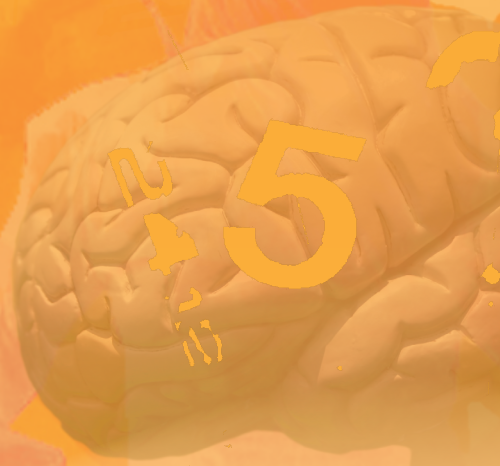


TROELS RICHTER

The 3 pillars of personal effectiveness

A step by step guide to a fulfilling lifestyle

FOREWORD BY JIM BENSON





Biography: Troels Richter

Troels Richter has worked as a developer, Scrum Master, team leader and Agile coach at Trifork throughout the last 6 years. His experience from different kinds of roles and projects has made him realize that agility is more than methods and processes – it is a way of living.

“Time is the most valuable asset in life and we continuously have to improve the way we spend it in order to achieve the fulfilling life we all dream of. This applies if you are working as a developer in a team, as a CEO in a big company or a father in a small family.”

His interest in personal development is outlived in his spare time startup <http://agilebrains.dk> with the dedicated goal to improve your effectiveness through simple tools like <http://kanbana.com>.

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A step by step guide to a fulfilling lifestyle

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The 3 pillars of personal effectiveness

A step by step guide to a fulfilling lifestyle

Foreword - I Don't Have Time to Think

By Jim Benson, author of “Personal Kanban – Mapping Work, Navigating Life”

On a beautiful sunny day in Melbourne, in a room looking out over the Docklands, I asked 80 financial services workers What is stopping you from being able to innovate? I divided the group into tables of 8, gave them all sticky notes and asked them to write down the reasons they felt they could not innovate – even after they had just spent the last week listening to presentations by some of the world’s leading thinkers on innovation.

Everyone was inspired, but felt they could not act.

Each table would then examine the sticky notes and vote on which were the most compelling to discuss. Then, in that new prioritized order, they would discuss them. We call this method “Lean Coffee.”

The results were stunning. Every table came up with at least a dozen topics, some came up with over 20. And quickly too. The creation phase was only about 7 minutes.

After voting, when everyone started discussing, I walked around and looked. Every table, regardless of how many stickies they had created, voted topics like the one above.

Everyone felt overloaded. Everyone wanted to innovate, but simply did not have time.

I ask you, *does this sound familiar?*

If we have an eight hour workday, our human tendency is to envision a goal of eight hours’ work. It is nearly impossible for knowledge workers to achieve eight hours of “work” in an eight hour day. No one, not our managers, not our peers, not our clients, and, sadly not even us, respect that over the course of a day there are interruptions, there are times when we need to rest, and there are days when we are distracted by other matters outside the office.

Pile up two or three of those projects at home, and match them with a few undone tasks at the office, and you have got some serious pressure. You start running around trying to do all those things as quickly as you can – but as you do you collect more and more tasks. Some get buried, some forgotten, some unduly

prioritized and completed because the customer of that task is very loud and persistent.

This short work, describes some easy methods to visualize, prioritize, and calm our workloads. As we take steps to visualize our real tasks, which should be life tasks (home, office, etc.), we get a sense for the actual zero-sum games we are creating for ourselves. We are pitting our family against our jobs. Our friends against our professions. And it does not have to be that way.

While some of that may sound pessimistic, the simple steps that Troels has written into this little book can help you build a simultaneously optimistic and realistic system to manage your work in real-time, to complete quality work at a regular pace, and to accept work in the future you are more likely to enjoy.

Seattle, WA

July 2011.



Introduction

The 3 pillars of personal effectiveness

There are a lot of personal productivity and self help methods out there but where do they all fit in and which one should I choose?

I have found that none of these techniques cover all aspects of becoming an effective person and I think there is a good reason for that. Personal effectiveness is a huge topic and requires a variety of skills. In this mini book I will step back and introduce the skills I think you have to learn to become an effective person and then linking those skills to concrete techniques for your further investigation.

When I think of effectiveness it boils down to 3 major topics I think we need to master.

I try to remember them as "The 3 pillars of personal effectiveness":

- **Importance**
- **Focus**
- **Value**

*At any given time you should be motivated through the feeling that what you are doing right now is the most **important** thing you can think of, that your mind is stress-less and fully **focused** and you know your effort will be **valuable**.*

This is a simple way of remembering the lifestyle I constantly try to seek towards.

The goal of this mini book is to give you a step by step introduction to the skills I find important to live out this lifestyle. Primarily, it is a combination of The Pomodoro Technique® which is very good at focusing your mind and Personal Kanban which is all about improving your workflow to gain more value from less effort.

THE FIRST PILLAR

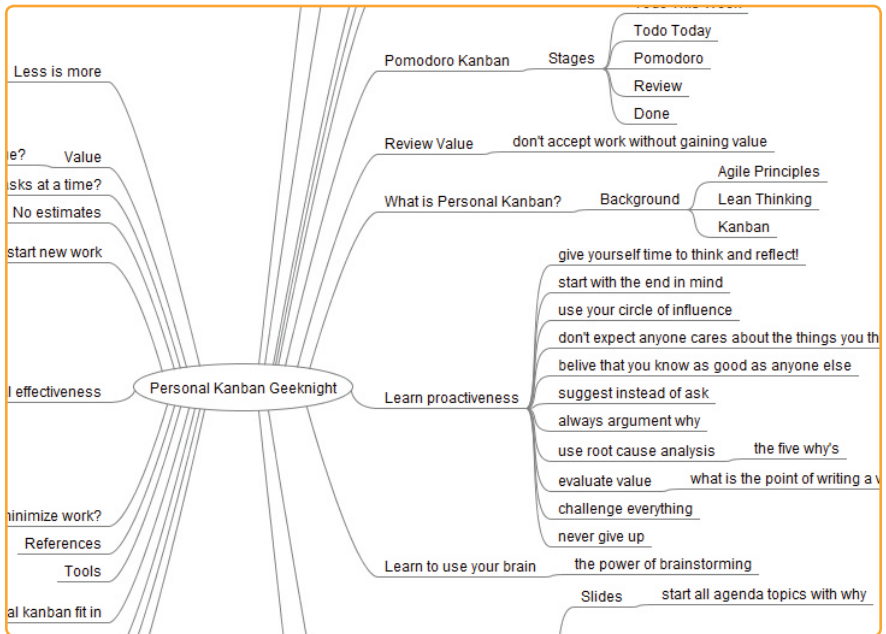
Importance

Take the time to think

Like Jim pointed out in the foreword we sometimes forget to use one of the most fundamental yet powerful skills we all possess – the skill of thinking. To sit down and think is where it all starts and still a major pitfall because it requires some of our valuable time. And when we finally take the time we almost do not know how to get started.

