



## **Agile & Lean Life Manifesto**

The **key principles** of the  
Agile and Lean Life

*...and how to have it ALL.*

**Blaz Kos**

**by Blaz Kos, agileleanlife.com**  
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# Blaz Kos



I am on a life mission **to make the world a more organized, innovative and transcendent place** to be by helping individuals, organizations and communities achieve their peak potential and an entirely new level of performance.

I have helped many individuals, companies and organizations create, deliver and capture real value by becoming lean and agile.

I am obsessively passionate about **hi-tech start-ups, mass media, personal development and making the world a better place**. I have spent the past ten years of my career developing the start-up, entrepreneurship and venture capital ecosystem in Slovenia and Eastern Europe. Here are some highlights from my previous work with startups and startup ecosystems:

- Helped to establish the university incubator (600 m<sup>2</sup>) at the biggest university in Slovenia
- Established the first and biggest angel network in Slovenia with 40+ investors and 12+ investments
- Helped establish the first business angel network in Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia
- Was an investment manager at a 6,000,000 € seed VC fund
- Advised the Slovenian government on business and start-up environment development
- Was in the management board of the biggest technology park in Slovenia – 66,000 m<sup>2</sup>
- Established the first franchised co-working space at 7 locations in Slovenia – 7 x 200 m<sup>2</sup>
- Running my own consulting company Venturelab Ltd.
- Co-organizing one of the biggest two day CEE conferences for entrepreneurs, PODIM
- Established and running two start-up accelerators with a 4,800,000 € public-private fund – Start:up Geek House and Go:Global Slovenia
- Author of the Agile and Lean Life Blog / ALL Movement

Over the past 10 years **I have lectured at more than 600 events across the Central and Eastern Europe and mentored over 300 start-ups**. My lectures used to be on traditional business topic like business planning, financial forecasting, analyzing the market, raising funds etc., but today I lecture mainly about new techniques such as lean and agile startup and how these techniques can be used in our lives as a personal development and productivity enhancement strategy.

By organizing the big regional conference PODIM, **I got the chance to get to know “lean start-up” authorities** such as Ash Maurya, Robert Fitzpatrick, Gregory Bernarda and others. Besides the PODIM conference, there are many other cool events I helped organize; events like Startup Weekend, mini Seedcamp, Wayra CEE tour and so on.

**Besides hi-tech start-ups I am also a personal development enthusiast.** I was born in a broken-up family without any help, and the only way to a brighter future was for me to begin developing my skills and competences with no mercy, including changing my inherited mindset and attitude towards life.

I have a long way to go, but I am still very passionate about helping others achieve their personal and professional goals. I have no difficulty with sharing my struggles and what I have learnt along the way, with no deceitfulness/and taboos. Thus **I can add around 100 workshops and a few hundred consultations to totally different people on personal development topics** like career planning, time management, goal setting etc.

As a part of my social responsibility, I had initiated and **co-founded a network of 150 most talented and socially proactive representatives of Generation Y** (the Ypsilon Institute), with a mission to give as many opportunities to young people as possible.

**My consulting clients at Venturelab Ltd. are:** Educational institutes, such as universities and research institutes, start-up companies, small and medium enterprises, investors, governments, chambers of commerce, sometimes big companies and individuals who need help with achieving their goals.

In my everyday life, I am a productivity freak, always working on two monitors. I cannot imagine my life without technology, gadgets and creating new cool products and services. I feel at home in Zen Buddhism, but find it incredibly difficult to practice as I am drawn to extremes. **Therefore I prefer to spend all my free time thinking, analyzing, creating, innovating or hiking high up in the mountains.** I don't like watching TV, shopping, small talk, parties and any kind of clutter. I can't stand hypocrisy, unfairness, violence and exploitation. I believe that what is happening to us in life and where we are is just a mere reflection of our inner world.

To read more of my blog posts visit:

[www.AgileLeanLife.com](http://www.AgileLeanLife.com)

# Foreword

This blog post is the Agile and Lean Life Manifesto, setting the foundations and key principles for living an Agile and Lean life. The twelve principles introduced in the manifesto **are based on best business practices like “lean manufacturing”, “lean start-up”, “agile development” and other advanced business strategies, transformed so they can be used for managing personal life.** In addition to that, a few best personal development practices and my own, already tested, ideas are also included.

The **five most important goals** of living an Agile and Lean life are to:

- Acquire *inner assets* faster (knowledge, skills, decision-making power ...)
- Create more *external assets* (time, money, revenue streams, status, energy, relationships...)
- Have the *tools to tackle the biggest challenges in life*, such as career change
- **Successfully manage negative situations** like anxiety, information overload and indecision
- **Blossom in all areas of life** and thus live a more happy and quality life

The key philosophy behind achieving these five goals is **to eliminate waste from your life.** Everything you do and have in life (decisions, material things, relationships etc.) either adds value to your life or drags you down. There is no third option. You can either make a return or loss on your every investment of time, money, attention and other resources.

Things that add value to your life are **the things filled with positive energy and emotions.** That means:

- doing various different things that make you *happy and self-confident*,
- doing things that *lead to creativity and greatness*,
- having *loving and empowering relationships*,
- being a *part of a group in which you fit in and prosper*,
- doing things that *make you healthier and more energetic*,
- doing things that lead to *building up your inner and external assets* by providing real value to the world, developing your talents and using prestige - a non-dominant approach.

A very important task for all of you who want to live a more quality life is to eliminate as much waste as possible, with the end goal of **making room for things that really matter to you – bring value.** Unfortunately today, it is very easy to get distracted by waste, having wrong assumptions about life.

