



www.AgileLeanLife.com

The Only!

Time Management Guide

...you will ever need.

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 m²) 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 m²
- Established the first franchised co-working space at 7 locations in Slovenia – 7 x 200 m²
- 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

Foreword

The most valuable asset you have in your life is time. If you had infinite time on this planet, you could achieve every single thing you wanted. The time limitation is the biggest burden of our lives. Therefore the first rule of success is to manage time wisely.

A successful person and a homeless person have the same amount of time on a day to day basis. I know that every one of us is facing a different level of life challenges, but in general, both individuals spend their time and set their priorities very differently. **You can achieve only a certain level of success with a specific mind-set, which also includes setting your priorities and spending or investing your time.**

To successfully achieve your goals, it is extremely important that you manage time to the full. That primarily means (1) eliminating all unnecessary time wasters in order to make more time in your life, and, in the second step, (2) investing every free minute you have very wisely.

Since most of us are short on time, **let's look at some very useful techniques for managing your time professionally and making more free hours in your life.** Some of the techniques will even help you become a more productive and energetic person. Implementing them in everyday life is not easy, but it's definitely worth it in the long run.

This eBook has **three chapters** (also blog posts at www.agileleanlife.com):

- Chapter 1: **The biggest time wasters** (<http://agileleanlife.com/best-time-management-guide/>)
- Chapter 2: **Eliminating distractions** (<http://agileleanlife.com/eliminate-distractions-from-life/>)
- Chapter 3: **Organizing yourself** (<http://agileleanlife.com/organize-yourself/>)



1. The biggest time wasters

If you want to have more free time in your life, the first and the smartest thing to do is to deal with all the time wasters. **Time wasters are all activities you do during the day that lead to no real progress in life.** Unfortunately, they usually make you feel like you are productive or give you a fake feeling of progress. However in reality you are not getting any closer to your goals. At the end of the day, you should remember that time and money can either be spent or invested.

The biggest time wasters in your life are:

1.1. E-mail and Instant Messaging

E-mail in business and chatting (IM) in personal life are two biggest time wasters. Why? Because they give us a fake feeling of progress, urgency and importance. We feel like we have actually done something and we feel connected to people, which brings a false sense of security. We feel like people need us, and that makes us feel valued and safe.

It boosts our adrenaline and serotonin level, and therefore we think we are very productive. The social proof of “value” seems like an additional benefit. But **in most cases, all the messages are nothing more than a distraction.** Distraction from the important work we should be doing.

Regarding e-mail, there are a few important rules that can help you save quite a lot of time every day. **The first one is the zero inbox policy.** You don't want to have anything in the inbox clouding your mind. That feeling somewhere deep in your mind that you haven't replied to something important is nothing but a mental burden to faster progress in your life. No e-mails, no burden. A good alternative to the zero inbox policy is keeping everything in your inbox and replying only to the important mails. If it doesn't bother you to have hundreds of e-mails in your inbox, this kind of approach is a good possibility too.

The second important rule is that **you should only answer the important e-mails. Try to reply to them in only one word or one sentence at the most.** Each extra word means nothing more than a lost second; seconds that add up to lost hours in a span of a year. If you really have a lot of e-mail messages that you must answer, you can increase your productivity with templates. An example of that kind of software is Yesware. And, of course, an automatic signature is basic. You shouldn't waste time by writing your name at the end of every e-mail.

The next good advice is to **only look at your e-mail account on your desktop computer twice a day**. The best time to look at your e-mail is before you start your working day and an hour before your working day ends. Each time you check your e-mail throughout the day, while you're working, you lose important mental focus and it takes a lot of time for you to get back into the workflow. If your e-mail hooks you too much, try not checking it in the morning, but instead only when you end your working day.

Pay attention to your “online social loop” that starts by checking e-mail, and then minimize it. Checking e-mail is usually the trigger for also checking social network sites, news sites and your other favourite web destinations. Before you know it, a whole hour has passed. Consequently, if you check your e-mail several times per day, your productivity suffers a lot.

The only logical exception is **checking e-mail on your smart phone when you are forced to waste your time, for example while standing in a line, waiting at the doctor's, sitting on the subway or the train etc.** For safety reasons, please don't check your smartphone when you are driving, flying a plane, having dinner with your partner or friends, having sex or doing any other activity that needs your full attention.

Here is one more important piece of advice. **If you want to have fewer messages in your inbox, send and answer fewer e-mails.** Every e-mail you send or answer will usually lead to replies, and you will want to reply again and so on, which only creates a bigger mess in your inbox. Just don't send e-mails.

The same goes for instant messaging and chatting online. It feels good to “catch up” with your friends, to share some updates, opinions on world news and to complain about how hard life can be. But in reality, you are just wasting your time again. The rule for IM is simple. **You want to chat with friends who encourage you to achieve your goals.** And of course this goes both ways so you should do the same for others. The more you give, the more you shall receive. You are the average of the ten people you spend most of your time with, offline and online. So it is wise to choose offline and online friends very carefully.

If your chat application is open while you are doing your work, and you keep getting popups saying “hi”, you're going to find it really hard to concentrate. Therefore **open your chat window / sign-in to your favourite IM only:**

- When you face some creative challenges or life challenges (and Google cannot help)
- When you need additional motivation to conquer your daily goals
- When you need to relax after your daily working capacities have run out
- When you feel like you need to have a deep conversation with someone
- When someone really needs your help and advice

1.2. Meetings and socializing

It goes the same for the “offline version” of e-mail and instant messaging. In business, **meetings in person are the biggest time wasters.** More than half of the meetings are completely unnecessary and useless. Probably only one in ten meetings really add value and are sensible. For most of the meetings, you need to prepare, change the location, greet people, do small talk, exchange opinions etc. And the conclusion of most meetings is that even more meetings will be necessary in the future.

Meetings can add value when you are brainstorming, setting the strategy, business planning, and building relationships or doing other similar activities with your team.

They are miraculous for all activities where collective brainpower is needed and everybody must agree on the common goals. But having meetings just because it sounds good to have a meeting, or for talking about things you can settle with a phone call? No thanks.

Having managed projects and teams for many years, I have found out that there is another situation in which meetings are very useful and can dramatically increase team productivity. The agile management philosophy advocates **having 15 minute meetings with your small agile team every morning, before the working day starts.** At the meeting, everyone explains, as fast as possible, what work had been done the day before, what they will do during the current day and if they are facing any problems in the current work package (tasks given).

These kinds of meetings are really great, but you have to make sure you have a small team and keep it limited to 15 minutes. Without a timer, the meetings can quickly convert into hour-long morning socializing and gossiping activities.

Try to have as few meetings as possible, finish your daily work faster, and focus more on the things that really matter in your life. The same goes for too much socializing. The fact remains that we are social animals and being social is an important part of feeling happy in life. But on the other hand, being too social is a big obstacle to your progress in life. **Nothing big or worthwhile has been accomplished in bars, restaurants or clubs.**

In Europe, you can see this difference very well. People in Mediterranean countries (Greece, Italy, Spain, Slovenia...) are extremely socially oriented towards hanging out in restaurants and bars throughout afternoons and nights. But their economy doesn't do very well. On the other hand, northern European countries (Germany, Finland...) are much more work oriented, and have a modest social life, but a much better economic position.

Balance is definitely the way to go in the long run. But if you want to achieve something in your life, some sacrifices have to be made. Nothing too extreme, because no extreme is good, but some rational optimization makes sense. Sure you can find happiness in life balance, but great results can only be achieved with extreme focus and sacrifices.