An old but still very useful technique to get going is mind mapping. The beauty of mind mapping is the flexibility. When you sit down and try to write your thoughts on a piece of paper your mind is often bound to that first word you write. It is hard to think with an open mind because you have already limited yourself to the format of writing in sentences from left to right.

When you need to find a solution to a problem or plan out a big project your thoughts will start to wander off in all kinds of directions. To keep an open mind the nature of that behavior has to be met with no restrictions.



In a mind map this is possible. Start off by letting your mind go nuts and then get into the more organized and evaluating state afterwards.

Throughout the last couple of years everything from meeting notes and presentations to business plans and overall planning always starts in a mind map. There are a lot of great tools out there but I have been using <http://freemind.sourceforge.net> for years with great pleasure.

Learn to track your time

One thing all productivity methods agree upon is that you need to start tracking your time. Why? Try to think of 10 things you would like to do. Then try to prioritize them inside your head. Then listen to 5 five minutes of music and try to recall your prioritized to-do list from memory. This is almost impossible – I know I cannot do it.

Unfortunately the human brain is not good at organizing without relating it to something visual so this is why it is a good practice to visually track what is going on in our lives.

This can be done in many ways and one approach everyone can relate to is the classical to-do list. The to-do list has many drawbacks but it can help you start visualizing a personal plan and that is the first very basic but crucial skill towards tracking your time.

If I am able to prioritize 10 items inside my head and reproduce them, then what? If you want to improve yourself you have to collect your own personal data to learn from. Even though you have a to-do list it rarely means that you can stick to those tasks. The biggest problem for most of us is actually that we are able to create the to-do list but at the end of the day we did not do the things that we actually set out to do.

Therefore you have to track everything you do, even though they are not on your to-do list. Tracking your time is hard because it feels like a waste of time and requires a lot of discipline. But it is a barrier you have to cross before you move on.

Learn to prioritize

Another basic skill, to improve your sense of importance, is prioritization. The first question is, why do I need to prioritize?



My answer is: “to ensure that you do not waste your time”.

Most of us think that there is too little time and too much to do. But in reality we actually have a lot of time if we only spend it on high value tasks that will enrich our lives. The constant battle is to fight all the things that creep upon us that seem important and urgent but actually ends up adding too little value or no value at all.

The next question is “what do I prioritize against?” What my boss tells me to do? What my girlfriend thinks is important? What is important for the business? What needs to be done even though it is trivial work?

Independent of your situation, it is crucial that your own goals, mood, energy and happiness are a part of the equation. Your own personality must always be reflected in what you do. So what you have to learn is how you can take responsibility for someone else’s goals by making them yours and how your goals can become other people’s goals. It is about establishing win-win situations in all you do and if that is not possible, you should spend your valuable time and energy on something else.

Many of the tasks I create never get done and that is a good thing. They have been through this evaluation and lost against my personality.

Practically keep it simple. The one thing you should think about is that your list should be easily accessible, visual and manageable. Tasks must be able to move around easily in order to do the prioritization.

Learn to respect your own prioritization

If you have been through the steps of tracking and prioritizing this is where you start to build up confidence in your own decisions.

It is hard to stick to a personal plan. First step is to start believing in your own plan and actually try to follow it through. A typical situation would be that a colleague comes to you with something really important which has to be done right away. In this situation, most of us are way too polite and will start working on the “urgent” thing that has come up even though it will break our own plan and goals.

When a situation like this occurs, the first thing you have to do is to enlighten your colleague about your own plan. Most people are actually quite sympathetic and have respect for someone who has set goals for themselves. It requires a lot of

courage to be open about your own plan and goals but it is the first step toward building respect for your own prioritization.

The outcome could also be that the issue which has come up actually was urgent and important. Here you have to respect your own process. Always ask why? Why should it be done? What is the purpose and why should it be done right now? After pushing back and getting clarity you can prioritize it according to your own plan and help the poor guy out because you have taken the time to see the meaning and making it a goal of your own.



THE SECOND PILLAR

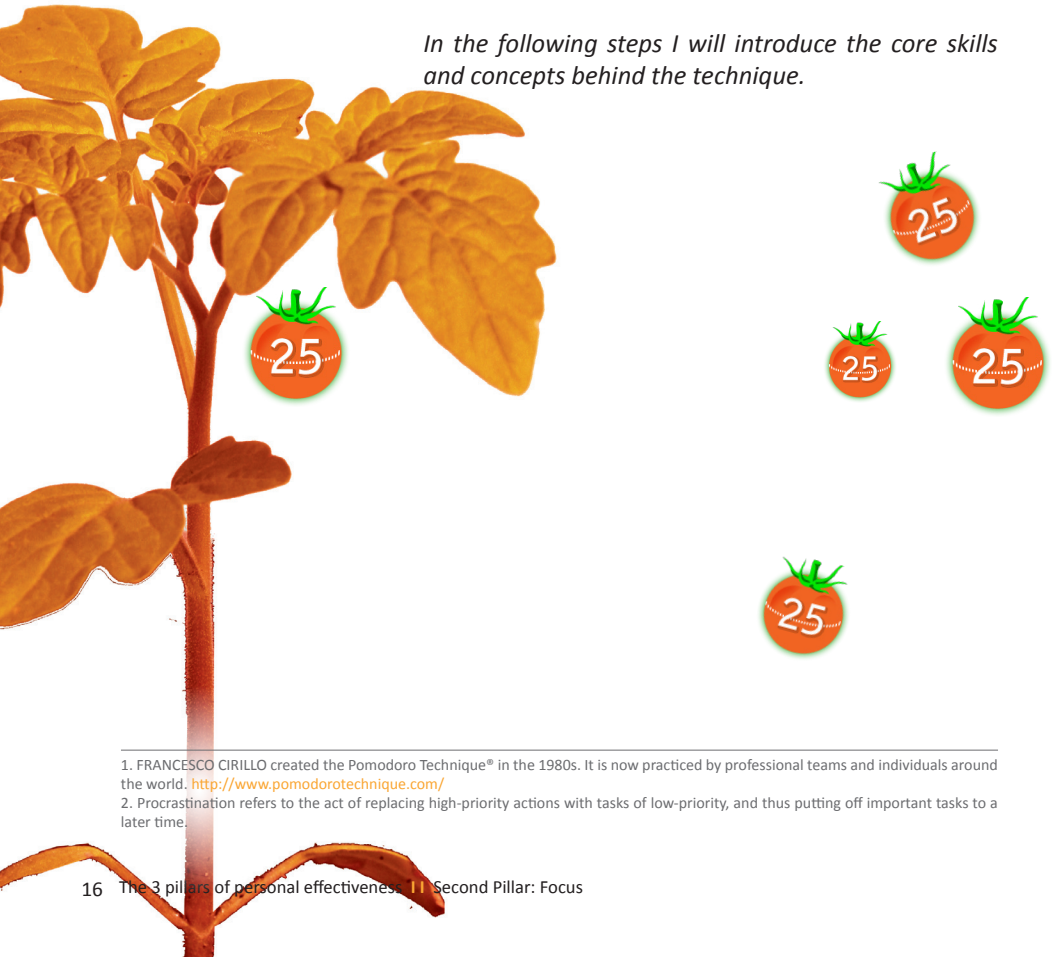
Focus

Learn to focus by learning The Pomodoro Technique

Even though you are able to track your time and prioritize your work it does not necessarily mean that you will become more effective. A good plan requires an effective execution which again relies on your ability to focus. Your focus is affected by your own personality, your work environment, your family and friends, your mobile phone, your email and tons of online media like Facebook, Twitter, Skype ect. Your focus is vital to get anything done so you have to protect it and use it carefully .