If nothing else, you are exposed to thousands of ads that are fighting for your attention and assets on a daily basis. As the famous quote goes (and is sadly not far from the truth), **before you know it, you can find yourself working a job you hate, buying things you don't need to impress people you don't like.** This is all a big waste of life that you should totally avoid. That kind of a situation is the opposite of an Agile and Lean Life - so called zombie life.

Eliminating waste is an endless process and, in addition to that, it's also not an easy task to carry out. But it's very worth it in the long run. **Eliminating waste is an important step towards personal freedom and genuine self-actualization**, no matter where your starting point is. The Agile and Lean manifesto sets the foundations and key principles for doing it.

## Life can be successfully managed even in today's complex and turbulent world

Before we go to the key principles, you have to be aware that **it can be done, that there is a way.** You can have it all, you can be happy, wealthy, healthy etc.

It's true, life is not always easy. In life, you have to face big challenges, a lack of resources, negative emotional states and disappointments sooner or later. The new digital era has added additional pressure on top of that, **with challenges like having too many options and unrealistic expectations, dealing with information overload, extreme market complexity and hardly bearable uncertainty**, like no job security.

But as you know, the world isn't that dark. *We live in the best times ever.* **Life can be an awesome and beautiful experience. But only if you manage it correctly.** Only if you have the formula for facing life challenges and turning today's disadvantages into advantages; and deep down inside you know that the formula is not posting your happy pictures on social media, no matter the short-term satisfaction you get.

And don't forget. **There are no second chances in life.** You have to get it right the first time.

**But what is the formula?** In school, they teach you everything from mathematics and chemistry to history and geography, but almost nothing is said about life management. There are thousands of books written about personal development, but most of them are either too superficial or only offer small insights on how to improve some areas of your life. That may have sounded arrogant, but it is not meant that way.

Yes, you should definitely read as much as possible in order to gain new insights on life, and there are many great books, but what you also need and is missing out there is **a systematic and structured manual for how to live and manage life in today's turbulent and complex world.**

Life is too short and **you want to figure out the formula for success as soon as possible**, and then live life to the full. You don't want to bother with how to live life all the time, making and correcting big mistakes, feeling sorry for yourself while life passes by. You want to achieve as much as possible, have as many good moments as possible, acquire enough assets to fulfill your desires, have deep and empowering relationships and so on - as soon as possible in life. It's true that everything takes time to be achieved, but the Agile and Lean life is about speed. *It's about the formula for accelerating your success.* It's about doing it as fast as possible in the right kind of way, meaning not being an asshole.

*There was a pretty good formula for living life that worked very well two decades ago. The formula was: get a good education, find a safe job, get married with your first love, live by the values of the local church, write down your goals and try to achieve a few of them, and live happily ever after. Jobs were available, markets were booming, education was cheap. The formula worked.*

Unfortunately the formula doesn't work anymore. **The times have changed too much.** In 50 years, the world has been turned upside down.

The businesses were the first ones to be dramatically affected by the new digital age and struck with all the new challenges, from market saturation and globalization to new internet competition and financial markets' meltdown. **They had to adapt, there was no other choice. Adapt or die.** Many manuals have been written on how to do it, about running a company successfully in the new digital age. For example, two very popular new age manuals are the "lean production" and "agile development", while the "lean startup" philosophy offers a new formula for success in business today.

There is no reason why you shouldn't use similar techniques for managing your personal life. This gives hope that it can be done. **By adapting the agile and lean philosophy to your personal life, you have access to a new formula for living life and being successful.**

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You can also read this document online at:

<http://agileleanlife.com/the-key-principles-of-the-agile-and-lean-life-all-manifesto/>

The measurement of success according to the Agile and Lean Life formula is very simple. On your death bed, looking back on your life, you want to say to yourself: ***“Life was an awesome experience and a daring adventure. I have faced many difficult challenges but I have played the game right. I have made the right moves and have taken the right decisions. It was worth it. And I have contributed to making the world a better place to live in for generations to come.”***

The Agile and Lean Life Manifesto will show you how. **You can become happy and successful in life no matter how difficult your life situation is** - as long as you have access to the internet and possess sufficient intelligence to comprehend this text. For the rest of the world, we must all work hard so that they will have the same options. By living the Agile and Lean life you may not become the next Bill Gates, but you can definitely make a move towards a better and happier life.

Before we go to the key principles, **you should be aware that:**

- We all have to face many (old and new) life challenges that are not easy at all
- We all deserve to live a quality life with adequate resources, self-actualization and happiness
- Life can be systematically and scientifically managed in order to achieve these goals
- You can do it as well, no matter where your starting point is. You can live a better life.
- The Agile and Lean Life Manifesto is based on twelve principles that successfully replace old life management techniques like setting goals, looking for job security and giving personal power for the important life decisions to other people (formal systems).

**The twelve principle of an Agile and Lean Life are:**

1. Search before you execute: Experiment – Reflect – Learn - Execute
2. Go out and see for yourself, see in order to compose your dream life
3. Optimize your entire life, not only parts of it
4. Visualize, simplify and make a move
5. Move fast and with focus in the execution phase by using the flow
6. Plan regular intervals with reflections and adjustments
7. Believe in yourself over looking for outside safety
8. Relationships and environment over work and tasks
9. Continuously improve yourself and your environment
10. Create value, be flexible and modest over having an ego
11. Life Accounting – measure everything
12. Live life with love and respect

# 1. Search before you execute: Experiment – Reflect – Learn - Execute

The key to a more successful life is **having a superior strategy for how to live it**. Your life strategy is shaped especially by your values, beliefs, personal management system, and thus by your decisions about spending your time, energy, money, skills and other resources.