1.3. Social Networks Time Management Hacks

Social networks have become an important part of our lives. For most people, it is extremely hard to escape from being on the most popular social networks. This means at least Facebook and Twitter, but I can probably also add Tumblr, Pinterest, Instagram and many others to the list. It won't get any better in the future. **There will be even more websites fighting for our time and attention.**

I think it is too hard or even impossible to simply close all your social network accounts and completely forget about them. They have become a too important part of our lives. But there is one trick you can do. **You can unsubscribe from most of your "friends", because who cares what they are doing, and you can fill your news feed with some motivational quotes, life hack news,** and other articles and pictures that will boost your motivation. That is a simple trick for turning a big time waster into a life asset.

This can be a big shift for you. Constantly seeing other people "having fun" means nothing but more social pressure, envy and desire to get additional social proof (prove yourself socially). After all, you are a social animal and you must make sure you are high on the social ladder. But in reality, **you shouldn't care what other people do, except for your life partner, family and close friends.** Besides them, you should care more about your life and your progress than about what your acquaintances are doing.

To be realistic, Facebook is not even close to showing real lives that people are living. People are only posting beautiful moments, the few peaks they get in their lives. Behind these beautiful moments, every human being must face challenges, disappointments, struggles and other burdens of life. At the end of the day, looking at the good moments of your Facebook friends makes you feel like you are the only weirdo who doesn't enjoy life to the full. But that is not the case. When you open your Facebook newsfeed, you should get some updates from your closest friends, only from the ones you also hang out with in real life. Additionally, you should also get tons of motivational stuff and information related to your serious interests and goals. That way, Facebook is not a waste of time and a source of additional social pressure anymore, but rather a big asset that motivates you every day. You can do exactly the same with other social networks. Just make sure your feeds are filled with inspirational, motivational and informational stuff, and not additional social pressure.

1.4. Daily news

The daily news and daily news websites are also big time wasters. We are all used to following the daily news, because **they give us a sense of connection with the world, as well as a sense of urgency and importance.** Most of the news pieces are negative and our mind loves negative information, from the evolutionary point of view. It increases adrenaline, which makes us feel more alive and important. But in reality, only time and energy are wasted on this fake feeling of being alive.

The news is history. It already happened. You have zero influence on that. If you want to co-create the future, you need to empty your mind, make some creative free time and focus on your goals. Don't worry: even if you unsubscribe yourself from all the news, the most "important" (the most negative) news will come to you.

Great minds think and discuss ideas; average minds discuss events and news; small minds discuss people. There are "small minds" everywhere. But you, you want to make sure you think like a great mind.

1.5. Conferences

People love conferences. They see them as a great business or career opportunity - new knowledge, new people, new sales, new possibilities, a big motivational bust etc. But in reality, **few conferences per year can really add value to your life**, and those are usually the conferences where you know exactly who you want to meet or at which you can generate some sales leads.

What is the real problem of conferences? **Attending a conference usually takes the entire day** - there is a lot in between time, only a few lectures are really great, and you rarely meet people who can really add value to your life, professionally or personally.

Acquiring new knowledge? At a conference, you will listen to maybe one or two really great lectures, and to a dozen or even more crappy ones. In the same amount of time, you can watch quite a few more lectures over the Internet, totally by your choice. Compare going to a conference and listening to two great lectures at the most, to watching twenty TED videos or videos relevant to your industry or goals. There's no doubt that the second option is a much better way of acquiring new knowledge.

Meeting new people? It's unimaginably more efficient to do targeted networking rather than just meeting people randomly at a conference. If you want to meet a certain speaker and that specific conference is the best way to do it, great choice. But if you go to the conference to randomly network, it's usually just a waste of time. In a few years, you will just throw away thousands of business cards that are a result of random networking.

Probably the best reason to go to conferences, besides targeted networking and developing sales leads, **is to get a motivational bust and have some fun, maybe even meet new friends.** Conferences are more about fun and relaxation than serious business. If you need that, fine. If not, just let it go.

1.6. Smart phone and tablet

Your mobile phone and tablet can be either an asset or a big liability. Let's start with phone calls. Every interruption with an incoming call means losing focus, switching from important work to the phone call, and getting back to work with a possible (negative) change of emotional state (if people have bad information for you). With one lousy phone call, you can lose hours of your precious life.

When you are working on your skills or doing any other important task, **you want to make sure that your mobile phone is switched off.** Same goes for any other potential interruption, from instant messaging, social network notifications and everything else that blinks, rings or attracts your attention.

But incoming calls are not the biggest problem. **In today's life, smart phones and tablets are all-in-one - news, social networks, games and similar time wasters; right in your pocket.** You don't even have to sit behind the computer screen anymore. You can waste your time any second you want, and anywhere you want.

The solution is quite simple. You want to make sure your smart phone or tablet are an asset, not a distraction. How? First you should **delete all games, fun apps like 9gag and any other applications that are not contributing to your life goals** (okay maybe you can keep 9gag, but all others). Make sure that accessing this kind of applications is as difficult as possible.

If you are real junkie to that kind of time wasters, **install some kind of a mobile nanny** and make sure that the only person who knows the password is one of your friends who won't give it to you.

Then **install useful apps** like an e-book reader, a money management application, a time management application, mind mapping apps, Kanban apps, and applications for managing goals and so on.

To be honest, you cannot be focused and working all the time, **so a few exceptions on the smartphone are welcome.** When you have to waste your time, for example while queuing or waiting in a line or at the doctor's office, and you know you won't have a big chunk of time for doing any meaningful work, it makes sense to reply to some e-mails, check social networking sites or read industry news for extra motivation and brain refreshment.

1.7. Logistics

In lean production, transport is considered to be one of the seven big wastes. Simply because it really is. Driving from one place to another can be a big waste of time. The solution is simple: if you are driving, make your vehicle a University on Wheels. **Listen to audio books.** You can use the Audible application on your smartphone and connect the phone to your car radio via AUX or Bluetooth.

A good alternative are also podcasts, since **you can find tons of podcasts related to your goals.** If you are not driving, but instead taking the bus or the train, you can read a book on your smart phone, watch some educational videos, jot down some ideas or do some other useful work.

Nevertheless, **you should try to reduce logistics as much as possible.** Move as close to your office as possible; try to drive for business as little as possible; have a long-distance meeting via Skype rather than drive far away to meet in person etc. But still, transport will be big part of your life and your mobile phone is your saviour, helping you make this time as productive as possible.



1.8. The in-between time

Going to a meeting at a distant location is the “in-between time”. Logistics and transport count as “in-between time”. Switching from e-mails to social networks and then back to your work takes “in-between time”. Waiting for people is “in-between time”. Waking up and snoozing your alarm clock 5 times before getting out of bed is “in-between time”. Waiting for your computer to load is “in-between time”. **In lean production, this is called motion. Motion is a waste of time.**

All the precious minutes that you are wasting between two tasks or two appointments count as the so called “in-between time”. And you want to make sure you have as little of “in-between time” in your life as possible. **Minimize the number of meetings. Decrease the number of group activities. Avoid logistics. Forget about small and unimportant tasks. Focus on things that really matter.** If you focus on only two to three important tasks per day and make sure that you accomplish them, you will successfully minimize your “in-between time”.

Here are some **additional ideas for minimizing your “in-between” time:**

- **Buy an ultra-fast computer**, and don't overload it with applications and useless stuff that will just slow your computer down.
- Choose **a top professional personal doctor, dentist, lawyer, accountant, insurance agent and so on**. Alongside the excellent service, you also won't have to wait in the waiting room, and professional people are always on time.
- **Try to do as many things as possible via internet** or fax, use online banking, online accounting to your advantage etc. Try to have as little of post mail as possible, and try to not go to the post office at all.
- **Have everything in place and nicely cleaned up**, so you don't have to look for things. Make sure your desk is tidied up; your papers are in folders, old magazines are thrown away etc. Same goes for your computer folders. Make sure everything is organized and in order. Create shortcuts for projects you are currently working on.
- **Be punctual**. If you respect other people's time, they will respect yours.