One of the best methods to improve your focus is called “The Pomodoro Technique^{®1}”. It is centered around small iterations and a special notation technique that will help estimate your day, handle interruptions and avoid procrastinations².

In the following steps I will introduce the core skills and concepts behind the technique.



1. FRANCESCO CIRILLO created the Pomodoro Technique[®] in the 1980s. It is now practiced by professional teams and individuals around the world. <http://www.pomodoratechnique.com/>
2. Procrastination refers to the act of replacing high-priority actions with tasks of low-priority, and thus putting off important tasks to a later time.

Learn to see focused time as the success criteria

How do you define success? Most of us measure success according to productivity. We have a plan; we are ambitious and normally set the bar high. “If I have completed the first 10 tasks on my to-do list at the end of the day I will consider it a success”. The problem however is that most days we only complete half of the tasks we planned. As a result, we feel disappointed and frustrated but never the less repeat this unfulfilling behavior the next day. In the end this leads to stress, your motivation drops and the endless loop of waste has begun.

We have to think differently about success if we want to become more effective. What is the best you can do to follow through if you are confident that you have a good plan of important tasks you would like to accomplish? It is to give those tasks full focus. There should be nothing else in the world but those tasks. If you are able to stay focused - this is the best effort you as a person can deliver. Therefore your success criteria should be for how long you are able to focus instead of how much you have done.

The goal of The Pomodoro Technique® is to optimize the amount of focused time you have during a day. The first thing you will learn from the technique is how surprisingly hard it is to stay fully focused even for a small amount of time but also how much value you actually are able to deliver in a small period of focused time.

Learn to work in small iterations with a sustainable pace

The practical approach behind The Pomodoro Technique® is that you divide all you do into iterations of 25 minutes. Then you start a timer and start focusing. If you can focus for 25 minutes you get a 5 minute break.

When you start using The Pomodoro Technique® it will probably come as a surprise how hard it is to focus for 25 minutes without anyone or anything interrupting you and without interrupting yourself. If you do not believe me try it out right now or are you already interrupting yourself reading this?

But how can I get anything done if I stop for a 5 minute break every 25 minutes?

First of all, you only get the break if you have delivered a focused effort and handled all interruptions in a way that did not disturb your focus. The psychology behind this is very crafty. The break becomes a reward every time you have kept your focus for 25 minutes so naturally you want to protect and follow through during those 25 minutes.

Right now I have 10 minutes left of my pomodoro, a mail just ticked into my inbox and my coffee cup is empty. A natural reaction would be to jump into those to procrastinations right away, but I will keep writing because I know there is a 5 minute rewarding break right ahead of me.

Why do I have to stop and have a break if I am in the zone of full focus?

From my perspective there are two essential reasons. Many people think that you will lose focus if you have a break and therefore consider it task switching. This is not true. If you are in the middle of a longer focused session it is very important to give your brain a pause. If you do not, it is likely that you will burn out at the end of the day. **A sustainable healthy** pace with many pauses will keep your mind fresh and your body energized throughout the day.

The other reason is **continuous reflection and evaluation**. If you are in the zone and have a five minute break the natural way your brain will react, when you stand up and walk to the coffee machine, is to reflect upon the work you just did. The change in perspective will give you an opportunity to change direction or maybe evaluate the time spent. Maybe you have been spending too much time on a detail that was not important and the break will end up saving you hours.

A successful pomodoro is defined as 25 minutes of focused time plus a 5 minute break and there is a good reason for that.

Learn to handle external interruptions

I have seen many people write negatively about The Pomodoro Technique® because they consider it too narcissistic and damaging to teamwork. I do not think this is true. I believe those who do not like The Pomodoro Technique® see it as a technique for eliminating interruptions and thereby interaction. Handling your interruptions is very different from eliminating interaction.

If you want control of your focus, you must learn to handle your interruptions in a positive way. It is about getting in control of your interruptions instead of letting interruptions control you, which unfortunately is the case for too many people.

In this process the first thing you have to be aware of is that there is very little in this world that cannot wait for 25 minutes to be dealt with. When someone comes to me and asks for a favor a simple approach to handle this external interruption is to evaluate if it can wait until my pomodoro is done. If yes I would say “Can I please get back to you in 15 minutes? - I am in the middle of writing about handling external interruptions”. Until this day I have never gotten a “no”. Actually it builds trust because I can tell others exactly when I will get back to them with my full attention – I just look at my pomodoro timer and there it is. Sometimes it even gets a laugh out of people when you say “is it ok if I get back to you in 7 minutes and 33 seconds?”

A positive side effect is that you will start paying attention to how you contact other people in a way that disturbs their focus as little as possible. I do not think there is anything narcissistic about that, instead it is a pure win-win for both.

Learn to handle your procrastinations

When you want to improve something about yourself the first thing you have to do is to find out how you are doing it right now. You need to collect data that will give you the necessary insight from which your initiatives can be based upon. So the first thing you must do is to write down every time you interrupt yourself and what interrupted you.

There can be a variety of reasons to procrastinate so you have to get the clarity of your own personality before you can start to improve. Try not to fight it at first but just collect data for a week and then reflect upon those data.

The main thing you have to think of is why did I interrupt myself in this situation? Maybe there is a root cause that needs to be dealt with? If you procrastinate a lot because you are bored and have no motivation for the things you do, it does not help to fight your procrastinations. In this case, you have to find a way out of the situation you are in, and start doing something else and conquer back your motivation.

But even though you are motivated and have a lot of interesting things to do you can still procrastinate a lot. Maybe so many interesting things pop into your mind that you cannot choose and you keep switching between tasks and never get any-

thing done.

A simple rule, independent of the reason behind your procrastinations, is to **empty your head**. When something pops up write it down and try to keep on going without paying further attention to it. The psychological aspect of knowing that nothing is forgotten will lower your stress level and sharpen your mind.

Learn to plan your day

One of Stephen Covey's 7 habits of highly effective people says "Start with the end in mind". If you want something to happen then use your imagination and envision the success.

In my opinion, everyone should use the first 15 minutes of every day, thinking about what they want to accomplish. If this is new, to you it can feel like waste of time and you might even feel guilty spending time on planning your own day. Even if you have to spend the first hour of every day on this, I can guarantee you it will be a good investment.

