



work. life. creativity
it's about being done.

March 2011 Newsletter

You're a creative. I'm a creative. We're all creatives - and like most creatives, you too probably think you can't get organized or be super productive *because* you're creative. Well, I'm just going to come out and say it...

You're wrong.

Schedules don't work, right? Those silly outlines - who uses those anyways? Left-brained people, that's who. But you're not left-brained. No wonder they don't work for you!

You need something *visual*. Something tangible that you can see, touch, and move - and it has to start messy, just like your brain. That's where Kanbans and mind-mapping come out to play.

You've likely already heard about mind-mapping and Kanban systems, but until now figuring out those systems probably required a bit more left brain than you have. This month at WLC, I'll help you navigate these systems to make them work for you.

First off we'll get you going with mind-mapping. Anything that seems overwhelming to you - from cleaning the house to writing an essay - can be simplified with a mind map. Even learning to use Kanban systems are a bit easier if you map it out. It enables you to get all the details in one place and look at them in small, chewable chunks, right when you need them - among other benefits.

The most basic mind map is built very simply. Get a sheet of paper. Put the name of your project in the middle, circle it. Draw a line from it, write your first thought, and put a square around it. If your next thought stems from that first thought, draw a line from the first thought and repeat. Just dump your thoughts one after the other in this fashion, and eventually you'll have a full mind map.

I like to start mind-mapping on paper then re-build it and flesh it out even more in a mind-mapping application like Freemind. You can read all about it and download it here for free - http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Main_Page

But a mind map doesn't help you put together an action plan. Being a creative, I know scheduling time for projects doesn't always work. You end up over- or under-estimating how much time it will take because the creative process isn't exactly stopwatch friendly.

The most useful Kanban system for getting things done is the visual board. In short, you put cards up on a board to represent goals, tasks, steps, and overdue elements. When you move one card, all the cards "behind" it move too, leaving the single most important task always front and center. You can get a simple free digital Kanban visual board at AgileZen.com.

There's a lot of rules and guidelines you have to follow when using the Kanban visual board, but once you get the system started it really simplifies the rest of the process. Second to the visual board are Kanban bins, but those are really only useful if you have some kind of supply chain - and they're another story for another day.

If you're already itching to get started, here's another perspective - <http://paulklipp.com/images/PersonalProductivity.pdf>

Of course if it all reads like so much Greek to you, come join us at the WLC forums and blog throughout the month for a right-brained translation. See you there!