Learn more about 7 types of waste in your life and how to eliminate it to be more efficient:

<http://agileleanlife.com/remove-waste-life/>

1.9. TV, movies and games

Well, TV and games have been obvious time wasters for decades. **TV is nothing but a “multimedia ad player”**, since you more or less only watch ads that are programming you to be a good consumer. Hundreds of articles on the Internet can tell you why TV is a big waste of time.

One big trap lies here. Maybe you haven't turned on the TV screen for decades and you can tell yourself that you don't watch TV. But on the other hand, you still watch movies and TV shows, just not on the TV. **We know video on demand now, we have Netflix, iTunes etc.** Or you can even go to the movie theatre too often.

So you don't have to sit in front of the TV to watch “TV”. All other options are basically the same waste of time, you merely skip some commercials. Don't get me wrong. A good movie or an episode of a TV show can be very relaxing from time to time. And we all need some relaxation; we are not robots. But watching movies and TV shows on your computer every night is the same as staring at a TV. Flushing your precious life away.

Set some limits. Watching movies and TV shows a few hours a week is more than enough. And remember: when you are watching TV, you are not living your life, you are wasting it. People on the other side of the screen are living their lives. Wake up.

1.10. Procrastination and worry

Self-discipline is not an easy thing to practice in our lives. It's a weak muscle and our daily capacities are very limited. Therefore we all have to face procrastination and worrying as two big obstacles in the way of meeting our goals. Both of them are ridiculous and counter-productive, but stayed as a part of our ancient psychological survival mechanism.

Let's look at worrying first. You have a goal to acquire new knowledge. But instead of sitting behind your computer and starting to learn, you lose yourself in negative thoughts and worrying. The negative thoughts can come from you doubting yourself and your potential or from questioning your decisions, wondering about what tomorrow will bring and so on. Before you know it, an hour passed and you have learned nothing. You have only spent valuable energy on nothing really productive.

The only way to overcome worry is to trust yourself more, to trust life more and to discipline your mind. Meditation is probably the best tool for learning to discipline your mind and live more in the present moment. Recognizing and turning down the volume of your inner critic can also help a lot.

If you worry a lot, do research or find appropriate help. You must release the unproductive tension as soon as possible.

The next interesting mechanism that can prevent us from meeting our goals in life is procrastination. It is the same silly concept. **Instead of doing important things, you can find yourself doing everything else that is contributing absolutely nothing to your progress in life.** That can usually be anything from cleaning your room, making lists, taking naps, doing too much research, eating snacks, spending time on social networks, watching TV or playing games.

It is no secret that procrastination has a deeper psychological background. **If you want to overcome procrastination, you have to tackle it at its source.** It is not hard to do that, but it takes some courage and being honest with yourself. Identifying the reason behind your procrastination and finding the appropriate solution is the hardest step. Then you just need to reinforce your new behaviour with daily practice.

Why do we usually procrastinate and what is the solution?

1.10.1. Laziness

If you see yourself as a lazy person, you will have a hard time of progressing in life. **The only solution to this problem is an identity shift.** If you want to change your daily habits, you will first have to see yourself as an ultra-productive person.

Nevertheless, laziness can also be a big help in your life. You want to be a hard-working person, but you also want to achieve maximum results with the minimum amount of effort. That is what being productive is. Being lazy is the right mind-set to achieve that. You have to be hard-working in your life to achieve great things, but you must also be brutal with yourself about prioritizing and optimizing your work. **You should be lazy in life only for the things that don't matter.**

Learn more about morning and evening habits that can help you to overcome laziness:

<http://agileleanlife.com/morning-and-evening-habits-and-rituals/>

1.10.2. A lack of energy and stress

Poor diet, no exercise and too much stress in life all contribute to the lack of energy.

If you don't have energy in life, you won't accomplish much, there are a few solutions for tackling this problem.

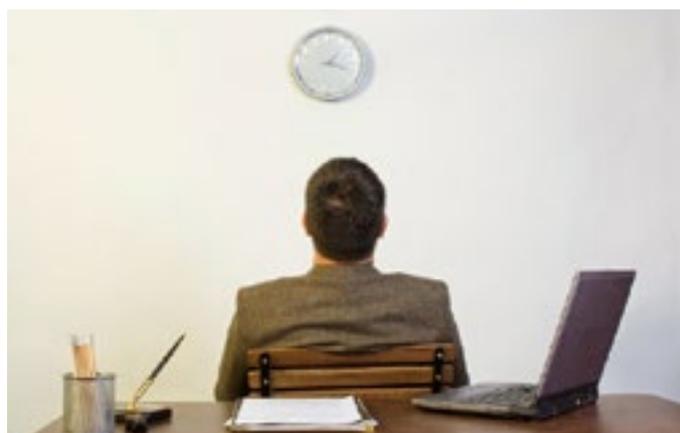
- First, (1) **exercise** at least a few times per week.
- Second, (2) **watch your diet.** It's not necessary to go into details here, since you can find many online resources for a healthy diet.
- Then (3) **get enough sleep** every day and
- (4) **drink enough water.**
- (5) Have **five to six meals throughout the day.**
- (6) **Avoid unhealthy snacks** in front of the computer or TV.
- (7) **Eat as much veggies as possible.**
- (8) **Add healthy fruit,** but not too much of it, because of its sugar content.

These simple rules will help you **boost your energy level to the max.**

1.10.3. Manage your energy, not time

Another very good thing to do is **being more focused on managing your energy than managing your time.** At the end of the day, we are not robots, but unpredictable human beings. Forcing ourselves to do some activities just because they are written on our calendar makes no sense, especially if we harm ourselves at the same time.

You will have days when you feel super productive. And you will have days when you are totally not in the mood for work. **Try to be agile and adapt to your daily emotional and energy state.** Logically, if one day you are super-ultra productive, working and learning for twelve hours, expect to be less energetic and productive in the next few days. Take some rest and fill you batteries.



1.10.4. Having unreasonably big goals

In life, there is one simple rule; **don't bite off more than you can chew**. You shouldn't be afraid of progressing slowly; what you should be afraid of is completely quitting. And if you only have big goals in mind, for example getting rich quick, you may feel overwhelmed and consequently not start at all, preferring to procrastinate instead.

Dream big, but start small. Slice and dice your big goal into smaller steps. Steps so small you can act on them on a daily basis. Your vision must be your compass in life, but make sure that your vision isn't also the source of your procrastination, because you don't see the small steps you must take.

1.10.5. A lack of skills

Closely connected to having goals that are too big is lacking a lot of skills. From a psychological point of view, **we know the comfort zone, the learning zone and the panic zone**. If the task is way too challenging for our current skillset, we go directly into the panic zone, start panicking and quickly run back to our comfort zone; maybe even forever.

In the panic zone, you can face such strongly negative emotions that it becomes much harder to go out of your comfort zone for the next attempt. Therefore it is really important that you start with small steps. **You should set tasks that are just a little bit more challenging than your current skillset**. Don't overestimate what you can accomplish in a month, but on the other hand, don't underestimate what you can accomplish in a few years' time.

