

[How I Simplified My Life](#)

Well, it's been a while since my last blog-post :-). Since [REWORK](#) inspired me to share more stuff, I'll now share how I simplified my life in the past months and years.



Ever since I've read [The 4-Hour Workweek](#) simplification became one of my key principles of life. Since then, my selective perception kicked in and I see, read and hear about this principle everywhere (e.g. in books of [Thich Nhat Hanh](#), in my productivity bible [Zen to Done](#), the Simplify Your Life audiobooks and many more).

Here are examples of what I've done so far and why:

- Low-information Diet: I stopped reading newspapers and watching news 100%. If something really important is happening in the world, people will tell you. Positive side-effect: The constant negativity isn't depressing me anymore.
- Quality reading only: I stopped reading magazines 100%. Instead I read books. My attention is a very limited resource. Why waste it on crap that will be out of date in a couple of days or weeks? The only exception left is Twitter: I only follow 20+ people and spend a couple of minutes per day. But honestly: Reading a book or listening to an audiobook would bring more value per invested minute.
- No alcohol: Since 6+ months I eliminated alcohol completely and switched to tea as my main beverage. It makes life so much simpler: Never worry whether you can still drive or not. No more hang-overs. Better sleep. Healthier liver. Less expenditures. And many more.
- Stick to Getting Things Done / Zen to Done: GTD/ZTD is my main organizational foundation

since more than 2 years now. The main advantage is that it keeps your brain empty by using a reliable system (note: the human brain is NOT a reliable organizational system). I've implemented it everywhere, from business to private, and I use it for absolutely every task and routine (grocery shopping, holiday planning, project management at work, weekend routine including laundry etc.). At [Trigami](#), GTD/ZTD has been built into the heart of the organization. It's how we think, it's how we act and it's a requirement for every employee.

- Meditation: Since more than 1 year, meditation is a core component in my personal development program. Mental health and mental strength is key for every human being. Bad habits intoxicate most of us. We're driven by emotions more than we're aware of. Our mind is blurred. This is not a good foundation for a truly happy life. Mental training helps me to relax, to get a clear mind and to transform my unfavorable habits. I also learn what's truly important in life (and if we're really honest we might realize that it's NOT money and NOT success—yet we forget that too often).
- Let old memories go: Some of us have a (secret) box with old letters, photos, postcards etc. Why hold on to them? So I eliminated most of them last summer. And it was a relief.
- Deleting SMS: There was a time when I stored almost every SMS I received. Not anymore. After reading/replying it gets deleted. It's a tiny habit, but a great relief.
- Reducing the closet: I don't buy many clothes. Yet it's unbelievable how many I own and how a little percentage of it I really wear. So I've put countless of bags to the Red Cross container—and I'm not done yet!
- Using a labeling machine: David Allen said it loud and clear: Get a labeling machine! It took two years to follow this advice, and I have to say: It's awesome and absolutely worth it! And it pushes you to define a fixed place for every item. Find the place, label it and never worry about where to put things anymore!
- Throw away administrative paperwork: Again a very tiny habit: Once an invoice is paid, I throw it away. Once an bank statement is scanned over, I throw it away. There was a time when I collected those things in folders to never look at them again. Those times are over. If something is worth keeping, I scan the item and throw the original away.
- A-Z filing systems: No matter if digital or physical, I use A-Z filing systems (thanks David Allen!). On my computer, I have an @Inbox and a @References folder. First, I've put all my mess into @Inbox, and then sorted it into @References in the A-Z fashion. That way I find everything I'm looking for in a matter of seconds, without ever using the search function.
- Only one computer: Since more than two years I'm only using ONE computer. No more syncing-pain and only one machine to maintain. I strongly recommend this.
- Tea: There was a time when I was convinced I can only drink tea with 2-3 pieces of sugar. Not anymore. I've eliminated the sugar out of the equation. Plus: Instead of waiting for the tea to cool down I only fill half the cup with hot water, wait a while and fill the rest with cold water. I might not get a medal of honor by the Queen of England, but it sure makes my life simpler ;-).
- Public transportation: For years I've been using a scooter as my main transportation vehicle. Now I switched to public transportation. Timed correctly it's as fast. Yet it's more relaxing and if you wish also more productive.

I think you get the picture. The conclusion is that I've made it a habit to change my habits, and I've become pretty good at it. And I will keep doing it. And just because these are the things I believe in today, doesn't mean I will believe in them tomorrow. Habits change. Beliefs change. Life changes.