The Agile and Lean life strategy begins with the old Ancient Greek aphorism “Know thyself”. **If you want to be successful in life, you have to know yourself** and what you want out of life very clearly.

But how? **The best way to get to know yourself is by experimenting, reflecting and learning**. The best way is to introduce a new search mode in life, the phase you should be performing every time before you do any kind of real execution and commitment.

**If you execute before you search, you could be climbing a ladder that’s leaned against the wrong wall**. Somewhere midway or at the top, you can discover that this is not you, it’s not something you want. The higher you are, the more difficult it is to climb down. Most people never climb down, and instead start living a “zombie life” – a life of constantly running away from reality.

Therefore in an Agile and Lean Life, you have to divide all activities of all areas of life into two groups:

- Search mode
- Execution mode

**In the search mode, you shouldn’t have any expectations, you shouldn’t have any commitments and you shouldn’t do any hard work**. Expectations lead to disappointments and before you understand something, you definitely have expectations that are completely wrong.

Commitments lead to heavy energy investments, and you shouldn’t be investing before you know what you are truly investing in and whether the investment really fits your character. **Hard work should always also be smart work**, but you can’t work smartly if you don’t have the right map and coordinates.

In the search phase you just try, experiment, observe, reflect and learn about yourself and the world. **The most important thing is to have no fixed ideas and no expectations at all in this phase.** Your job is only to test the assumptions you have written down, correct them, and try different things to find out what suits you best. Your only job is to learn about yourself and the world. No goals. No measurement of progress. Just learning and playing.

**After you find your fit in the search phase, you start executing.** You set the big and clear vision, strong foundations, have laser focus, commit fully, start working hard and achieving your goals. You optimize, improve, and measure your progress. But first, you have to find the right thing. You must put the ladder against the right wall before you start climbing.

After every experiment (action) you do in the search phase, you have to make a reflection. **You learn about yourself by reflecting on your actions.** Reflection is an insight into knowing yourself and life better.

Why you need a search phase before execution:

- To do **adequate research and form first assumptions** about yourself and life
- To conduct small experiments and **figure out what your best personal fits are**
- To not put pressure on yourself to achieve and **do something that is not really you**
- To **have fun and try as many things as possible in life**
- To **set a realistic execution strategy** that you can follow and really implement

*Let's look at an example.*

*The old strategy was to write down a goal in a smart way (SMART = Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Realistic, Time-bound). OK. You then write down something like: "I want to lose 10 kg by exercising and dieting in one year." What usually follows is that after a few months, you look at your goal paper, you step on the scale and feel even worse. No progress at all.*

*In the Agile and Lean Life Search phase, there are no goals yet and no pressure at all. The first phase is driven by curiosity. You know that you want to lose weight and you know that you lose weight by exercising and dieting. But instead of setting goals, you ask yourself: Is there a sport that I would really enjoy and wouldn't even be hard exercise? Is there a diet for me that is tasty, healthy and makes me more energetic? With whom can I try the first sport I think I might like? Then you continue reading, trying and researching. In the first phase, you put no pressure on yourself, you just experiment.*

*Let's look at another example. In every company that hires you, you are usually on a trial period for a few months. They want to know if you and your skills are actually what you have presented in your CV. It makes complete sense and you should have the same approach towards the company. It's not enough to just have a job. You must find out for yourself if you really fit in the company culture, if you like the work, if you can develop your talents further and so on. Only then you can decide if you really want to fully commit.*

## **2. Go out and see for yourself, see in order to compose your dream life**

The second principle of an Agile and Lean life is based on the “genchi gembutsu” philosophy, which means go and see for yourself in Japanese. It is an important concept in the Toyota production system, and is also known as “Go out of the building” in the lean start-up philosophy. **The “go out and see” principle is an important part of the search phase.**

It's a very simple rule in the Agile and Lean Life. **Don't talk about things, but go and try them. Don't assume, go out and test.** Testing and trying is the best way to gain firsthand knowledge about yourself and the world. For every new experience you get, you should decide whether to preserve it in your life or not. Every new experience should also give your ideas and insights into what to try next. That is called a pivot.

*The difference between what you think is valuable to you and what is really valuable for your life creates waste.* Don't assume anything, try and test everything.

*Let's look again at two examples to prevent things from sounding too abstract.*

*There is plenty of advice on fitness and diet. You can even find contradictory advice. But you can test what works and what doesn't work for you as an individual. For someone, being vegetarian is the optimal diet. For others, far from it. There is no single formula for success. You can only try vegetarian, vegan, fruitarian, paleo and other verified diets until you find the one that suits you best. It doesn't make sense to only read about it or argue about it, you have to try it for yourself and see. With no expectations and by keeping an open mind. After the search phase and finding what works for you best, you can execute (keep, set goals, measurements. . .) by optimizing details.*

**While experimenting, you must be careful you don't do anything that would really damage you.** If necessary, you should consult specialists.