1.10.6. Addictive behaviour

We all have some (soft) addictions; from chocolate, TV shows, sleeping too much, hanging out in bars etc. I dearly hope that you don't have to face any of the harder addictions like smoking, alcohol or drugs. In that situation, you need professional help. But for soft addictive behaviour, there is a very simple solution: **you want to change bad habits with new, good ones**.

How do you do that? Easy. First, you need to know that you can't really quit your addictive habit. You can only replace it with a new habit, either a negative or a positive one. And you want to replace most of your negative habits with positive ones. **Negative habits should become triggers for positive ones**. For example, if you are addicted to watching TV, go read a book every time you want to turn the TV on or whenever somebody else turns it on. It's that simple.

When you feel like doing something bad for you, immediately go and do something good for your future instead.

1.10.7. Fake passion

We have two options for living our lives. The first one is **being true to ourselves, living the life that we deeply want and that is connected to who we really are.** The second option is living a life based on expectations of others. Family, friends, teachers, society, they all have expectations for how you should live your life. If those expectations are not aligned with your true self, frustration takes place. Suddenly, you may be living a lie.

You want to make sure that your goals are totally aligned with your own life vision, your talents, competences and values. If your goals are not true to your real self, you will never be motivated enough to achieve them, since they won't be your real passion. As a result, you will procrastinate. You will be unhappy. Thus when setting new goals, always ask yourself if that is something that you truly want or if it's something that someone else is expecting of you.

If you want to be successful, passionate and happy in life, follow your heart, not opinions and expectations of other people.

1.10.8. Fear and self-sabotage

We are all born with two fears only; the fear of falling and the fear of loud noises. When facing challenges, disappointments and childhood trauma in our life, we develop new and new fears. Many of them are subconscious in nature and we are not even aware of them. And **if you are fighting your subconscious fears with your discipline only, the subconscious will always win.** You want to eliminate the problem at its roots.

The two most common fears that are potentially holding you back are **the fear of failure and the fear of success.** You want to make sure you are not holding yourself back with these two common fears.

Nobody likes to fail. Failing sucks big time. But it is an integral part of success. Success is nothing but going from one failure to the next without giving up; until you succeed. So if you want to succeed faster, you have to fail more. You have to learn to love failing and constantly learn from it.

On the other hand, the fear of success can also be a big burden. **If you don't see yourself as a successful person, you will never become one.** Success brings things like fame, financial abundance, and good feelings about yourself etc. If you don't feel like you deserve it, you will always self-sabotage yourself. The best solution to this problem, besides professional help, is active visualization. You want to mentally picture yourself as a highly successful person, connecting strong positive and good feelings with this picture.

1.10.9. Perfectionism

And last but not least is perfectionism. When you are a perfectionist trying to acquire a new skill, it's really hard, because you always suck at the beginning. There is a big gap between the masterpiece you want to create and your skill level. This brings frustration and a desire to quit.

The solution is quite simple. You have to divide the activities connected to your goal into two phases. One is the discovery phase and the second one is the execution phase. **In the discovery phase, perfectionism is not allowed** - you research, you learn, you prototype, you acquire new skills and so on. The goal is not to be perfect or to make a perfect masterpiece, but to acquire new skills and set a strategy. The goal is to learn something new.

When you acquire the desired skills and you have a clear vision of what you want to do with your new skills, it is the time for execution and perfectionism. Remember, you can spend months or even years in the search mode before executing something perfectly.

Perfectionism is one of the cognitive distortions that are lowering your productivity. Learn more about cognitive distortions: <http://agileleanlife.com/cognitive-distortions-negative-thinking/>



2. Eliminating distractions from your life

Let's move from the biggest time wasters to distractions. In the first step, **you want to spend as little time as possible on the time wasters we mentioned** - E-mail, IM, social networks, meetings, too much socializing, daily news, conferences, useless apps on smartphones and tablets, unnecessary logistics and in-between time, TV, movies and games and procrastination and worry.

Secondly, you want to eliminate most distractions in your daily life. It is hard to eliminate all distractions, but if you are brutal enough, you can eliminate most of them. Why are distractions such a big problem in life? Because **they throw you out of the working flow, and take much more of your energy and time than you might think.**

Let's look at an example. Finally, after a long day of work, you can take some time for your important goals, like investing in acquiring new skills or managing your money. All excited, you open your favorite investing or skill development application. You choose your lesson and start to learn. It takes some time, but after a while, you are in the flow, completely focused on learning and acquiring new skills. You forget about the world around you, your complete attention is given to a single activity.

Then your phone rings. You look at the phone to see who is calling. In that same second, you are already out of your flow. You say to yourself: "It will only take a second, I should take this call." You answer. It isn't nearly as important as you thought. And you need to do some small talk. Now you are out of your flow, and just lost half an hour in the least. You go back to your skill development application. You have to focus again and get in the flow. It takes time. And now your mental focus is weaker than it was before. But anyway, you are disciplined and continue learning. The next thing that happens is that somebody knocks on your door. The whole thing repeats itself, maybe even several times. Before you know it, the day is over and your progress is close to zero.

The best way to deal with distractions is to eliminate them way before they get a chance to kick you out of the flow. To do that, you need a good time management system and some strict rules for it. You must draw strict boundaries regarding your behavior and interactions with other people.

The best way to do that is to simply unsubscribe from distractions. You have to make sure nobody and nothing bother you when you have time for your focused work. Here are some ideas how.

2.1. Identify your main distractions

The first thing to do is to identify the most frequent distractions in your life. **We all have some weak points.** Maybe you like people stopping by your office and saying hello, because gossiping relaxes you and kills time. Maybe you are crazy about instant messaging, because you feel more important and connected. Maybe you are addicted to phone messages or phone chatting. Maybe you are addicted to looking at your watch every five seconds.

When you start with your focused mental work and somebody or something distracts you, **write it down.** You can do that for a few weeks, and you will soon discover your weak spots and identify the biggest distractions in your life.

2.2. Eliminate distractions with zero tolerance

The next step is to eliminate distractions. Be brutal. Don't count on only your self-discipline or the ability to say no when you are distracted. Self-discipline is a weak muscle and when you have to say no, you are already distracted. **Be smarter than that. Build a system that will help you eliminate all distractions.**

- Put a "do not disturb" sign on your office or private room door
- Turn off your phone
- Install a web nanny and block all the fun sites you are addicted to
- Close e-mail and the IM application
- Do the same with all other potential distractions

Put on some classical music. Get yourself in the flow. **Don't let anything distract you.** Just enjoy performing, learning and creating. Ignore the rest of the world.



2.3. Learn to say No

When you are distracted, it is already too late for saying “no”. But before that happens, you want to make sure that saying “no” is your most common reply to all people who are asking you to do things for them or join different projects. As we mentioned before, nothing great was ever achieved in life without brutal focus.

Why? Let's say you have 100 units of energy you can invest into your goals - projects, learning and daily work. If you work on one big goal at a time you can invest all 100 units in that goal. Let's now say that you have two big goals. Consequently you have to split 100 units in half. But you now additionally have the “in-between time”, spent switching activities etc. That means that you dedicate only circa 30 units of energy to one goal. If you take on one more project, set one more big goal or start one more big task in a day, you can go down to 10 units of energy per one activity.

Can you imagine the difference between investing 100 units (1 year time) or 10 units (10 years' time) of your energy into one task that's really important to you?

Therefore if you want to achieve anything in your life, you have to focus your energy. **To focus your energy, you have to learn how to say “no”.** It is very simple to learn this skill. For 14 days say “No” to anyone who asks you to do something. To everyone! After 14 days, you will feel confident enough to say “No” to everybody. Then you can carefully select people to whom you will say “yes”.

