



Getting Results the Agile Way: A Personal Results System for Work and Life

J.D. Meier, Michael Kropp (Foreword by)

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In Getting Results the Agile Way, author J.D. Meier introduces Agile Results(R)-a simple system for meaningful results! It's a systematic way to achieve both short- and long-term results in all aspects of your life-from work to fun. It offers just enough planning to get you going, but makes it easy to change your course as needed. It also provides fresh starts for your day, week, month, and year. Even if you already use another time management system, Agile Results can supplement it to increase your impact and sense of fulfillment. In today's world, change happens quickly; learn how to be flexible and responsive to new opportunities. Don't just check off tons of stuff from your to-do list; do the things that make a difference. Stop trudging your way through life; bolster your energy with habits that will carry you forward each day. Quit sacrificing your personal life for your work life (or vice versa); give each facet of your life its due and find balance. In other words, learn the skills to go the distance in an ever-changing world. The beauty of Agile Results is that you don't have to adopt the entire system to see the benefits; just start with the following three basic tenets. First, adopt The Rule of 3 and you avoid being overwhelmed and become mindful of your results. Second, adopt the Monday Vision, Daily Outcomes, Friday Refection pattern and you set the wheels in motion for weekly results while giving yourself a fresh start each day and each week. Third, set up boundaries for your Hot Spots and begin to experience work-life balance. When you're ready for more, flip through the chapters to learn how to use stories to design your day, week, month, and year; how to find your motivation; how to improve your productivity; and many more. Agile Results is a time-tested system that J.D. Meier has honed through his years at Microsoft: learning from some of the best minds, leading virtual teams, and mentoring people around the world. It is a system he can bet on time and again. This guide is the playbook for getting results that he wishes somebody had given to him so many years ago. Now, he's sharing it with you.

Getting Results the Agile Way: A Personal Results System for Work and Life Details

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Bill says

My best friend is a person who is, to all appearances, effortlessly organized. When we were roommates in college, he was up early, finished his homework in a demanding scientific discipline (while studying Chinese on the side) before dinner, and went to bed promptly by 9:00 p.m. after a leisurely dinner and a couple of hours of science fiction. This book is not for him.

Being the opposite of my best friend on the organizational scale, much of my life has been spent on a journey to bring life into focus and clean up my act. I am a modest, but not obsessive, consumer of organizational self-help books, from Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's *Flow* to David Allen's *Getting Things Done* to Gretchen Rubin's *Happiness Project*.

J.D. Meier's *Getting Results the Agile Way*, based on his experience as a program manager at Microsoft, strikes me as a thoughtful and important contribution to the genre. Meier does not despise the minutiae of task management, but he attempts to transcend it. His emphasis is on identifying measurable goals, working toward them systematically, and evaluating the results regularly. In addition, he emphasizes the importance of recognizing that time and energy are finite resources, and he writes at some length about both effectiveness — doing the right things — and efficiency — doing them well.

Part of being both effective and efficient is boundaries and balance. If you work to exhaustion, it affects your ability to perform in every other area of your life. If you do not get at least a minimum amount of sleep, you won't function effectively. If you do not have some fun, your motivation will plummet. And if you do not pay attention to your relationships with other people, they will atrophy. While these observations may seem obvious, it nevertheless takes a certain amount of planning and discipline to ensure that people schedule a ceiling to the amount of time spent at work and a floor to the amount of time spent for fun, sleep, and other people.

Beyond his emphasis on the importance of short and long term goal setting, Meier is also an astute observer of the self-defeating mind games that prevent people from working effectively toward their goals, and he breaks down a number of simple strategies for addressing them, from settling for something less than perfection on a first iteration to plunging into work to escape analysis paralysis.

In all, Meier's book achieves what should be the goal of every good organizational book: it does not settle for tidying our schedules, but insists that we examine our goals in the hope that we will choose to live more meaningful lives.

Teacup says

This was an eye-opener for me. It really changed the way I systemized my life. For the longest time I've followed the GTD method, and while it's still effective, there are parts of it that made me feel GTD was more effective as a project management system and curating information for projects as opposed to a full-fledged system to organize a lifestyle. Meier's book is a conclusive approach, thought at times it feels slightly overwhelming at the amount of information that is required to set up a system like that. I imagine to a

beginner it might feel too much to plan in this intricate way daily life; however, you can always simplify it. I do not follow Agile to the tee. In fact, I combine both GTD, Agile and my own proven and tried methods. I highly recommend reading the book for any productivity fan.

Jon Bash says

This book had a number of tips that I found really helpful in terms of getting into an outcome-oriented mindset, but...

1. It's horrendously written. Full of corporate-buzzword-salad, full of overly wordy repetitively verbose redundancy and cliches (I don't even want to count how many times he talks about "seeing the forest from the trees", or how many times he just repeats nearly the exact same material without actually adding any new information).
2. I didn't actually find it very useful in the long-run. I might borrow a couple of concepts (which is why I give it an extra star) but overall it's just not very helpful advice.