*The second example would be looking for a new career. Your emotions show you complete dissatisfaction in your current career. Here is how you would tackle this challenge in the first phase of an Agile and Lean Life. In your free time, you write down assumptions for careers you think you could blossom in. You start testing how much passion awakens in you when reading about specific industries, join forums to read discussions and attend online courses etc. You take some part time projects, even for no payment, just to see how engaged you become. You continue experimenting until you find the new perfect fit for you. Then you go into the execution phase. At the end, you may find that design is your thing after trying to prepare an outstanding CV for a completely different industry.*

These are two very simplified examples. **The search phase must be done scientifically and systematically**, with writing down assumptions and testing them by experimenting, doing things and paying attention to feedback (your emotions, environment you operate in etc.). Your task in an Agile and Lean Life is to find your perfect fits in all areas of life by searching and experimenting. Trying completely different things, hanging out with different kinds of people and so on.

At the end of the day, **you must find your best fits and have your dream life composed like a beautiful mosaic** - perfect diet, best exercise, best fitting career, investments best suited to your character, perfect partner etc.

If we have started with the Agile and Lean Life rule that you have to search before you execute, this rule is all about you searching for your perfect fits by performing experiments in real life - actually doing and trying, not only talking about it. **Talk is cheap and gives zero insight into you and life. So try it, life is one big playground for you to enjoy and experiment.**

#### **Additional Resources**

- Don't be a zombie: <http://agileanlife.com/zombie-life/>
- Find your fit: <http://agileanlife.com/fit/>
- Apathy before finding your fit: <http://agileanlife.com/apathy-before-finding-your-fit/>
- The Search Mode: <http://agileanlife.com/search-mode/>
- Challenges of The Search Mode: <http://agileanlife.com/biggest-challenges-search-mode/>
- The ways to get to know yourself: <http://agileanlife.com/ways-getting-know/>
- Start with the life vision: <http://agileanlife.com/start-life-vision/>
- Have a powerful why: <http://agileanlife.com/start-with-why-your-mission/>

## 3. Optimize your entire life, not only parts of it

You can't run a successful business if your marketing or cash flow management or any other key business functions suck. You have to optimize the entire business, not only a few business functions. In the same way, **you can't have a happy and successful life if you only focus on some parts of your life and forget about the others.** There is no running away from any area of your life. You have to look at your life as a whole, and optimize it on the macro level.

**If one of the life areas collapses, everything else can collapse as well.** Your health greatly affects your earning potential and the quality of your relationships. Your income level has a big influence on all other areas of life. There are some periods in life when you have to put more focus on a single area (e.g. when getting a baby), but you should never let the bigger picture out of your sight.

You have ten key areas of life you have to juggle:

### 1. You

- Your personality - knowing yourself, your beliefs, values, behavioral patterns, daily habits, your ideal-self etc.
- Your environment – country, city, home, office etc.

### 2. Health and primary needs (body)

- Diet
- Fitness / Sports
- Other (sleep, sex, breathing...)

### 3. Relationships and people skills (love and belonging)

- Spouse
- Family (primary, secondary)
- Friends
- Coworkers
- Others

### 4. Money and wealth

### 5. Career, achievements and respect

### 6. Emotions (your emotional body)

### 7. Competences - Intelligence, knowledge and skills (your intellectual body)

- Formal education (degree, certificates...)
- Informal education

### 8. Fun, creativity and travel

### 9. Spirituality, self-actualization and giving back to the world (your spiritual body)

### 10. Technology as a leverage for being more productive on all areas of life

The Agile and Lean Life formula for managing life at a macro level is pretty simple. **You should do constant linear improvements in certain chosen areas of your life, and one big rapid improvement in one area of your life, when the time is ripe.** At the same time, you should maintain all areas that are currently not your priority.

Out of the ten life areas, **you should choose**, in one year time frame:

- One area where you plan to do a rapid improvement (your focus area for the time being)
- Two to three areas where you will implement a few linear improvements
- In all other areas, you try to maintain the current level (of course improvements on other levels will, in most cases, also positively affect the areas you are maintaining)

*Every year you should choose one area to really level up your game, two to three areas to improve a little bit and you try to maintain the same level for all other life areas.*

**You cannot implement too many changes in your life at once.** You only have a strong enough will to do a few linear changes, and you can only implement one really big change in your life at a time, provided there are foundations strong enough for it. Therefore you should do only a single rapid improvement at a time.

If you want to live a happy and successful life, you have to optimize your life from all ten perspectives. Of course **all the areas are interconnected and consequently improving one area leads to improvements in other areas.** The important thing, however, is to not only think about money, sex, fun, career or any other isolated area, but rather look at your life as a whole. First see the woods, then go and cut down trees.

You should always **thoroughly think about how every major decision influences all ten areas of your life.** That is the principle number three. You can decrease the quality of your life or even destroy it with:

- One or several big wrong decisions (for example choosing your spouse, industry, career...)
- A series of small wrong decisions (unhealthy diet...)

For every big *decision* you make, and for all the small decisions you are making almost every day, you should ask yourself **where they are leading you and how they impact all ten areas of your life.** Short-term history is a good predictor for short-term future. Ask yourself where your past decisions and current behavioral patterns are going to lead you in one year's time in all ten areas of your life. That is the best technique to use for determining priority areas of your life: where you should be doing rapid changes and linear improvements.

## 4. Visualize, simplify and make a move

Brain neurons for our visual perception account for approximately 30 % of brain's grey matter. When we look at pictures, our brain can process several pieces of information simultaneously, which means **it is processing around 60,000 times faster than when reading a text.**

Therefore you first have to “see” what you want from life before you can have it. A very important rule of an Agile and Lean Life is to **visualize everything**. In the Agile and Lean Life, you have to do all kinds of creative stuff, from Kanban boards, “want-to-have experience” boards, and master list visualizations to outlining mind maps and constantly drawing, sketching and sticking pictures together. Even if you suck at it, like I am.