2.4. Energy vampires and enemies

Negative people are ultra-uncomfortable distractions in your life. Not only do they waste your time, they also suck the energy out of you. You probably know the experience of spending an hour with a negative person. Just listening to bitching, whining, complaining and gossiping. After that, you probably feel like you were hit by a train.

The most ironic thing in life is that the biggest energy vampires in our lives are usually people close to us: family members, our (wrong) partner, close friends or co-workers. Well, there is no simple and easy solution for that. But no matter who and no matter what, you want to **get rid of those people in your life who drag you down.** You should instead surround yourself with people who motivate you, encourage you and help you achieve your goals.

Energy vampires are usually zombies, people who are wasting their life. No matter what don't become a zombie: <http://agileleanlife.com/zombie-life/>

But before pointing fingers at others, **make sure that you yourself are not an energy vampire.** If you find yourself in any of the situations below, you must first tackle your beliefs before you manage time. It is hard to optimize your time if you constantly have to battle with your own mind and negative emotions.

How do you know that you are an energy vampire?

1. You feel like a victim (of the country, system, primary family...)
2. You bitch, whine and complain a lot
3. You are completely dissatisfied with your life
4. You are not grateful for what you have in your life
5. People hesitate when you want to spend time with them

Never forget that what is currently happening in your life – the situations you face, the people that surround you, your financial status etc. – is nothing but a reflection of your inner world: your beliefs, thoughts, behavioral patterns and decisions.

Therefore **if you exhibited any of the symptoms stated above, first read at least 100 personal development books**, find some professional help like cognitive therapy and build more solid foundations on which you can build your dream life. After that, time management techniques will significantly help you boost your productivity. But before you lay down some solid foundations, these techniques will be nothing but an additional burden and pressure in your life.

Also be very careful when choosing your battles with other people. We all have enemies, we all have people who envy us or see us as competition. Of course you must have a spine of steel, follow your goals, but don't lose precious energy on battles that don't really matter.

Every time you fight with pigs, you will get dirty. You will lose time, emotional energy, and mental focus and get more grey hairs. Instead invest that time in acquiring new skills and achieving your own goals. It is understandable that from time to time, those kinds of battles are necessary, but as mentioned above, choose your battles very carefully.

At the end of the day, your mental capacities and energy resources are very limited. **Focus on the positive, focus on building things not destroying them.** Ignoring assholes will do it just fine most of the time.

If you want to be successful in life you will have to deal with haters. Learn how:
<http://agileleanlife.com/haters-gonna-hate/>

2.5. People that just stop by

Your policy should be that people can't just stop by, neither at your office nor at your home. **You want to have full control over how you spend your time.** The solution for this one is easy. At the office, there is no stopping by if you don't have a meeting request in your calendar. If you like socializing with co-workers, you can do that during lunchtime.

If you are managing big teams, you can have daily or weekly open hours, and quick 15 minute meetings in the mornings. No stopping by.

At home, have a socializing schedule. For example, every Friday night you can socialize with your friends. And every Saturday night, have a date with your spouse, partner or whatever. All other afternoons and weekends should be reserved for your most important goals. No stopping by. If somebody bothers you, just say: "I would love to, but I just can't right now."

There is one more good technique, I think originally from Brian Tracy, for what to do when people interrupt you with socializing intentions, let's say on a plane, train or anywhere else where you would like to do some work. When they ask you about what you do for a living, just reply, "I raise funds for the local church. I am always on the lookout for new donors." There's a high probability that people will leave you alone after that. ;)

2.6. Multitasking

We all feel ultra-productive when multitasking. But in reality, **multitasking is a big waste of time.** You are much less productive when trying to accomplish several tasks in the same time frame. You can find hundreds of scientific studies that very clearly show that multitasking doesn't work.

Therefore don't try to feel more productive or busy by multitasking. Do just one thing at a time. Fully focus on one thing. And do only those things that deserve your full attention – like making love, for example. ;)

3. Organizing yourself

You have minimized all the time wasters in your life. You have unsubscribed from most of the identified distractions. **Now you have some additional free time in your life. It is time for you to organize yourself and boost productivity to the full.** Let's see how. The following techniques are not advanced Agile and Lean Life approaches, but very basic tools and ideas how to organize yourself. Well, first you have to master the basics.

3.1. Focusing and setting priorities

The first thing you need to do is **look at your values and reorganize them.** Values are the core source of making decisions in your life and that also includes deciding how you are going to spend your time.

For example: if you have to decide between spending time with your family and going to a sports game, and you select the latter, fun is much more important to you than family in your value system. It doesn't matter what you say that is important to you, what matters is how you make decisions when allocating time or setting priorities.

If you want, for example, to develop a new skill (as an important life goal) you have to put learning new skills to the top of your values list, at least for the following few months or years, depending on the size of goal and other goals you have. If you are not prepared to make some sacrifices and let go of some other activities in your life, you have zero chances of progress in the area of skill development.

In your life, only the things that you focus on will grow. If you want to make progress in a specific area of life, you will have to rearrange your values and shuffle new priorities. If you will be doing everything the same way as you are doing it now, nothing in your life will change.

Focus is one of the most important elements of successful time management. Read more about focusing yourself: <http://agileleanlife.com/focus/>

3.2. Important vs. Urgent Tasks

Stephen Covey divided the activities we face in our lives into “urgent” and “important” tasks. **Urgent activities usually get in the way of the important ones, and consequently block our progress.** We are much more drawn to urgent activities, like answering e-mail, going to meetings, etc. because of the adrenaline rush, easy accomplishment characteristics and, as an added bonus, they are usually fun socializing activities.

Successful people make sure they spend time on the most important things. They invest heavily in their future. On the other hand, they eliminate most urgent things, since those are more or less distractors and time wasters. Successful people intuitively know how to eliminate all the waste.

If you can't distinguish urgent tasks from the important ones, here is a simple rule. **Important tasks are all the tasks connected to creating value, delivering value and capturing value in your personal or business life.** At least 80 % of your time should be spent doing only important activities. Everything else is a waste of your energy, money, focus and time.

- **In Business:** Creating value includes strategic planning, creating new innovative products and value propositions, engaging resources, forming strategic partnerships etc. Delivering value includes optimizing distribution channels, forming customer relationships, marketing products, sales and so on. At the bottom line, capturing value means maximizing revenue streams and optimizing costs.
- **In Personal Life:** Creating value in your personal life can be connected to your physical body (meeting your basic physical needs, regular exercising, eating clean diet etc.), your emotional body (having positive emotions, socializing with positive people, being loved, belonging, having friends etc.), your mental body (creating something new, brainstorming, having meaningful conversations etc.) and your spiritual body (having a sense of purpose, integrity, a strong life vision, believing in life and yourself, self-actualization etc.). Delivering value means doing it and capturing value measuring progress in the right way.

3.3. The fake feeling of progress

Besides “urgent tasks”, which distract you from doing the really important work, **a fake feeling of progress can be also a big obstacle to your real progress.**

The fake progress in your life appears **when you are doing activities that are closely connected to your goal, but do not provide any real value added or real progress.** These are activities such as doing too much research, too much planning, over-analysing, suffering from information overflow, talking about it instead of doing it and so on...

Let's look at an example. If you want to learn how to code (develop a new skill), the best way to do this is to open IDE or a text editor, and start coding. You can invest a few hours into scanning the territory, getting some basic knowledge, but then you have to start learning by doing as soon as possible. All the contemporary online coding schools (Codecademy, Threehouse etc.) are based on the fact that if you want to learn it fast you have to start doing it as soon as possible.