There's free info about the system online. I'd recommend just looking at that. You'll waste a lot less time.

Davy Buntinx says

Nogal weinig ruggegraat in dit boek, dat dan nog eens vol met herhaling zit.

Artur Matos says

People organisationally challenged like myself need to have a system to keep ourselves on track. For the past few years I have been doing GTD, which has been tremendously helpful but I feel it's lacking in some respects, mostly on setting priorities and ensure things are done. The system presented in this book is quite different from GTD and in some sense diametrically opposed, the most notable difference being that you are forced to think about outcomes for the day, month, and year, versus GTD where you don't attach time frames to things. There are some other interesting bits to the system, like defining "hot-spots" for your life (work, exercise, mental, etc..) and ensure everything is balanced. Overall, I feel it's a quite sensible system and I can see it definitely making a difference in my life and productivity, although I haven't implemented it fully yet.

On the writing: as noted by other reviewers, the book is awfully repetitive, repeating the same sentences over and over again. The last one third of the book has this very "self-help" feel to it and it's made mostly of bland, generic advice without any context to make it useful. I think it would be a much better book without it. Other than that, I can definitely recommend this book for anyone interested in being more organised and productive.

Heslei says

Although it repeat itself, there are a lot of good tips.

I'm putting into practice to do the worst things first and to delivery three things per day.

Mihaelaborta says

The book describes systems and practices for getting to the outcomes one aspires to, while also making sure that their life as a whole is balanced and the 'right' attention and care are allocated to all the realms that make up a functioning life.

The ideas and systems presented seem to be rooted in a lot of common sense and distilled through experience and a lot of self reflection. Thus, I personally value most of them.

The evident caveat that the book has though is that it is pretty repetitive. In this case, though I didn't mind it that much because it makes you reflect more. But it can be a bit dragging.

Suhrob says

Productivity systems are very personal, one has to sample, experiment and combine until arriving at something that works for him/herself, the tasks at hand and temperament. Therefore the star rating here is not necessarily informative. Your millage might vary.

Meier's book seems to work for me - the main reason is that it is a really small extension to my existing workflow, addressing something I was missing. As for the "tactical" side of my work management, I think I'm quite happy with that. Since a longer time I was however searching for something to give me a higher level/long term, strategical view.

Getting Things Done offers this in spades, but it is too involved, whereas Meier's system was super-easy to graft on my system.

The book also condenses a ton of positive psychology and productivity research into very brief taglines. As such it might sound slogan-y and not very substantial - it usually doesn't give reference to the quoted lit. But if you already know about most of this work, the integration of all these elements can be quite helpful.

Now to the bad side of the book - the writing here is insanely repetitive. Not in the standard sense, when 50 pages of material is fluffed up to 250 with useless paraphrasing and restatements. No, Meier simply cut-n-pastes full sections several times in the book. Incredible.

And yet - I've read it cover to cover, taking in the repetition as a didactic tool. Was it meant so? I don't know. It comes of lazy rather than "efficient". I can absolutely understand, if you chuck it into corner for the repetitive slogan regurgitation. For me this was however very useful.

Joe Cotelless says

I want to give this book 5 stars. I just can't. I stumbled upon Agile Results while reading the great book Creating Flow with OmniFocus. Checked out the website, like what I read and purchased the book.

I could have stuck with the website.

The book is poorly edited, extremely repetitive and felt derivative. Some of the concepts I had heard before by different authors. That part isn't too bad because he does bring them together in an interesting way.

The big takeaway for me was the Rule of 3.

I'd suggest the author find a new editor and for the second edition focus on quality, not quantity. You have a lot of decent raw material here it's just poorly organized. It seemed like you took a bunch of blog posts put them together and didn't really hang a structure on it.

In the end, I'm going to put some of the ideas into practice and if it helps me, I'm happy to have supported the author. I just wish the material was laid out in a better way.

Shymon Shlafman says

This book is complete waste of time. It's the purest example of a book pumped up by endless repetitions and meaningless phrases, just to make it voluminous. For example, the author introduces the concept of "life Hot spot:mind, body, emotions, career, financial, relationships, and fun" and repeats the whole phrase dozens of times throughout the book.

Another striking example is the following "pearl" : "One of the best ways to make the most of any situation is to ask yourself, 'How can I make the most of the situation?'"

This is my first one-star review. I'd give this book even less, but it is impossible. Highly not recommended!!

heidi says

This book is very fractal. It introduces a concept and then circles back to it a couple times in increasing depth. It's a logical structure, but you end up feeling like you've read everything a couple times. Perhaps this is better for readers who skim.

My other overall comment is that most productivity systems written out of software make me resentful because they assume that my home-life schedule is something that can be managed. I think I speak for a lot of working parents when I say that my schedule is something that I manage the same way surfers manage waves.

