Challenges:** She finds her current system messy because it doesn't prioritize tasks by urgency. As a result, she sometimes completes tasks out of order.
 - **Dislike of Canvas:** One issue she mentioned is that Canvas doesn't always cross off completed tasks if they're linked to external websites. This disrupts her workflow.
 - **Aesthetic Preferences:** She dislikes the aesthetic of Google and Apple Calendars, describing them as too formal. In contrast, she enjoys the simplicity of Canvas, which she finds visually appealing and easy to use.
 - **Digital Features:** Yasmine likes that Canvas allows her to click on a task and be taken straight to the assignment. She doesn't currently use her phone for planning but would like to have her planner accessible on both her iPhone and iPad.
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▼ Interviewee 3: Avinash Anand

- **Major:** Computer Engineering (Junior)
- **Planner:** Digital (Canvas Calendar for academic tasks, Notion for personal tasks)
- **Usage:** Avinash uses Canvas for school-related tasks because it automatically includes assignments and events posted by his professors. For personal and project management tasks, he uses Notion, where he customizes his own templates and workflows.
- **Duration:** He has been using this digital method since his sophomore year of college, approximately one year.
- **Frequency:** Avinash updates his planner as needed, usually when he gets new assignments or personal events to add. He appreciates the ability to customize his calendar based on what's important to him.
- **Why Canvas:** Avinash prefers using Canvas because it's the only platform where assignments are posted directly by his teachers, saving him the effort of manually inputting academic tasks. He finds it efficient and doesn't want to have to manage multiple apps for school-related tasks.
- **Platforms Used:** For personal organization, Avinash uses Notion, which allows him to link full documents and condense them into previews. He enjoys the flexibility of Notion's templates, which he customizes to suit his needs. For birthdays and other minor reminders, he uses Apple Calendar.
- **Past Experience with Paper Planners:** In middle and high school, Avinash used paper planners but found them too time-consuming and inefficient. He dislikes that paper planning requires constant manual updating and isn't automated like digital tools.
- **Essential Feature:** Avinash needs a digital planner that is accessible across devices (phone, laptop) and that allows for detailed descriptions and note-taking within tasks.
- **Motivation to Switch:** He would switch to a single digital planner if it provided better integration of all his platforms and allowed for comprehensive task management without the need for multiple apps.

- **Frustrations:** One challenge with Apple Calendar is that it's harder to use for more detailed task management, as tapping and searching for events can be cumbersome. He also dislikes that the priority levels in digital calendars are not implemented well and wishes for better task categorization and priority-setting features.
- **Task Organization:** Avinash organizes tasks by due dates and categorizes them into priority levels. He updates his planner as assignments come in and prefers using Canvas because teachers handle much of the data entry.
- **Handling Larger Tasks:** For larger assignments or projects, Avinash posts the syllabus into Canvas at the start of the semester, and the system automatically creates events and deadlines. For personal projects, he breaks tasks down in Notion using templates.
- **Adjustment during Busy Seasons:** When things get busy, such as around midterms, Avinash focuses heavily on organizing and prioritizing tasks based on deadlines and impact.