Much like the business model canvas is a much more fun experience in the business planning phase compared to a dull business plan, **boards and visual materials are similarly a much better and more fun tool in a personal life compared to writing down goals.** And they work so much better.

This rule of an Agile and Lean Life is pretty simple. **You must have extreme fun when outlining your life and designing what you want to experience.** For your better performance you have to visualize everything.

Besides better clarity and comprehension, you should get two more answers by visualizing and sketching your desired life experiences:

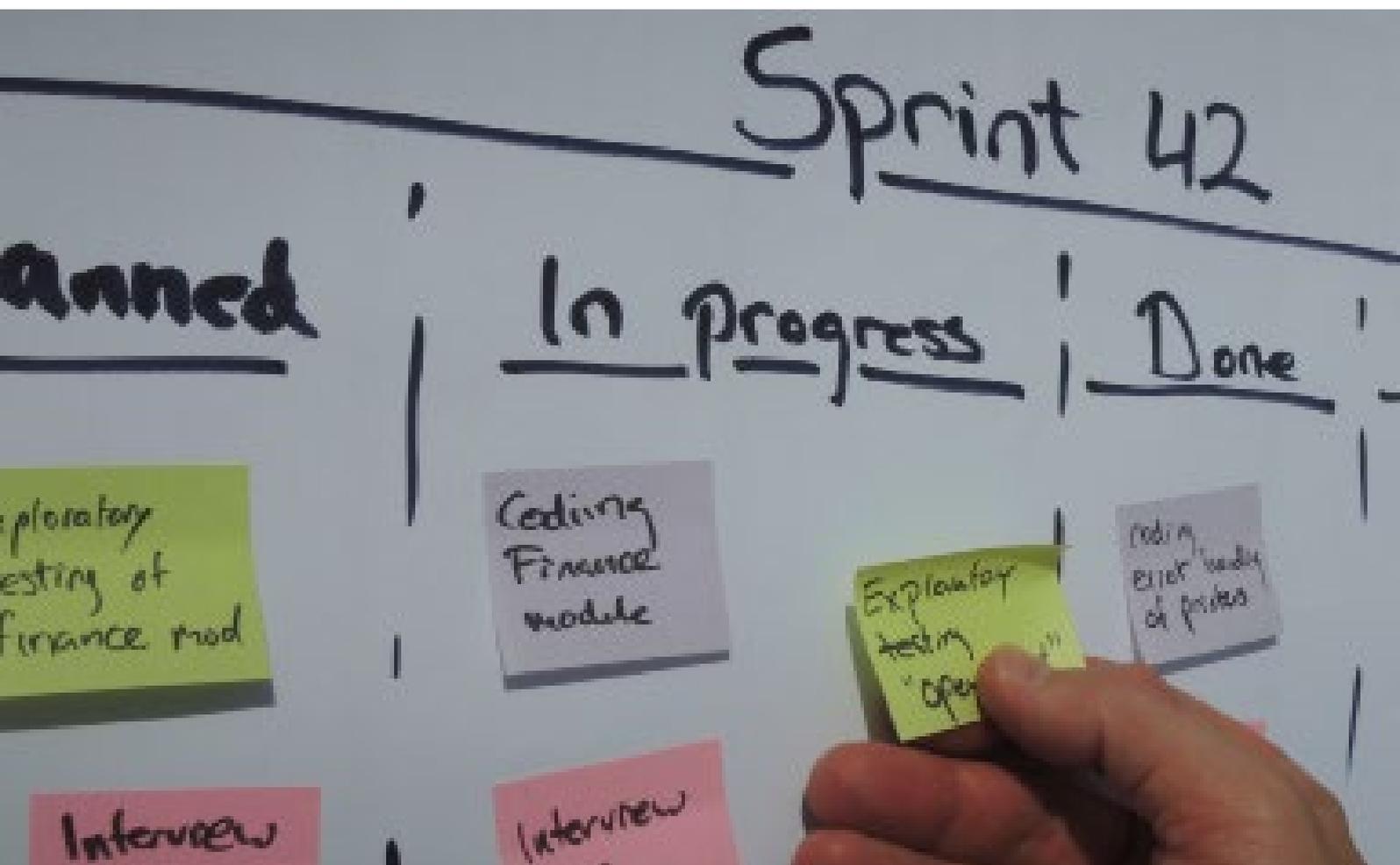
- ***Scenario-based thinking:*** What are all the potential moves you can currently make in your life and which ones will you try first? With more options, you get a feeling of more freedom and personal power.
- ***Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication:*** What is the simplest thing that would work for every move you can make? What is the first step you can easily make? You can take action only if you don't feel overwhelmed.

Having everything visualized and outlined makes it become obvious to you. **There is always a move to make towards a better life. There is always a way to live a better life by implementing simpler and faster solutions.** That should give you a feeling of inner security.

## Let's review

The next, fifth, principle that is following is a step further from the search mode to the first execution step. **So let's look back at the first four principles we had covered so far:**

1. **Get to know yourself by searching, experimenting and trying.** Don't execute and invest yourself strongly before you find your perfect fit. Don't have any commitments and expectations in the search phase. There is no failure in the search mode. Only playing. That should free your mind of pressure. You should do regular reflections in order to acquire knowledge about yourself and the World.
2. **You have to go out and see for yourself.** You have to try things and experience them in order to gain knowledge. Don't talk about it, experience it. Don't judge if you haven't tried it for yourself, don't assume if you don't know how it feels. You are here on Earth to experience as much as possible. Do it. Test, try and experiment.
3. **Think about how every action you plan to do influences all ten areas of your life.** You have to optimize your whole life to be happy and successful, not just a few isolated parts. Prioritize areas on which you will do rapid and linear improvements.
4. **Visualize everything you are doing or planning to do in your life and want to experience.** Pictures, sketches, mind maps, boards and so on are the best tools for your brain. Use them and have as much fun as possible while visualizing it.