One simple piece of advice is to plan your day completely on your own without any outside input at first. A common pitfall is that you start by talking with your colleagues who have some kind of problem. Out of nothing it suddenly concerns you. You open up your email and see that someone needs an answer and others need you to do something. Then you go to the coffee machine and meet your boss who wants a status on something that happened last week. Then you sit down to plan your day and how do you think your plan will look like? Is it your plan? Is it your day?

Instead, sit down and relax. Think for yourself and plan what is important to you. Then open your email, turn on your phone and evaluate all other input. Adjust your plan according to your own personal goals. In this way you will plan a day that you feel good about and have a good chance of accomplishing.

THE THIRD PILLAR

Value

Learn effectiveness by learning

Personal Kanban

Now that you have been through the first and second pillar you should have a good sense of importance and the ability to focus - now it is time to become effective.

- **Productivity** is measured by **quantity against capacity**
- **Effectiveness** is measured by **value against effort**

The paradox is that you can be very productive without being effective at all

What we want to achieve is that little effort should produce a high positive effect and thereby creating high value. We normally have the idea that if we only work hard we will also reach our goals. That is not the case. We have to work smart to reach our goals – but how?

Personal Kanban³ is about visualizing your workflow so that your work will appear in its own unique context giving you the ability to make fast but good and informed decisions. It is about following through instead of starting new work, optimizing your workflow and timing and getting into the mindset that less can be more.

There are only two simple rules:

- **Visualize your workflow**
- **Limit your work in progress**

It is a highly adaptive method in which you can incorporate The Pomodoro Technique® or whatever suits you. It is deeply founded in Lean thinking and Kanban pull systems but adapted to a personal level.

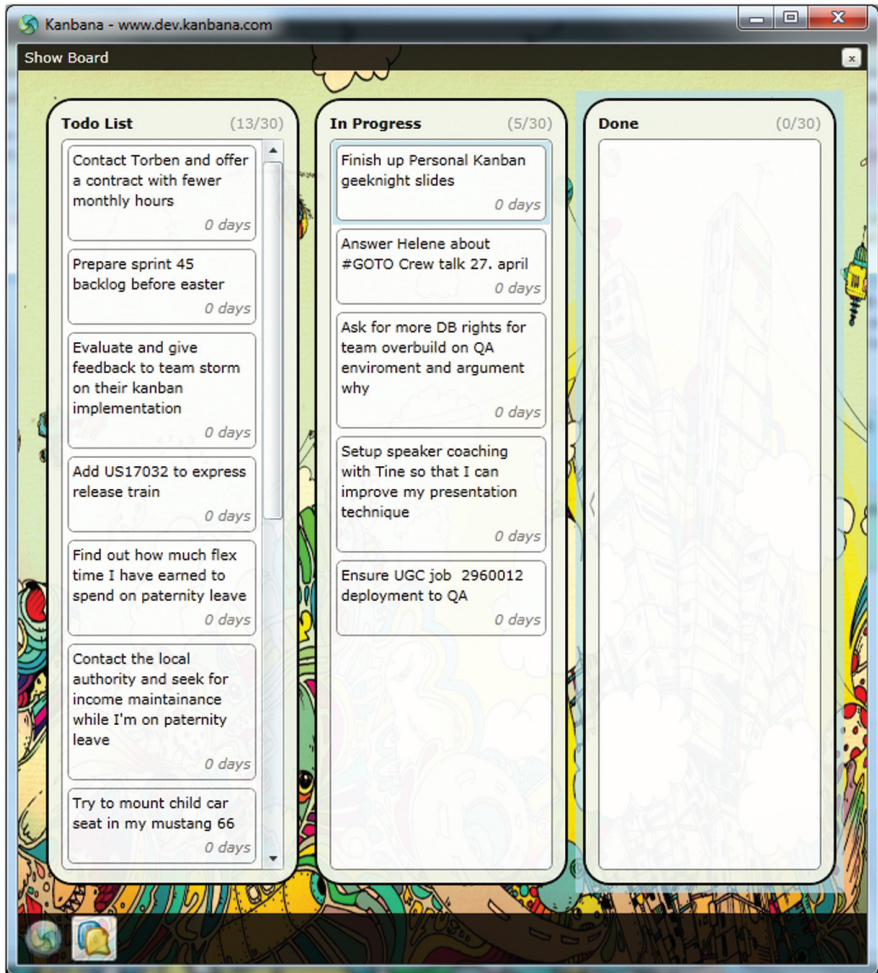
In the following steps I will give an introduction to those two rules and the philosophy behind.

3. Personal Kanban is started by Jim Benson, the author of “Personal Kanban: Mapping Work - Navigating Life” and founder of <http://personalkanban.com>

Learn to visualize your workflow

Do I have a workflow? If you have never thought about it before you probably do not know how your workflow looks like. My recommendation is to start simple and find out as you go.

The simplest workflow that should cover all kinds of work could look like this:



Each column called a stage is a picture of your work being in a certain state. Your work flows from left to right and at last it is done.

Positive

- Your work in progress is visible
- You have a **sense of accomplishment** when dragging it to the done column which is an important ritual to achieve closure⁴

Negative

- No daily goals
- Hard to get on top of your work because the to-do list is still too long

This is a simple example of how to start visualizing your workflow. It is important that you find a way that suits you. It could be a paper block with post-its, a whiteboard or an online tool.

Am I becoming more effective by this? Maybe not right away, but this is the starting point. I would recommend you start very simple and get on going for a week or two. This will get you thinking about your workflow and prepare you for the next step – limiting work in progress.

