



An Agile Music Business

From SYFR Co-Founder | Sean O'Leary

Why Agile Methodology?

If your goal is to live off music then music is a business. In business, data is a key indicator of growth and agile methodology allows businesses to be data-driven without sacrificing creativity.

You should use agile if you would like to...

- Improve work quality and quantity
- Take more risks
- Reduce pain of failure and often presents the correct pivot
- Create a predictable schedule for output and growth
- Focus on creating value and ROI
- Implement accountability
- Create transparency
- Improve communication
- Dives fan engagement and satisfaction
- Live off doing something you are good at

What Is Agile Methodology?

Agile Methodology is an approach to project management that is often used in software development. This method assists teams in responding to the unpredictability of constructing software. It uses incremental, iterative work sequences that are commonly known as sprints.* Put simply: plan... plan some more... make/record/shoot/learn something... release it... measure... repeat.

A few of the companies who use agile:



Spotify®



facebook®



slack

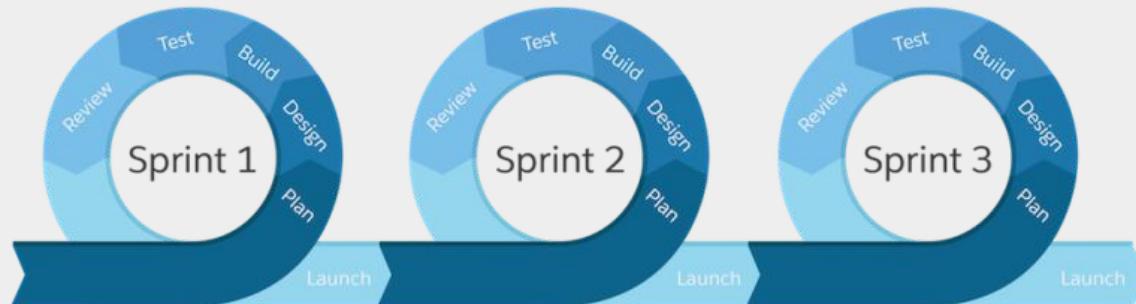
Google

SYFR
projects

* <https://linchpinseo.com/the-agile-method/> - source & great place to learn more about agile

How Does Agile Work?

Agile is how you plan out your day, week, month, quarter, year, etc. If you're an entrepreneur, it becomes how you live and structure your life. At the heart of agile are Sprints. These are 1-4 week periods where focus is on a single or select few projects. Sprints can be used to: make music, RESEARCH & LEARN, book shows, launch merch, develop & execute releases, network, create brand partnerships, and so much more! There are a number of events that happen on a daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly ($\frac{1}{4}$ of a year) basis that key aspects/events of Agile and I will use the following slides to outline them for you. I'll also include some screenshots and real examples of how we set up our quarters at SYFR.



Setting Up An Agile Quarter

SYFR's Example

Quarter = 3 Phases

Phase = 2 Sprints

Sprint = 2 weeks

Key Events Include:

Quarter Review & Planning

Phase Review & Planning

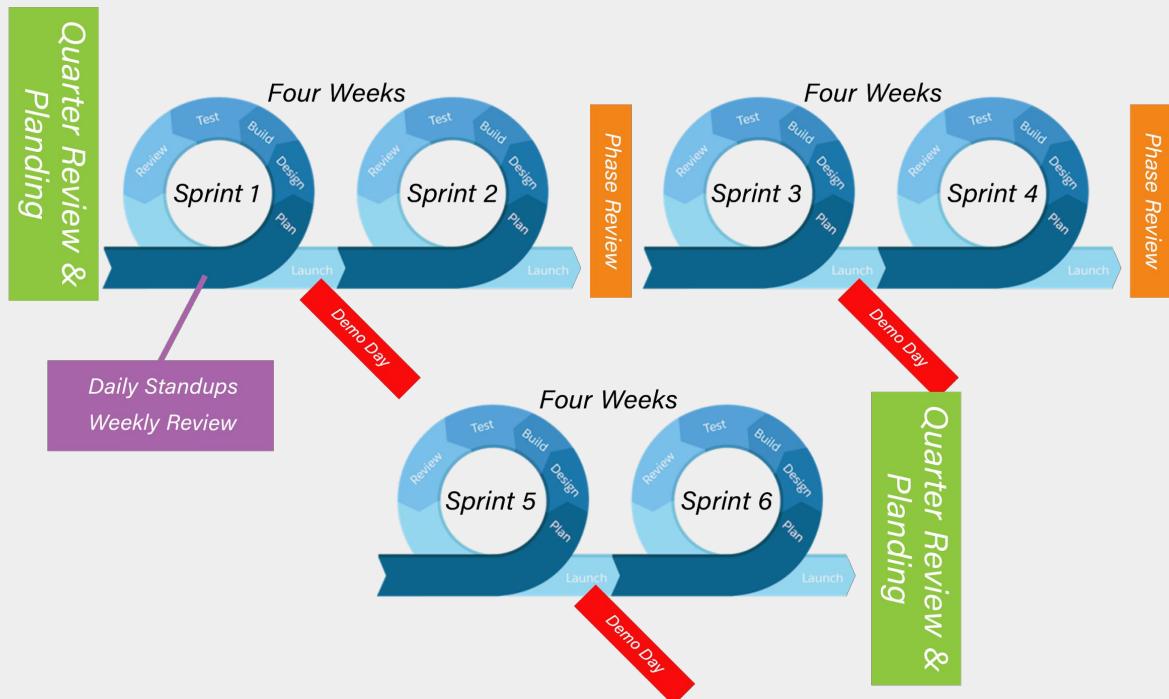
Phase 1-1 Meeting (personal)