## 5. Move quickly and with focus in the execution phase by using the flow

In the Agile and Lean Life, **interested does not equal committed**. “Interested” and “interesting” are the two main enemies of real progress in the execution mode, after you have conducted the search mode. No. Try not. Do or do not. There is no try. After the search mode.

**When you find your fit, you have to make more than a hundred percent commitment.** You have to move fast, be focused and learn more about which innovations work for you and which don't. The more energy you put into a few of your key goals (one major, a few minor ones) the faster your progress will be. In the execution mode it's all about speed.

In the Agile and Lean Life, **the following is strictly forbidden in the execution phase:**

- Multitasking
- Doing too many things and having too many goals at once
- Not having a place where you can work without any distractions and be in the flow at least once a day for a few hours
- Losing focus because of distractions and urgent tasks, instead of working on the important ones
- Not working on your goals on a daily basis
- Not regularly measuring your progress in the intervals you have set with visual elements

The key point in the execution phase is **to work on your goals on a daily basis, and measure progress at regular intervals (sprints)**. An example of the right mindset would be: *if your goal is to live a healthier life, there is nothing that can get in the way of me doing my daily exercise.*

Most of the work should be achieved in the flow. The flow is a superior creative and execution phases. **The flow is a divine experience that enables you to create, deliver and capture real value added quickly and efficiently.** The biggest killers of the workflow, the most productive state for a human being, are distractions. Therefore you need a place for yourself where you can get real work done.

*Laser focus by eliminating all distractions and being in the flow as much time as possible is the formula for good execution results. Use it.*

It's also very important to **break down your "life vision" with all the desired experiments into small steps you can easily take**. You should break down all the goals to extremely small tasks that you can perform immediately, and gather feedback to do reflections.

## 6. Plan regular intervals for reflections and adjustments

When living an Agile and Lean Life you don't just do work and execute tasks. **You have to think regularly about why you are doing it and how you are doing it, and whether you are making real progress** - the progress that brings value to your life. Being strong and passionate about the reason why is the best motivator you can have in life, and there is always a way to do things better.

You need **regularly planned intervals** for:

- Reviewing the tasks done in the previous interval
- Connecting with yourself and straightening out your life vision (and whys)
- Measuring your real progress
- Adjusting the strategy and plan
- Reflecting on new things that were learned
- Gathering new ideas
- Identifying potential improvements
- Setting new tasks for the upcoming interval

First of all, **in life things will never go as you assume, think and plan**. Even less so in the future, since the environment is becoming even more complex, turbulent and unpredictable. Be prepared to change your strategy frequently and constantly. Your goals will be constantly changing in the Agile and Lean Life. You have to constantly adapt to the fast changing environment.

**The best way is to have reflection days at 14-day intervals**. Every two weeks, you take two hours to reflect on your life. You look at all ten areas of life, determine your progress and do strategy and goal adjustments. In the 14-day reflection intervals, you also set tasks for the following two weeks (the so called sprint) based on your strategy adjustments. You should visualize your two-week execution sprint on the Kanban board.

Every single working day within a Sprint you should be working in the flow as much time as possible. **The sprint & the flow are your execution techniques in the Agile and Lean Life**.

## Let's review

**After the search phase, you enter the execution mode.** We have looked at two principles you have to follow in the Agile and Lean Life execution phase:

1. In the execution phase, you fully commit. You laser focus yourself. **No excuses are acceptable.** Most of the work you do is in the state of flow.
2. You set 14-day intervals in your calendar. **Every two weeks, you take two hours to reflect, adjust your strategy and set activities for the upcoming two weeks (sprint).** You use visualization tools to have a clear picture of your progress during every sprint (Kanban board).

Now let's look at **some other important rules** that aren't in the scope of search and execution, but are very important for living a happy and successful Agile and Lean life.

## 7. Believe in yourself over looking for outside safety

**If you want to live an extraordinary life, you have to do extraordinary things. If you want to do extraordinary things, you have to extraordinary believe in yourself.** You must find your inner security and be aware of your personal power. You must find safety in knowing that there is always a move you can make towards a better life, no matter what kind of a situation you find yourself in.

**The path to an extraordinary and awesome life is full of little risks, experiments and failures.** If you cling to your current relationships, especially the bad ones, if you seek job security, if you are not willing to try new things, you will get what most people get: an average life. An average job, an average paycheck, an average relationships. But being average is not awesome, it's boring and dull.

Don't get me wrong. **There is a big difference between stupidity and doing extraordinary things.** *Being certain that you are more productive if you are texting while driving is completely stupid. The probability of causing an accident if texting while driving is pretty similar to the probability of causing one if you were driving drunk. The latter is also very stupid.* And you don't want to do stupid things that can ruin your life. That is forbidden in the Agile and Lean Lifestyle.

What you want to do is **firmly believe in yourself by developing and executing a superior life strategy, as well as taking smart risks** (looking for situations where the risks are small and the rewards are big). For that, you need courage, self-esteem and knowledge for mitigating risks and scientifically measuring progress.