Learn to limit work in progress

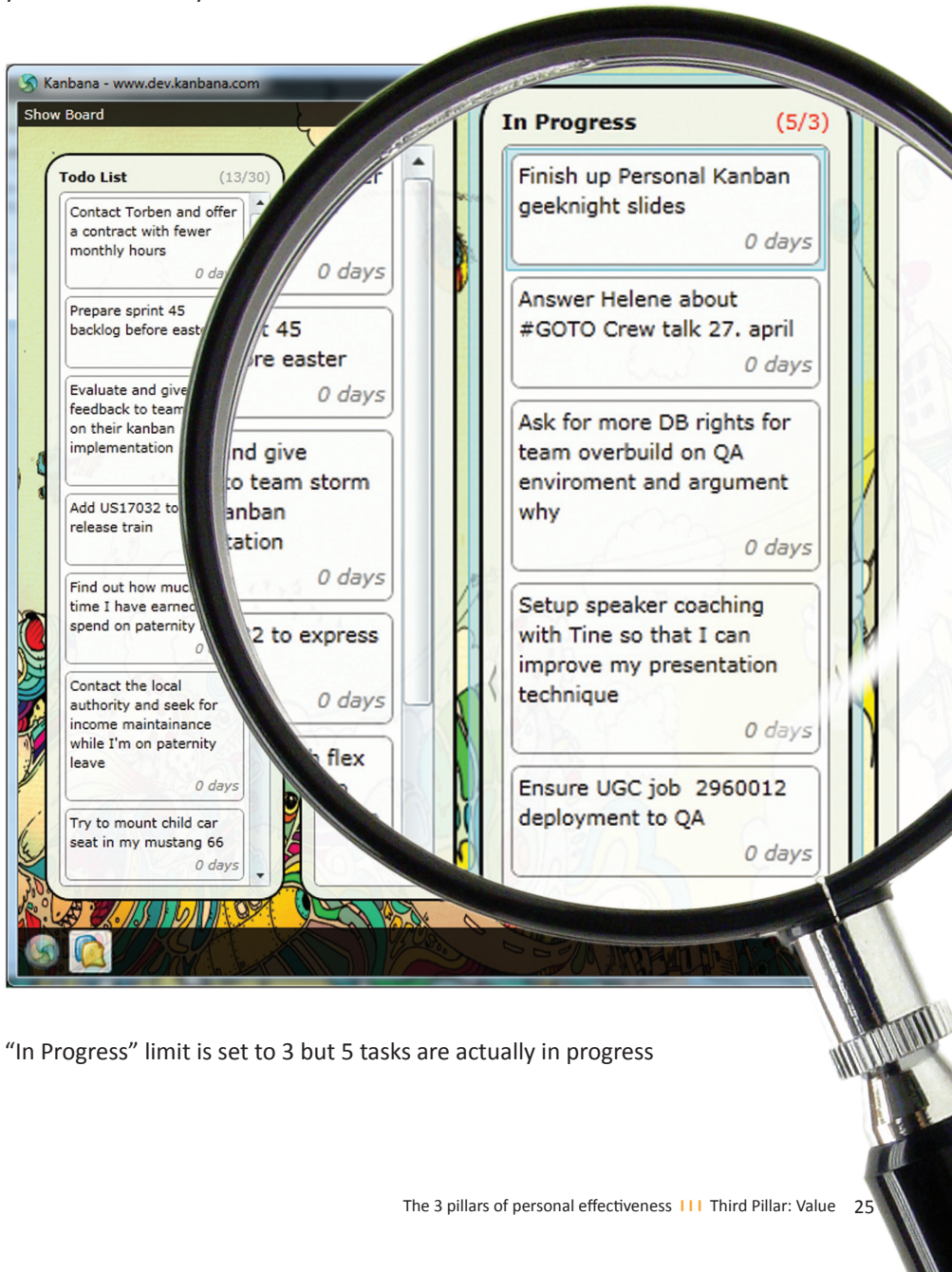
First of all, what is work in progress? If you focus on productivity instead of effectiveness you tend to think of work in progress as what you are doing right now. If you are writing an important email to someone the task is done when you have sent the email.

If you want to learn effectiveness you have to think of a task in a more holistic manner. You sending an email, is not considered done until you know that the receiver has read and understood the message behind it. A simple rule I try to incorporate into my definition of done is that your tasks need to add value before it is considered done – in other words: *“Expect value for all you do”*

Why is it important to limit your work in progress? We tend to start too many things at once because much of what we do depends on some kind of outside involvement. Without being aware of it, we create bottlenecks for ourselves because we are waiting for something or someone. Limiting work in progress is a technique used to avoid creating bottlenecks and to enable delivery in a steady flow.

4. The Zeigarnik Effect states that people remember uncompleted or interrupted tasks better than completed ones. After starting a task the human brain will have a tension that motivates us towards seeking closure.

How can I limit my work in progress? You have just started to visualize your work in progress so the easiest way to get started is to add a limit to your current “in progress” stages. Even though you have not tried this before set the limit to what you think it is today.



“In Progress” limit is set to 3 but 5 tasks are actually in progress

Positive

- Try limiting work in progress instead of starting new tasks

Negative

- Why do I have so much in progress?
- Why can't I respect my own limit?

At this point you should be around 2-3 weeks into the process of implementing your own Personal Kanban board. You have now implemented the two rules of Personal Kanban - visualizing your workflow and limiting work in progress. Now it is time to improve these two steps to get the clarity needed to be able to take fast and informed decisions.

Learn to map your value stream

Value stream mapping is the process of analyzing the end-to-end value chain. Where do I add value? Where do I waste my time? Where do I wait? Where do I need buffers? How can I ensure that my effort adds value in the end? By asking yourself these questions you can start visualizing a more accurate workflow that will take your effectiveness a step further.

Work in progress is now split into 3 stages: (Illustration on page 27)

Doing – what am I focusing on right now? To incorporate The Pomodoro Technique® into your workflow this stage could also be named “Pomodoro”.

Waiting for feedback – after analyzing my work 3 of my tasks where actually waiting for someone's feedback to move on. This is a typical non value adding stage that until this day still is a bottleneck I have to be aware of.

Evaluate – the purpose of this stage is to ensure that I spend time evaluating everything I do. Ask myself if this task has added any value or if something has to be done before it can be completed. When finally dragging it to the done stage, this is a good chance to appreciate your own effort.

Remember this is personal. Try to analyze your own value stream and visualize it. It should give you more clarity right away. If not, rethink it.

Todo (13/30)

- Contact Torben and offer a contract with fewer monthly hours *0 days*
- Prepare sprint 45 backlog before easter *0 days*
- Evaluate and give feedback to team storm on their Kanban implementation *0 days*
- Add US17032 to express release train *0 days*
- Find out how much flex time I have earned to spend on paternity leave *0 days*
- Contact the local authority and seek for income maintenance while I'm on paternity leave *0 days*
- Try to mount child car seat in my mustang 66 *0 days*

Doing (1/3)

- Finish up Personal Kanban geeknight slides *0 days*

Waiting for feedback (3/3)

- Ask for more DB rights for team overbuild on QA environment and argument why *0 days*
- Ensure UGC job 2960012 deployment to QA *0 days*
- Answer Helene about #GOTO Crew talk 27. april *0 days*

Evaluate (1/2)

- Setup speaker coaching with Tine so that I can improve my presentation technique *0 days*

Done (0/30)

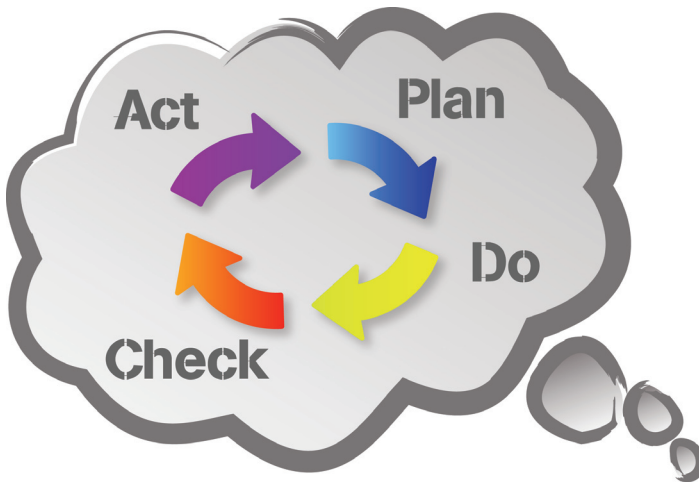
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Learn to kaizen

“Embrace change” is one of the 12 agile principles⁵. People living in the agile world agree that we have to embrace change if we want to succeed and I believe this applies to our personal lives as well. Everything around us is changing so fast that we have to adapt to this fact in order to navigate our lives in a positive direction.