Phase 1-1 Meeting (business)

Demo Days

Daily Standups

Weekly Call With Advisor



Quarterly Reviews & Planning

Objectives

#1 accountability

did we do what we said we were going to do?

#2 alignment

is our work bring us closer to our goals for the quarter/year? New ops present themselves every day. Has something significant come into play.

Do we need to iterate or pivot?

#3 consolidation of information

doing this correctly will allow us to reflect and plan future quarters more efficiently. If we know clearly what works and what does not we will be able to scale more effectively. Transparency for everyone involved

Quarterly Review & Planning

Part 1 - Review

#1 Reflection & Goal Setting

Reflection - 1 hour

High-level honest self and peer reflection on the last quarter.

Each individual should write down things that went well, went shitty, they could have done better, where they excelled, favorite moments, and ask each other they did well and could have done better. Make bullets on paper but this should be a discussion. (example on next slide)

Looking at last quarters goals - 30 minutes

Looking at key metrics- 30 minutes

Where are we at on Insta, Spotify, Apple, YouTube, FB, SC, etc.

#2 Rocks, Anchors, Sails - 1 hour

Everyone on team gets notecards and spends 5 minutes writing everything they can think of as a rock, anchor, and sail this coming quarter. (example on next slide)

Rocks = Things that will end your career or business

Anchors = Things that can slow you down

Sails = Things you have going for you

Once you have all your Rocks, Anchors, Sails written down, by category, share what and why you wrote the R.A. or S. with your team. As a team go through and identify the top 2-3 for each category. These will be topics you refer to throughout the planning process and quarter.

Quarterly Review & Planning

Reflection Ex:

What do you feel like went really well?

- Ryan
 - Music Video - production, content creation
 - Networking
 - Making music
 - Release
- Sean
 - Second ^
 - Created multiple new opportunities with partners and industry folks
 - Wheels rolling on studio sessions

What do you think went kinda shitty?

- Ryan
 - Extra things we could have done during the music video shoot
 - Did not make the most of relationship with Legends
 - Getting the video premiered on a blog
- Sean
 - Contracts and clear upfront agreements
 - Not having food on set

Rocks, Anchors, Sails Ex:

ROCKS, ANCHORS, SAILS:

Rocks - things that could end this

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| <p>#1 Not Following Through on commitments
- not communicating correctly</p> | <p>#2 Getting Into a Bad Deal</p> | <p>#3 Making Unconscious Decisions
- Defamation
- Drugs & Alcohol</p> |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|

Anchors - things that could slow us down

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| <p>#1 Personal issues</p> | <p>#2 Not Sticking To Agile Process
- Prioritizing incorrectly
- Skipping Standups
- Time management
- Putting off tasks</p> |
|---------------------------|--|

Sails - things we have going for us

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>#1 Work Ethic
- Commitment
- Knowledge/learning
- Energy & Health
- Character
- Agile Process
- Business plan</p> | <p>#2 Brand
- Personality
- Great music
- Great vision
- Engaged fans
- Racing</p> | <p>#3 Business Opportunities
- Connections & Network
- 100% ownership of music and brand
- A great artist, producer, team member contract
- Engaged brands,
- History working and modeling with major brands</p> |
|--|--|--|

Quarterly Review & Planning

Part 2 - Planning

#1 “Existing” Opportunities This Quarter

For each op write out:

Why?

What work is to be done?

Who is involved?

Where is the work being done?

How long is it going to take to complete?

#2 What else do you want to get done this Quarter?

For each objective write out:

Why?

What work is to be done?

Who is involved?

Where is the work being done?

How long is it going to take to complete?

#3 Project Prioritization

Review opportunities outlined in #1 & #2 and rank them from 1-X in order of priority and when it should be addressed.

#4 Quarterly Goals

Write out your goals for the quarter.

#5 Phase Outlines

What are your goals for each phase?

What will you be working on in each phase?