*For example, you must have the courage (trust yourself enough) to speak the truth, regardless of how unpleasant it is. Honest communication builds trust. That doesn't apply only for communication with others, but also with yourself. Lying to yourself and making compromises merely brings hardship in life later on. There are many cases like that in Agile and Lean Life where you need courage and where you have to believe in yourself.*

**If you don't believe in yourself, you will never make a move towards a truly better life.** You may make small linear improvements, but you will never gather enough courage to make a quantum leap in the quality of your life. Therefore the rule of the Agile and Lean Life is to look for safety in yourself (your inner assets like knowledge, skills, competences...) and not in external things, like relationships, money and contracts.

In an Agile and Lean Life, there is no clinging to external security (but it's of course good to have safety nets in assets, loving relationships etc.). There's only the World you must experience to the full. Life is either daring adventure, or nothing at all. For that, **you need to free yourself by believing in yourself.** It's the key enabler for executing a superior strategy for better life quality.

**Forget about social pressure. Forget about expectations of other people. Forget about rotten compromises. Live life true to yourself.**

- Believe in yourself and trust in life
- Acquire as many inner assets as possible (your competences)
- Have enough safety nets in outer assets (money, status, relationships etc.)
- Don't do anything stupid that can ruin your life
- Take smart risks (think small risks and big rewards)

*Living the Agile and Lean Life is more or less an emotional challenge. You must find inner security to make smart and extraordinary moves and to go from failure to failure until you succeed.*

Two things can help you a lot to believe more in yourself more:

- Positive orientation towards your past: <http://agileleanlife.com/positive-orientation-towards-your-past/>
- Living in the present moment: <http://agileleanlife.com/living-in-the-present-moment/>

## 8. Relationships and environment over work and tasks

**The two most powerful influencing factors on your life are your relationships and the environment you work in.** They can either drag you down or empower you, thus helping you achieve your goals. The more ambitious your goals are, the more empowering relationships you need, with less room for compromises.

You can have ambitious goals and high expectations for life, but **if you are not in an environment that supports you, you will never thrive.** You will never achieve your goals without an adequate support system. You are more a product of the environment than you might think.

The rule of an Agile and Lean life is to **surround yourself with motivated individuals who have goals similar to yours.** People you spend time with, including your spouse, are the most important decision in your life. Choose your environment very carefully. Much like your mindset should not be fixed, your environment should not be fixed either. You are the one who chooses your own environment.

Make sure that **the following environmental elements are supporting you** in achieving your goals:

- Market (chosen industry trends, occupation potential, structural changes, market size...)
- Country (political, economic, social, technological, legal, environmental factors)
- City (logistics, culture, fun, nature, food, education, kids...)
- Office (possibility of working with no distractions, no need for a long commute...)
- Home (quality of sleep, room for visualization of goals...)

Make sure that **the following relationships support you in achieving your goals:**

- Spouse
- Friends
- Family
- Acquaintances
- Coworkers
- Business partners
- Other people in your life

There are **two important things regarding relationships** that are a part of an Agile and Lean Life.

- **Outstanding communication.** The basic foundation for good relationships is outstanding communication. You have to communicate honestly, frequently and deeply with people you want to have good relationships with. You need to learn how to be a good communicator. It's an enabler for the Agile and Lean Life.
- **Coaches and mentors.** No one can succeed alone. You need other people who empower you and help you. One segment are people who surround you, and another are people whom you hire to help you or who you have mentoring exchanges with. In an Agile and Lean Life, you accelerate your progress with your personal mastermind group and coaches for different life areas.

## 9. Continuously improve yourself and your environment

You must never forget that there is always room for improvement, there is always a way to do it better. **You should always look to improve yourself and grow.** The foundation for an Agile and Lean Life is the growth mindset (Kaizen philosophy). You can always change yourself and by changing yourself, you can change your environment and the situations you are facing.

Don't be afraid of problems and challenges. **Problems and challenges only present opportunities to learn and change.** Don't try to hide your mistakes. Expose them, talk about them and learn from them. But don't make the same mistake twice. That is a big waste in life. Make sure you learn from mistakes the first time you make them.

When making changes, knowledge and insights are your greatest assets. You can learn from your own past experiences and experiences of other people by reading, talking, watching, observing, listening etc. **When using knowledge and insights of other people, go straight to the best knowledge and learn directly from the best people who achieved what you want to achieve.** With the information overload, there is just too much crappy information and too many cheap copies. It's better to read one really good book than 1000 average blog posts.

*To get the best out of life, you have to learn from the best.*

## Linear and rapid improvement

**You change yourself when you find a way to do something better.** Self-improvement in your life can be either linear or rapid. When there is no more room for linear improvement, rapid improvement takes place, if the foundations are strong enough and if big enough motivation is present.

**You can only improve your current practice to a certain point.** You can optimize your current behavioral patterns only to a certain level. Your current actions will only lead you to a specific level of success. You know you have reached a plateau when every new improvement experiment leads to an inferior performance.

If you want to achieve more in that kind of situation, **you have to do a dramatic (rapid) improvement.** Painful situations and setbacks usually lead you to these kinds of more dramatic changes in life.

The key **questions to ask yourself when doing linear improvements:**

- What are my current values and behavioral patterns?
- How can I make things faster or better?
- How can I get the same result by using less resources (money, materials...)?
- How can I make things simpler?
- How are other people doing it more efficiently?

The key **questions to ask yourself when it's time for a rapid improvement in your life:**

- What are my current values and behavioral patterns?
- What is the best result that this kind of behavior can get me? Is it enough for me?
- Why do I work like that? How should I work to achieve a quantum leap in productivity?
- What is really holding me back from changing dramatically? Which values are holding me back?
- How are other people doing it differently and being much more efficient than me?
- What knowledge and skills am I lacking to do rapid improvement?
- How and what would you work if you were totally free of your problems/limitations?