But how do we embrace change? How can I motivate myself to see “change” as something positive?

From my perspective you have to think of change as a fact and an opportunity to do better. How can I, by reflecting on the recent past affect the nearest future in a positive way ?



Kaizen is the Japanese word for continuous improvement or change for the better.

Kaizen is a mindset that should evolve into an integrated part of your personality. Kaizen is the fun part of becoming an effective person because it is about experimenting and trying out things without taking them too seriously. If you think of every initiative as an experiment it all becomes more fun because you will have the willingness to take chances. From time to time you will be surprised of experiments that with little effort will have a huge and positive impact.

5. <http://agilemanifesto.org/principles.html>

Kaizen is your key to improvement and keeping your workflow fresh, experimenting and motivating.

Practically what do I do?

Most important is to schedule a recurring personal retrospective⁶ where you reflect upon your workflow and think of a new experiment. One way to do this could be to introduce a stage called “Retrospective” with a limit of around 10 tasks. This stage will be a kind of “on demand” stage telling you to sit down and have a personal retrospective every time the stage has reached its max.

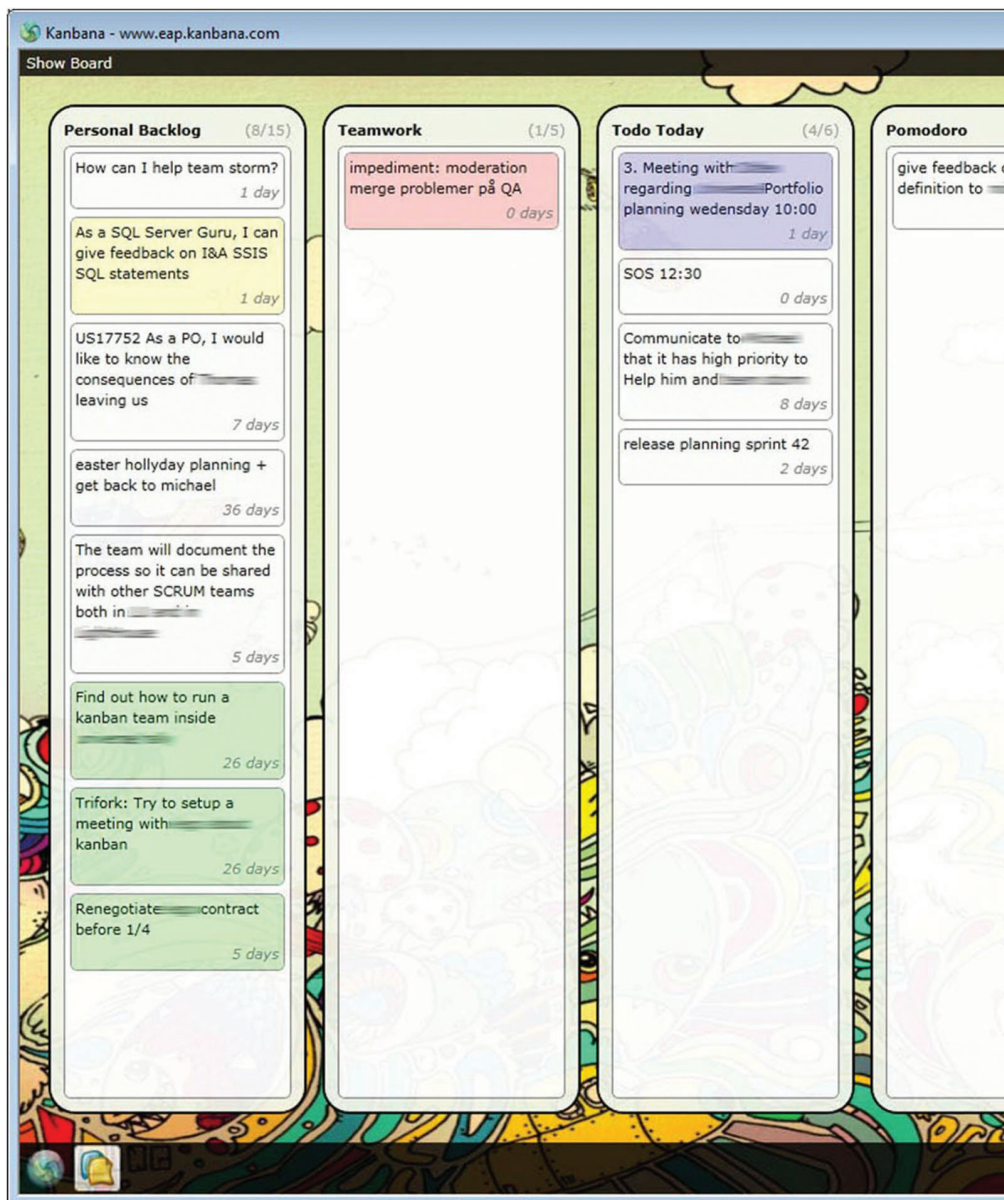
Another way is to end every week with a mini retrospective. Normally it is a very calming experience to end a week by cleaning up your board. Maybe change a stage or two and prepare for the week to come. This does not have to take more than 10-15 minutes with a good return on investment.