Useful concepts I will take from this book:

Outcomes, not activities. You don't want to be doing something, you want a finished product to show for your work. Write your tasks to reflect that.

Fix time, flex scope. You have the time you have. Instead of changing that, change how much you are trying to get done in that time.

Use your vision of the end result to drive your motivation and self-analysis.

Don't wait for inspiration. Even uninspired work is more useful than nothing.

Pretend to think like someone else to work your way through problems you are stuck on. Pick problem-solving heroes and ask yourself what they would do in a similar situation.

Work from an abundance mentality. Instead of assuming there is only so much of anything to go around, ask yourself how you could make more.

Growth feels awkward.

Things I could have lived without:

I thought that even for the structure of the book, there was a lot of repetition.

I found the emphasis on exercise and diet pretty ableist. Not everyone can "work out to maintain their health".

I was completely vexed by the assumption that emotional work was a knowable obligation. That may be true for other people, but I think that system would come up against a lot of grief given one week with kids who have the flu. To me, emotional work is much more interrupt-based, and when it's happening, it's the thing that's blocking everything else.

Read if: You are looking for a way to think about organizing and timeboxing yourself that is derived from Agile development methods. There is a lot to be gained from some of the concepts presented here.

Skip if: You will feel angry at a book that assumes you are in charge of your time allocation. You are not feeling patient about repetition.

Also read: *Cheaper by the Dozen* for another way to think about time use.

Erin says

Seriously? The guy needs a better editor. The whole book is a mess of buzz words. Examples: "unimportant items slough off.....you'll rehydrate the when needed." Rehydrate? Rehydrate. "Find a way to flow value...chunk your results down." I have no clue what he means. "Create glide paths". "Identify hot spots". "Create scannable outcomes". "Threats" "levers" "actionable"

This is a Dilbert cartoon. I suspect the book could be rewritten in one chapter if the editor asked him to use regular, that is, untrendy, phrases.

J Crossley says

Redesign Your Processes

I really found this book helpful. It is full of information. Sometimes I get bored when there are a great number of stories to illustrate the principles that the author is speaking about. This was just right.

The author structured the book so that you can understand and remember the concepts. At the beginning of each chapter, he would say what you would learn. Then he gave the concepts. At the end of each chapter was a summary.

The Rule of Three was great to learn. I usually overwhelm myself with way too much to do, and then I get frustrated. By focusing on the top three items for a day...month...year really helps me focus.

Rosie says

This book gives you three ways to read it - as a guide, cover to cover, or as a template, or take it for a test drive. I read it as a guide. I read it a few pages a night over a long period of time and I tried to use some of the basic ideas presented in my life, but never adopted the full structure.

I am an Agilist at work, mostly using Scrum, and I use personal kanban a lot in my daily work and personal life. This book presents a fairly complicated structure for being Agile in your life. Some principles of Agile are sprinkled throughout, but mostly it just seems like a structure that worked for the author and that he or she wished to share.

It's not a bad structure, and there are some good helpful ideas in this book. I find the Personal Kanban works a lot better for me, because I already had a fairly complex structure, actually not too dissimilar to the one recommended, and need more the limitations and simplicity of the Kanban board. That said, I will likely save this book and use it from time to time.

I gave it only three stars because a) it was not easy to read and understand the complex system. It needed to be broken down a bit more, or maybe put the test drive/templates earlier in, 2) it needed more practical examples of what various items like "hot spots" were intended to read, 3) although you could adopt some of it and not all of it, I was looking at the whole and it seemed unwieldy to me, 4) I didn't like the font/format and that took away from the pleasure of reading as well.

That said, I like the rule of three, but that can be similar to Kanban or woven into it. I liked the reference chapters with ideas and will return to them. For instance, I liked the idea to watch your mottos and pick good ones. And finally I want to say your mileage may vary. This book may be just the spot o' tea for you and your goal planning system.

For me, it had some value, but also some flaws, but overall I'm glad I read it. Maybe I will use some more of it and return and update if I find more value in time from the ideas, but I think my notation about organization will remain.

Lilit Yenokyan says

This books would have been more suitable as a corporate workshop handbook on time management rather than a serious read. The same concepts, ideas even sentences kept re-occurring all though the book. Everything could have been summarized in 30 pages. I found chapter 10 - results frame, personas and pitfalls the most interesting part.

I heard about this book while working at Microsoft, and could "feel" the corporate approach of the author who has been a program manager at Microsoft for many years while reading it. I am a person who keeps weekly and daily todo lists, and even for me some of the techniques suggested, such as time-boxing your day, and having an exact plan, e.g.

7:00AM wake up
7:10AM workout
7:40AM shower
8:10AM breakfast

8:45AM drive to work

...

seemed too obsessive compulsive. I think it is much more effective to plan for the main goals for the day, rather than have specific slots allocated for each activity.

Overall an interesting read, but it could have been really shortened.