You should also use the 5 Whys Technique when doing a specific linear or rapid improvement. It's a technique **where you ask yourself "why" five times, with the final goal of tackling the cause not the effect.** Describe the situation you are facing. And then ask yourself five times: why?

There's one more important thing for an Agile and Lean Life, regarding improvement and trying new things. **It's easy to be different. But it's hard to be different and better.** Different doesn't always mean better. Try all the options, even the mainstream ones, and find the ones best suitable to you. Don't just try to be different. Be different and better.

## 10. Create value, be flexible and modest over having an ego

In the Agile and Lean Lifestyle, **your ego is the biggest obstacle on your path to a better and more successful life and personal growth.** If you don't believe that you can improve yourself and achieve your goals in a smarter and better way, you are driven by your ego. If you are driven by your ego, you are drawn towards exploitation and dominance. Both principles are short-term survival strategies, which are forbidden in the Agile and Lean Lifestyle.

There are **two options for how to act in life:**

1. **You create**, deliver and capture value, by serving and solving people's problems (people pay you for solutions, skills, creativity etc.)
2. **You exploit**, meaning that someone else has to create value for you (you take by fraud or force)

There are **two approaches for achieving social status in life:**

3. **Prestige**, meaning sharing expertise and knowing how to gain respect
4. **Dominance**, which encompasses using force and fear over others

The Agile and Lean Life is **about creating value and achieving social status with prestige.** You need to have a modest ego and trust yourself to live that way. You should never try to look superior in favor of learning something new and doing well. You must create value for people by using prestige.

It is also very important that when you are creating value, you are market-centric not ego-centric. **Markets always win, therefore you always have to count market structure and trends into your decisions** (choosing a career, investing money etc.). You have to be flexible and not fixed in your assumptions about markets. The world will not change to be more to your liking. You have to be flexible and change to the point where you find common ground with markets, and then start making the world a better place.

## 11. Life Accounting – measure everything

On the one hand, the Agile and Lean life is all about creating, visualizing, testing and playing, but on the other, it's life in spreadsheets. **You have to very carefully and closely measure the progress you make in all areas of life.**

The most important thing is to **avoid vanity metrics and the fake feeling of progress.** *If you are using olive oil, that doesn't yet mean that you are living a healthy lifestyle. If you are driving a good car on a lease, that doesn't mean that you are financially prospering.*

There's a simple reason behind the need for metrics. **Numbers don't lie and you can manage only what you measure.** You should not talk about your progress in life at all, if you don't have the metrics to show it.

In the search mode, you should have sufficient insight and gather enough Intel and knowledge to set up basic metrics that need to be monitored. **You should also know a few priority metrics and one metric you should focus on the most (the metric that matters).** In the execution mode, the more experience you have, the more advanced and detailed metrics you can set and follow.

### Additional Resources

- Environment you operate in: <http://agileleanlife.com/ideal-conditions-for-you/>
- Minimum Viable Experience: <http://agileleanlife.com/minimum-viable-experience/>
- Pivots in personal life: <http://agileleanlife.com/pivots-in-personal-life/>
- Remove all the waste from your life: <http://agileleanlife.com/remove-waste-life/>
- Innovate your way out: <http://agileleanlife.com/innovate-your-way-out/>
- Your life strategy: <http://agileleanlife.com/life-strategy/>
  
- Kanban - Visualize everything: <http://agileleanlife.com/kanban-visualize-workflow/>
- Kaizen & Growth Mindset: <http://agileleanlife.com/kaizen-growth-mindset-continuous-improvement/>

## 12. Live life with love and respect

The final foundation and the last principle of an Agile and Lean Life are respect and love. **Respect yourself by believing in yourself. Respect other people you have chosen to be with or work with by empowering them and learning from them.** Be humble and grateful for the relationships you have chosen in your life after the “cleaning” had been done. Lead, follow or just go away.

**Respect Mother Nature. Respect markets. Respect the global flow.** Don't expect them to change. You will have to change yourself first. You can change the world only after changing yourself. Never get cocky, never get full of yourself no matter how well are you doing.

**Besides respect, never forget about love, as it is the strongest force in the universe.** The opposite of fear is not courage, but love and understanding. Courage is just a tool for managing fear. You cannot have positive and negative emotions at the same time. You cannot live a positive life with a negative mind. Life and happiness can't occur where death and sorrow take place. Therefore do all things with love and respect. Love is the most powerful positive emotion in life. The moments you most remember in life are the moments filled with love.

**It's not about being happy at every single moment, but about doing things in a positive way for a positive cause.** For yourself and for others. Do no evil. Be a good person. Create value. Share. However don't expect that just because you're a good person, life owes you something. You will still have to fight for a better career, a deeper relationship, a pay raise or anything else you want in life. Love doesn't mean being soft and naïve.

The final question at the end of this manifesto is how to start living an Agile and Lean Life. **You simply start with your “life vision”** – a list of everything you want to experience in your life; and then you continue with experimenting, searching, trying and executing.

*Want to know more how to live the Agile and Lean Lifestyle? Please visit:*  
<http://agileleanlife.com/productivity-framework/>

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THANKS FOR READING

## **Agile & Lean Life Manifesto**

The **key principles** of the  
Agile and Lean Life

*...and how to have it ALL.*

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**Blaz Kos**