Learn heijunka

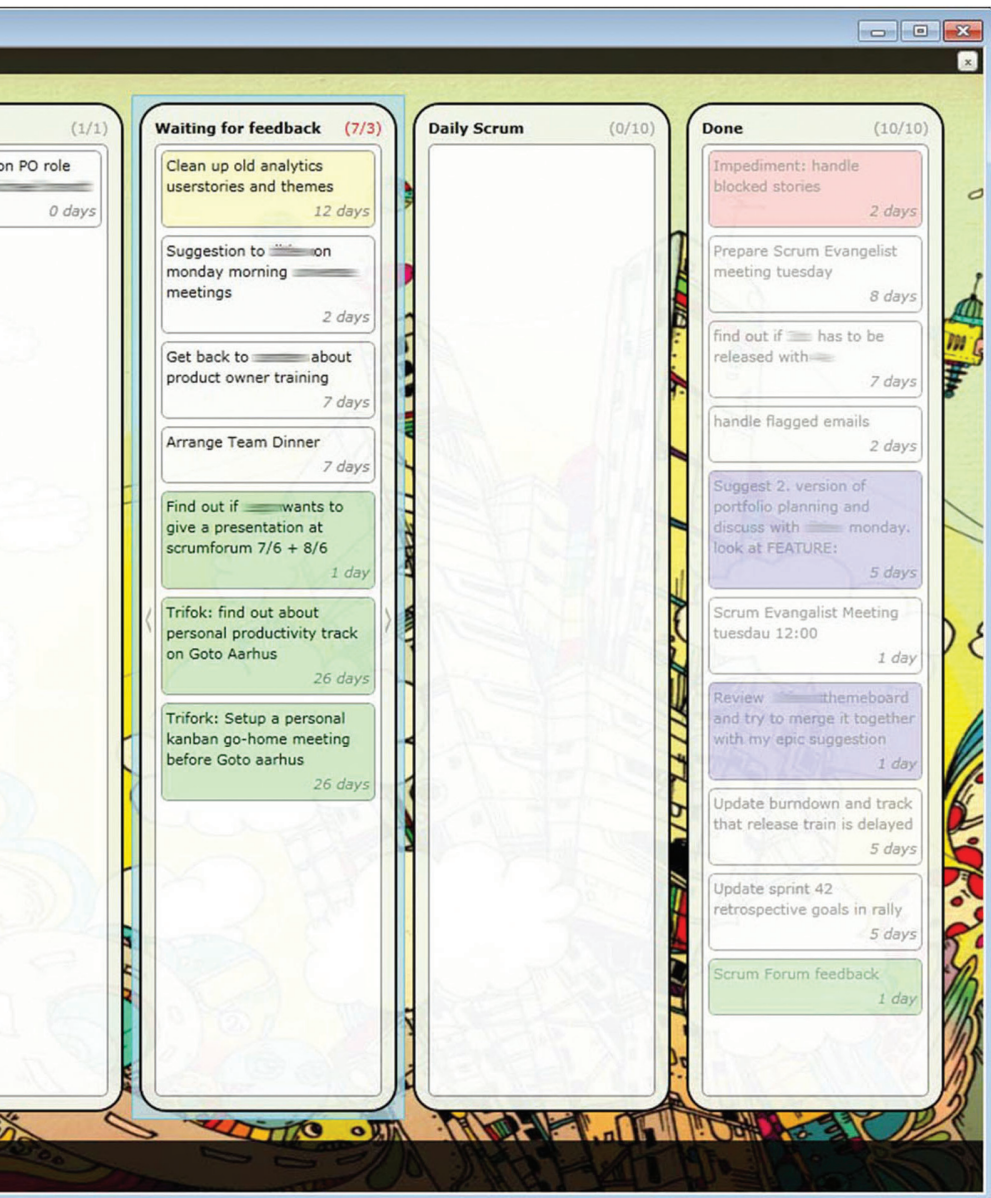
If you are convinced that limiting work in progress is a good thing the ideal picture must be that every stage in your workflow has a limit of one. In Lean manufacturing this is referred to as “**One piece flow**”. In reality this is impossible for most people, but it is still a simple vision of what we would like to achieve. Since we cannot rely on one piece flow in most situations the next best thing to strive for is heijunka.

Heijunka is the Japanese word of leveling out workflow. This is a more realistic goal of what we would like to achieve. We can strive for heijunka and optimize flow by choosing work in progress limits that are small enough to keep things moving and big enough to avoid blocks and bottlenecks in our system. Choosing a work in progress limit of 1 will naturally end up blocking your work. A limit of 10 however might keep you from following through and focus on completing your tasks.

6. Retrospective is a form of meeting where the goal is to reflect and improve. Diana Larson has written a good hands-on book called “Agile Retrospectives: Making Good Teams Great” which covers many simple practices. It is focused around teams but many of the techniques can be used on a personal level as well.



“Waiting for feedback” limit is 3 but actual tasks waiting for feedback is 7. To achieve heijunka I have to either change the limit or handle the bottleneck. Two of the tasks have a cycle time⁷ (page 33) of 26 days which indicates that I probably have to think of a solution for those two tasks instead of changing the limit.



If you look at the board as a whole it does not seem like a flow that is leveled out and in balance either. The more visual your workflow is the more tangible it becomes. It is much easier to act upon a bottleneck if it is right there in front of you and that is the key to learn heijunka.

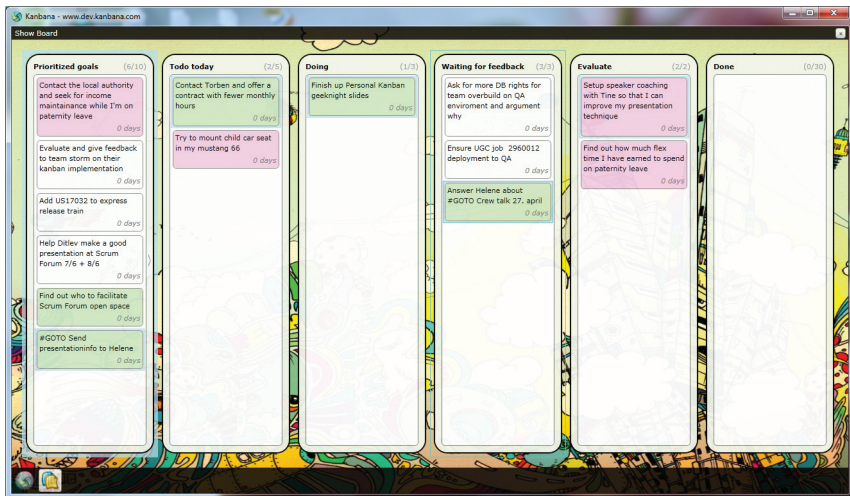
Learn to enrich the context

A simple improvement to make your Kanban board even more digestible is to add colors.

Without colors:



With colors:



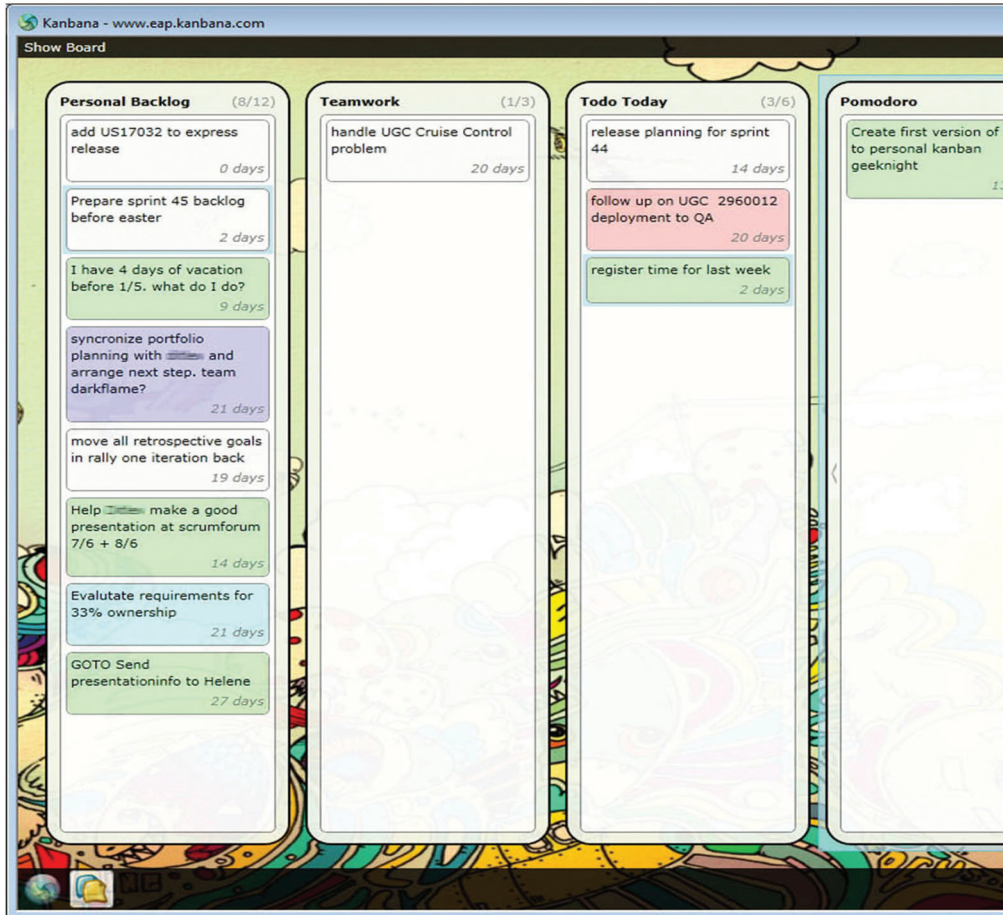
Red: personal tasks, Green: Company tasks, White: Customer tasks