On the other hand, if you are only reading books, articles, doing research etc. from one month to the next, you will feel like you are getting more and more knowledge, but your actual progress will be extremely slow. It's like wanting to learn how to swim or ride a bicycle by only reading a book.

The solution is simple. **Don't over-read and don't over-think.** Estimate how many hours you're spending making actual progress and not just making yourself feel better.

3.4. Delete, Delegate, Do

For every task you set for yourself or get in your life, you can do three things: Delete, Delegate or Do. **As you can see, the "Do" is the last in a row.** You want to delete as many tasks as possible, especially the "urgent" ones and the ones that give you a fake feeling of progress. In reality, it is very easy: you just press the delete button. This especially works with e-mail, since e-mail is a kind of To Do List enforced in your life by other people.

Never forget: **you can follow your own goals or goals of other people.** You want to make sure that you are following your own goals. Everything else is a distraction. So just press delete for most of your e-mails. And meetings. And other stuff that bring no real value to your life.

If you have an assistant or a team of people, delegate every task that somebody else is capable of doing. The obstacle here can appear if you see yourself as the expert and therefore the only one who can do the job correctly. Well, in that case you will drown in work sooner or later. **Find the right people, mentor them in the beginning, and then delegate the work.** Other people's time is, besides other people's money, the biggest leverage in life. Use it! After deleting and delegating tasks, you should only focus on the most important tasks that will bring you the highest return on investment of your time, money and energy in the long run.

3.5. Outsource everything

If we take the 3D (Delete, Delegate, Do) principle one step further, try to outsource everything in your life that you cannot delegate and is not connected to the highest value added you can produce in your life at a given moment.

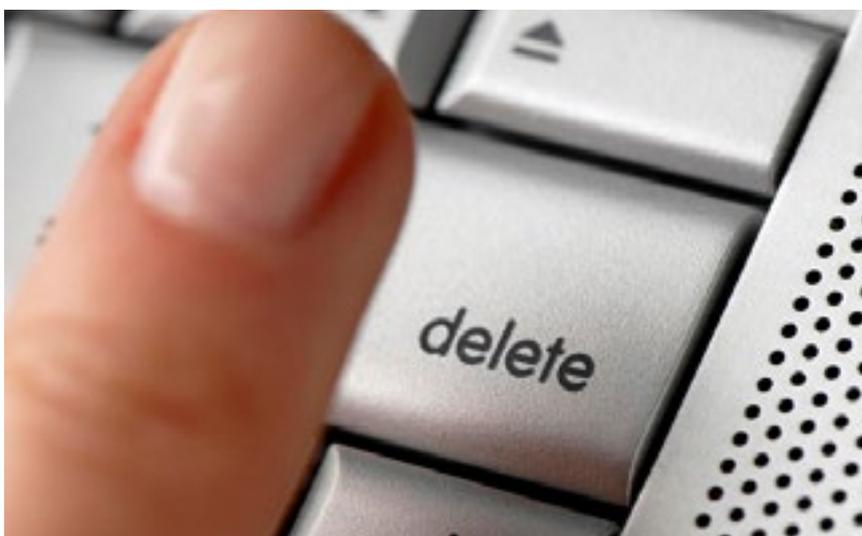
The more you focus on adding value, the more money you will make, and the more things you will be able to afford to outsource.

There are two areas in your life where you can apply this kind of thinking immediately. First, think of all the household chores - cooking, cleaning, fixing house, setting up your family computer, DIY stuff etc. It all takes time, energy and focus. It is logical that your financial situation must allow you to pay someone to do all that stuff, but as mentioned before, if you work hard and produce more value for the market, you will make more money in life and will consequently be able to afford to outsource as many activities as you want.

A good rule of thumb is to **not do anything that costs less per hour than you can make.** It makes sense to use the time that will free up in your life with outsourcing to make more money. Consequently you will be able to outsource even more things with “no real value added” and make even more money. How cool and productive is that.

The second part are all administrative, legal, tax work things etc., especially if you are an entrepreneur or a freelancer. You want to spend as little time on these things as possible, instead focusing yourself on creating, delivering and capturing value. To do that, you need to hire really skilled people who are amongst the best in their industry. **You should hire the best people you can still afford.** It will save you a lot of headache and time in the long run.

- **Delete.**
- **Delegate.**
- **Outsource.**
- **Do.**



3.6. The master list and the 3T (3 most important daily tasks)

You are now aware of all the activities that are really important in your life, connected to your passions and values, leading to real progress and creating real value in your life, and you just can't wait to start working on achieving your goals. Good. **But there is one more trap you want to avoid.** Even having eliminated all the unnecessary activities, your list will probably still be full of things you want to do, learn and master. Therefore you could start feeling overwhelmed. You could feel as if there are just too many activities to do. You could become lost, not knowing where to begin. This is especially true for complex tasks and big goals in your life, and can result in procrastinating or even giving up. Therefore you have to be smart about starting to meet big goals.

The clearer mental picture you have of what you want to do in your life and how you will get there, the easier it is to start and prioritise “value added” activities. First you want to have a clear picture of the final outcome you desire, then you want to slice and dice the end goal into the smallest bits possible. After that, you will easily make the first step, which will automatically lead you to the second step and with some discipline, you will be running before you know it.

What you want to do is have a Master List, on which you put all the things you need to do in the long run. Every night, pick up the master list and choose three most important things you want to do and learn the following day. Just three. Not even one more. Three only. Each of them should take one to two hours of your time. And after selecting the three most important tasks, commit yourself to do these three things the next day no matter what.

Do not have more than 20 – 30 items written down on your master list, and when you complete a few tasks, you can add new ones. Write down all other tasks on the wish list or the long-term vision of your life or somewhere else. If you have too many tasks on your master list, all you will feel is pressure and a shortage of time.

In addition to that you can also make a weekly plan of all the tasks that needs to be done. Then you can adjust your plan day by day. A good thing to have is a Kanban board. Every week you choose tasks from the Master list that needs to be done in the following week; you put all of them in the Weekly to-do column on your Kanban board. Then you move every day three cards to In progress column and you make sure that you do the work.

I have written a blog post on how to use Kanban system for the task management and which software to use. More about Kanban: <http://agileleanlife.com/kanban-visualize-workflow/>

3.7. Know your limitations, we all have it

When you are deciding about the three things to do on a particular day, remember that you have daily limits for how much you can actually do. **Do not overestimate your energy capacities.** Assuming you have a day job, your capacity is approximately 4 to 6 hours of focused work or studying, 1 to 3 hours of focused learning and skill development, and 1 to 2 hours of exercise and sport. If you are entrepreneur the available hours are usually much different because you have to work more.

But **no matter how organized you are, some parts of your day will probably be filled with some useless meetings, in-between time, time for fun and relaxation, and so on.** Face the limitations: there is nothing you can do, there is a limit for how organized you can be. There is never enough time to do everything, but there is always enough time to do the most important things.

Deciding on three priorities on a day to day basis will help you be extremely focused. You will have the compass for a given day, so taking decisions and saying “no” to time wasters and distractions will be much easier. At the end of your day, you can review if you completed all the tasks, how well you completed them and what you have learned. Some self-reflection just before you go to sleep can be a big value added. If you combine it with before-sleep visualisation, you will definitely become a winner in life.

If you are a list kind of person, you can have even more of them.

- **The Idea list**, where you can write down all your ideas.
- **The Never to do list**, on which you have all the things you are attracted towards doing in life, but know that they are waste of time or dangerous or you would like to unlearn them or something.

Technology is a good help for organising all your lists. You can use Evernote for your master list; the Clear mobile application for three daily priorities; the Idea store for writing down your ideas. Microsoft Outlook or Google Calendar for managing meetings and so on.