The human brain is very good at associating different elements by color and shape. If you focus on the green tasks these will stand out as a whole and you can easily see the pattern between them. By associating a color with a category this will improve your ability to take fast but well informed decisions.

In the example above, we have also added our daily goals as a stage called “To-do Today” and our first stage is now a prioritized list of goals. Even though there are 14 tasks on the board it is very easy to comprehend.



7. Cycle time is the time from a task is started to the task is completed



Learn to Combine Personal Kanban and The Pomodoro Technique®

Effectiveness requires the ability to switch from being in the helicopter planning ahead of time to focusing on the execution of a single task. Personal Kanban is very adaptive and therefore fits very well in combination with The Pomodoro Technique®.

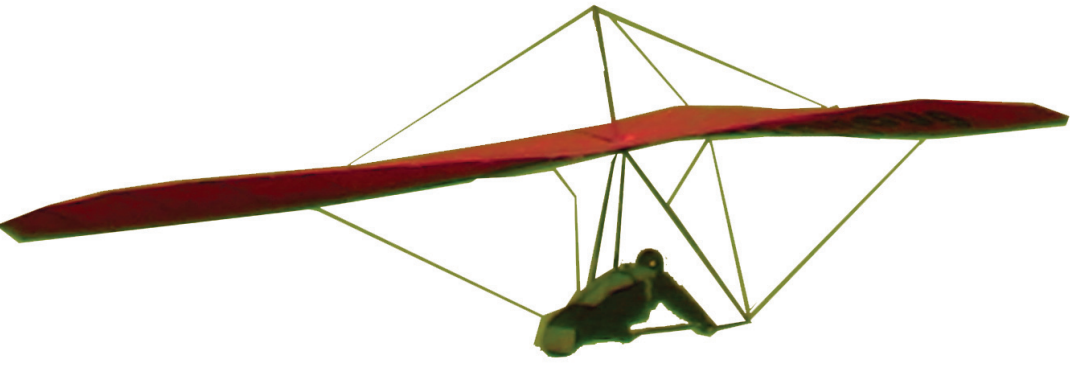
When I need to work on tasks that require my full focus I always start the timer and work by the basics behind The Pomodoro Technique®. I usually do not use all the notations mostly because I have learned how to handle my interruptions and consider this as a fairly integrated part of my skill set.



In the bottom right corner the Pomodoro Timer is counting down from 25 minutes. The board has a “Pomodoro” stage with a limit of 1 visualizing the current pomodoro iteration.

I recommend that you experiment and find your own balance. Pick and choose when to work by The Pomodoro Technique® based on the type of current tasks so that it becomes an active choice to be fully focused.

Now I would call this a full blown Personal Kanban board. It combines all 3 pillars of personal effectiveness and will be a helpful partner on your journey towards a more effective and fulfilling lifestyle.



2025
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2025
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2025

Good luck on your journey towards a fulfilling lifestyle

I hope that this book has given you useful insights into the world of personal effectiveness and that you have gained enough inspiration in order to actually get started in real life.

I have shared some of my stories and I hope you will do the same. Therefore I would love to get your feedback from reading this and stories about how it might have helped you achieve a more balanced and fulfilling personal and work life.

All suggestions to a possible third edition are very welcome. You can find me here:

- **Troels Richter**
- **Mail: trc@trifork.com**
- **Twitter: <http://twitter.com/troelsrichter>**

The screenshots are btw. from my own Personal Kanban tool “Kanbana”. Please sign up for a FREE trial at <http://kanbana.com>

Links

I want to learn more – where do I go?

Personal Kanban

“Personal Kanban – Mapping Work, Navigating Life” is the first book on the market about this topic. It is written by Jim Benson & Tonia DeMaria Barry who are also the founders of

<http://www.personalkanban.com>.

The Pomodoro Technique®

Francesco Cirillo created The Pomodoro Technique® back in 1980. A free downloadable version of his book can be found at his website.

<http://www.pomodoratechnique.com/>

Staffan Nöteberg has written a highly recommended and nicely illustrated introduction to the Pomodoro Technique® which you can find here.

<http://www.pomodoro-book.com/>

Personal Effectiveness

Timothy Ferris is one of the gurus if you talk about personal effectiveness in general. His book “The 4 Hour Work Week” is considered a must read if you are into personal effectiveness.

<http://www.fourhourworkweek.com/>

Self Development

“The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People” by

<https://www.stephencovey.com/>

“Awaken the giant within” and “Get The Edge” by

<http://www.tonyrobbins.com/>

Personal notes

A step by step guide to a fulfilling lifestyle

This mini book is for everyone who is struggling with a high daily workload and often juggling with a lot of projects at once. Maybe the clear picture of what you are doing is missing leaving you stressed out with a constant feeling of being behind schedule? This sounds like a horror story but it has become the normal case for too many of us.

The purpose of this mini book is to introduce you to the world of personal effectiveness and through simple steps help you get a better sense of **importance**, optimize your **focus** and improve your workflow in order to achieve more **value**.

*The tools used are primarily a combination of **Personal Kanban** and **The Pomodoro Technique**®.*

Trifork Agile Excellence

Since 1996 Trifork has been pushing the adoption of Agile and Lean principles in IT and has played a key role in the world wide adoption of Agile and Lean in the last decade. Trifork has vast experience in helping large and small companies transition to a more effective software delivery cycle and remains a leading edge provider of conferences, training and coaching in Lean and Agile product development. Trifork offers a wide range of standard and customized courses, workshops and change programs covering everything from low level Agile development practices to large scale Agile and Lean change initiatives. So no matter if you are looking for courses in TDD, Scrum or Kanban, need an introduction for top management to Lean product development or the most experienced onsite coaches guiding your Agile journey - Trifork has an offering that will fit your particular need.

We hope that you will enjoy this book in the Trifork Agile Excellence mini-book series and hope that you will keep us in mind should you need assistance in your Agile and Lean transition.

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