Learn more how can technology help you with your productivity:

<http://agileleanlife.com/free-your-mind-with-your-own-digital-brain/>

A really cool thing to do, if you can afford it, is to not have a calendar at all. Eliminating all scheduled meetings from your life can extremely boost your productivity. But for now, only ultra-successful venture capitalists like Marc Andersen can afford that.

Here is an additional time management idea. You can have No interruption days at your office or in your personal calendar to do really focused work. Learn more at: <http://agileleanlife.com/no-interruptions-day-best-time-management-tip-ever/>

3.8. A “Maybe someday” list

Sooner or later, you will come across some activities, for which you will feel like you have to do them, but the timing isn't right because you have other priorities. **You don't want to keep those kinds of activities in your head**, because they will just bother you and give you the feeling of always being short on time.

You want to put as many tasks, information and thoughts as possible from your head to the paper, in order to free up your mental capacities for creative “value added” work.

Having a “Maybe someday” list is a good solution to that problem. You get things out of your head and on the paper, so they don't bother you. On the other hand, sometime in the future, when you finish a big important project or your time frees up in some other way, you can look at the “Maybe someday” list and fill your life with new activities you've always wanted to do.

In the Agile and Lean Life we will define that as a life vision. It is the sum of all experience you would like to live to see (*more at: <http://agileleanlife.com/start-life-vision/>*)



3.9. Daily habits put deadlines to shame

You have probably heard or read about setting S.M.A.R.T. goals. Well, I think that that kind of technique doesn't work at all. That is why we need new techniques like the Agile and Lean Life. **If you don't develop a daily habit that leads you closer to your goals every day, you can write down what you want a hundred times and set as many deadlines as you want, but it won't come true.** You will just feel more frustrated.

It is much smarter to focus more on you daily habits than on your concrete goals, at least in the beginning.

Once you develop daily habits, once new behavioural patterns become a routine for you on a daily basis for example, you can set goals based on the S.M.A.R.T. philosophy. **But first you have to search if you want to execute successfully.** But never forget the right order: first you have to search, make an identity shift, then you have to develop daily habits and after that, you can set real goals with deadlines. No execution before.

3.10. The time-boxing technique

The best technique for developing a daily or weekly routine is so called time-boxing technique. That means that **you reserve certain hours of the day for your important activities and goals.**

Here are some examples. First thing in the morning, after you wake up, is dedicated to an hour of reading. Right after you finish your day job, you do an hour of sports. Right after dinner, you take two hours for learning how to code (or developing any other skill). Every Saturday morning, you review your finances. Every Sunday evening, you plan your upcoming week. Nothing should be more important than the hours you have time-boxed for your progress.

The best way to time-box activities that are basically new habits you'd like to develop in your life is to schedule them right after the activities that are already your daily habits. **The easiest way is to develop new morning and evening habits,** but you can also schedule them, for example, after work, after lunch, after brushing your teeth and so on.

There is one more important thing regarding time-boxing. If you don't know exactly where to begin with achieving your goal, just make sure you begin whenever you time-boxed the time for that goal. **Start somewhere and starting it will automatically lead you to the next step.** When you start something, your brains want to finish it and you can use that to your advantage. Just start and the rest will follow.

For example: your goal is to write an article and you have no idea what to write. Time-box an hour or two, let's say tomorrow after lunch, sit down in front of the computer, open a word processor and just type the first few words. The ideas will follow and your brain will want to finish the task. Sooner or later, you will find yourself in the flow, creating value, writing the article.

Here are some **additional ideas for using the time-boxing technique:**

- Business/Project Idea Brainstorming every first weekend of the month
- Taking care of your personal finances the day after pay check
- Setting one day per month for doing something completely new; things you've never done before in your life

3.11. The Flow

When you work on the important tasks in your life, you want to fall into the flow as soon as possible. **Going straight to the activities with the most value added is the best approach.** You know, just open the text editor and start writing or working on the most important project.

The flow is a divine experience that enables you to create real value added fast and efficiently. While working in the flow, your productivity, creativity and learning abilities will climb to the maximum. Since we all have a limited amount of energy, most of us have the capacity to fall into two to three flows per day, whereby every flow lasts a couple of hours.

Time-boxing two to three flows per day is an organizational maximum.

Let's say that you have the capacity for a morning flow, an afternoon flow and an evening flow. You can anchor the three flows right after your main daily meals; the morning flow after breakfast, the afternoon flow after lunch and the evening flow just after dinner. You can strengthen the anchor by listening to some music that increases productivity. And you want to make sure that nothing distracts you from getting into these three working flows and staying there for as long as possible.

You know you are in the flow when you forget everything around you and just create, learn and experience.

Of course if you have a day job, study obligations or any other serious grown-up responsibilities, it's going to be hard to dedicate all three flows to your most important tasks. Nevertheless, **make sure that at least one of the flows per day is dedicated to that real important goal that will lead to your brighter future.**

And if you fail to get in the flow on a particular day, don't try to catch up. You will just put too much pressure on yourself and give up sooner or later. Just make better decisions the next day.

3.12. Sharpen the saw

A very important rule among time management techniques is sharpening the saw. Investing in your skills definitely already sharpens the saw, but either way **you must not forget to take care of all your four bodies– the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual ones.** The more you take care of yourself, the more energy you will have for productive work. The rule is simple: put yourself in the first place.

- For your **physical body**, exercise, eat healthy, avoid stress and sleep a lot.
- For your **emotional body**, connect with positive people, make love, think optimistically, enjoy everyday life, be grateful, believe in yourself and manage your emotions.
- For your **mental health**, read books, do new things, do some brain exercises, create something artistic, go to a museum, do some math, wash your teeth with your non-dominant arm, brainstorm, meditate and so on.
- As for your **spiritual life**, keep finding and realigning your life purpose, give back to the community, be a good person, help others and donate, and so on. What you give, you will get back.



3.13. Put down the saw

Rest is as important as work. **If you don't get adequate rest, your productivity will slowly decrease in the long run.** The general recommended time to take off is at least:

- one day per week,
- one extended weekend (4 days) for every quarter and
- additional two full-time weeks (14 days) a year.

On the off days, be lazy and do nothing, or do some activities that really relax you – take care of your garden or pool, go travelling, afford a massage, read magazines, watch TV or do other things that will totally disconnect you from this world.

3.13.1. Put down the saw throughout the day

After finishing one big task of the day, preferably in the state of flow, don't forget to take a few minutes off. **After 2 – 3 hours of focused work, take a 20 – 30 minute break.** Have a snack, stretch, take a short nap or go for a walk. Taking small breaks throughout the day will energize you and prepare you for your next state of flow.



3.14. A few practical time management advice to end with

We have made an overview of the general philosophy and approach to managing your time and making new room in your life for the really important tasks. **These techniques are extremely useful if you want to accomplish a complex and demanding goal.** If you are really productivity freak you can additionally upgrade these techniques with the Agile and Lean Life approaches (more at: <http://agileleanlife.com/productivity-framework/>).

Before we end, let's look at some additional fully practical advice that will help you be completely organized in your life.

3.14.1. Clean your desk

Some people are big believers in the "creative chaos" philosophy, but in reality, it usually only means that they are "pigs". **Clean your desk, have everything in its place.** It will go a long way to helping you focus. Mess and chaos are nothing but distractions.

3.14.2. Minimalism

In order to be organized to the full, you should be a fan of minimalism. **Try to have as few things as possible in life.** Much like people, thoughts, words and tasks, material things also take room, energy and time in your life. Throw away everything you haven't used in the past three months. Have as few things as possible. All you need is your brain, happiness, some money in your bank account, and things in your digital cloud. Eliminate all the waste from your life.

3.14.3. Asset-light life and living "in the cloud"

You want to have as many things as possible "in the cloud" – from your music, movies, documents, software, notes, records and so on. If you have everything in a cloud, you can lose your device, it can break down and you won't lose anything. You just buy a new device, enter your passwords and everything synchronizes.

You can be really productive having your life organized in the cloud. **You can work from anywhere; you are not chained to your personal physical stuff and so on.** All you have to do is make sure that your life in the cloud is also organized to the full. You don't want to be wasting your time looking for files, folders, notes or information. If you have a good system, living life in the cloud can be miraculous for your personal productivity.

3.14.4. Know your biorhythm

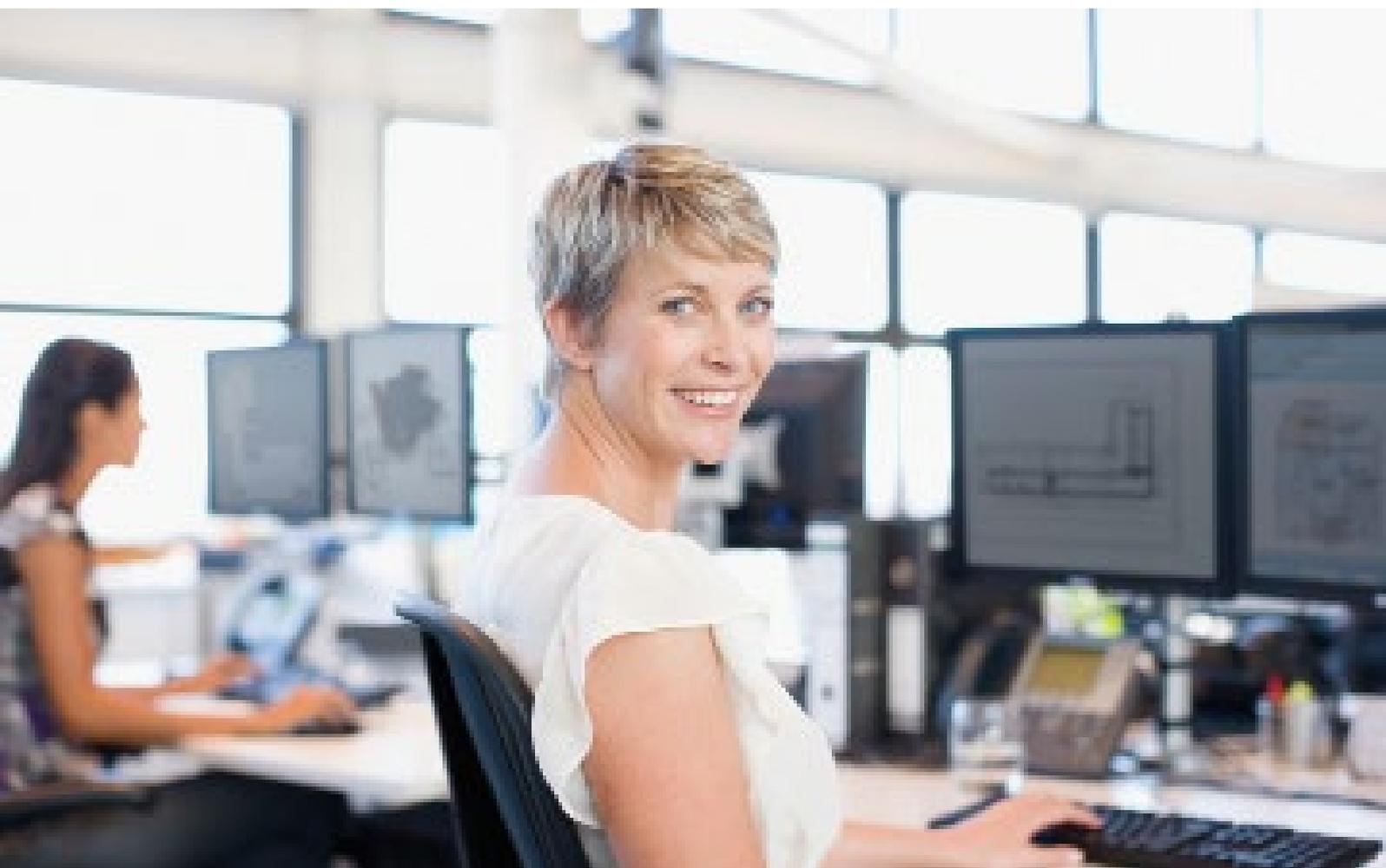
Every one of us has a different personal biorhythm. Therefore you have hours when you are extra productive and hours when you feel less energetic. Being an early riser brings many benefits, but still some people, especially in the creative fields, are at their most creative when the sun goes down.

Find out if you are more of a morning or an evening person. Identify your personal biorhythm: plan naps and walks for the less energetic time of the day, and creative flows or agile execution for that time of the day when you feel the most productive and energetic.

3.14.5. Two computer screens

A big improvement for productivity is definitely having two big monitors. You should maybe even use three, but they can emit too much radiation and your head could start hurting. But anyway, **you won't believe how much more productive you can be on a computer with two big screens** compared to a laptop or a tablet.

Buying a second monitor **is not expensive at all and is easy to set up.** Just don't have e-mail opened on one of your screens, since that will just interrupt you all the time.



3.14.6. Productivity apps

You can find tons of productivity apps for your smart phone or your tablet. Their disadvantage is that they can be quite time consuming, but if you are productivity freak and you find that they help you, by experimenting, then why not. If you Google “best productivity apps” you will find tons of them. Here are some:

- Any.do
- Asana
- Clear
- Dropbox
- Due
- Evernote
- Flow
- IFTTT
- Lastpass
- OmniFocus
- Remember The Milk
- RescueTime
- Things
- Todoist
- Tooleo
- Wunderlist

3.14.7. Drink plenty of water

Drinking at least 2 - 3 litres of water per day will help you stay fresh, focused and energized. When your mouth is dry, you are already too late. The best way to follow this advice is to have a bottle of water with you at all times and just drink it throughout the day.

You can buy a sexy plastic ecological antibacterial bottle for less than 30 dollars. Regular water drinking is basically the only distraction allowed when you are in the flow.

4. The conclusion

Organizing yourself is really important in your life. **It presents a big competitive advantage.** Investing a few hours into reading an article can help you save years of time in the future.

So let's hope that since you are reading these words, you have read the whole eBook, all three chapters. Well, congratulations, this is **definitely the best possible proof that you want to organize yourself** to the full and achieve some big goals in your life. But now, it's time for implementation.

Knowledge without real-life implementation is totally useless and by only acquiring knowledge, you have just wasted your time. You don't want to do that, especially after reading such a long article. Therefore forget about everything and start working on your implementation plan.

It's definitely not easy, but it's worth it in the long run. **Being organized and disciplined is nevertheless the best and most proven way to success and accomplishments in life.** At the bottom line, there is never enough time to do all things, but there is always enough time to do the important ones. I wish you all the best with prioritising and being productive on your important tasks.

When you master the basics **you should take your productivity to totally new level** with the Agile and Lean Life methods.

Now it's time for the more advanced time management techniques. Agile and Lean Life Productivity Framework can really help you to achieve an entirely new level of personal performance. More at:

<http://agileleanlife.com/productivity-framework/>

THANKS FOR READING

The Only!

Time Management Guide

...you will ever need.

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Blaz Kos