Begin outlining sprints for each phase

#3-5 examples on next slide

Quarterly Review & Planning

Goals (examples)

Q4 GOALS

- #1 TIGHTEN UP OUR SHIP
- #2 ROUND OUT WONDR'S CORE TEAM
- #3 WONDR IS THE GUY TO WATCH IN NC
- #4 RAISE CAPITAL AND SUPPORT FOR DEBUT EP
- #5 PERFORMANCE ON LEVEL 10
- #6 MAINTAIN & CULTIVATE NEW RELATIONSHIPS WITH BRANDS AND PARTNERS

Phase Outline (example)

Phase 1 | 7/15 - 8/11

- 1 task
- 2 task
- 3 task
- 4 task

Phase 2 | 8/12 - 9/8

- 1 task
- 2 task
- 3 task
- 4 task

Phase 3 | 9/9 - 10/6

- 1 task
- 2 task
- 3 task
- 4 task

Key Projects (examples)

Q4 KEY PROJECTS:

- #1 "Perfect" on Agile
- #2 All New Music To Whizbang
- #3 Singles Slated For Release
- #4 Publishing & Sound Recording PRO Live
- #5 All Cue's from Raymond to Dance Moms
- #6 Successful onboarding of AJ & Liion to SYFR projects Publishing
- #7 Music Video Treatments Complete
- #8 Five meetings with Management companies 1/5
- #9 Five meetings with A&R's 1/5
- #10 Five meetings with Distribution companies 0/5
- #11 Five meetings with Booking agents 0/5
- #12 Five meetings with Publishing companies 0/5
- #13 Five meetings with potential entertainment Investors 1/5
- #14 Radio ready - NC, SC, TN, & GA
- #15 Social Media on-track and distribution plan in place - should be 2
- #16 250-500 cap WONDR show booked
- #17 Modeling and partnership ops healthy
- #18 Connecting with DSP - SoundCloud, Tidal
- #19 Email list hit 500 people



Phase Review & Planning

Every 4 Weeks (2 sprints)

#1 What Happened?

What were our objectives?

How did we attack them?

Did we achieve the desired result?

Why?

#2 What's Next

Here is where you take the goals/objectives from quarterly planning and really break down what you need to do and when these things need to be done over the following sprints. The more detail you can add here, the easier it will be to set map out your sprints and day-to-days.

#3 Demo/Presentation

Listening to new music, looking at numbers, etc.



I know this isn't helpful and I'm a nerd for making this.

2 Week Sprints

The reason we work in sprints is to frequently and efficiently deliver products and results. When one of our biggest goals is to constantly be learning, by going all out a 1-3 things over a 2 week sprints we can be confident in our findings. At the end of each sprint we often have enough data to make an informed decision as to if an initiative/product is bringing us closer to our goals so we can quickly move on.

Examples Of Sprint Objectives:

- First Single Off EP Selected
- Set List Locked In
- Producer, Engineer, & Feature Contracts Ready
- Vet 5 Engineers
- Production Partner Locked In
- Distribution Company
- More examples >>

Week 2	
Monday	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Weekly Recap & Planning <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2:45 coffee meeting with Brock <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> School Night w/ Daniela - ask about Press Releases <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> White Aston 500k stream announcement <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Instagram Sponsored Ads <input type="checkbox"/> Contracts for Bardo & Alec
Tuesday	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Instagram outreach spreadsheet to 6m reach - need WONDR's leads <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dates for Instagram <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Budget for Instagram set <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Identify what else is needed still <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Shortlist for Atlantic Session
Wednesday	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spotify Goals Solidified <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Build out analytic/tracking spreadsheet <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Build out of playlists <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> continued research on what we can do to submit to Spotify's playlists <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wizbang Meeting
Thursday	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spotify Strategy and Contacts <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lisa Heller Show
Friday	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reach out to people at Spotify <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Begin research on Apple music playlisting <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Set goals for Apple music <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Set up TuneCore Account
Saturday	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Finishing/tightening whatever we missed this week <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Studio Finishing All For You

Sprint 1 10/1 - 10/14

- Clear All For You
- Spotify Campaign Ready
- Insta Campaign Ready
- Whizbang Sync Ready
- Events & Show 2/3
- Network meetings 1/3

Sprint 2 10/15 - 10/28

- Complete detailed campaign outline
- Record a second track at Atlantic
- PR Partner Contract In Place
- Next single song selected - All for You
- Execute first two weeks of single campaign
- Outline follow up strategy
- Events & Shows 4/3
- Network meetings 5/3

We outline our sprint objectives (fig 1) and the weekly tasks (fig 2)

using a free tool called [Evernote](#).



Demo Day

At the end of each sprint

Demo day is a chance for everyone on the team to show off what you have been working on and get feedback.

Whether it's a new song, merch design, website iteration, learning, etc. this is a great way to keep everyone learning and up to speed on aspects of the business that may not be their key focus but important nonetheless.

This is a 30 min presentation with all team members present.

Once again, we are promoting transparency, accountability, creativity, leadership, and teamwork. Having this presentation on hand helps speed up the monthly review/planning process.



1 on 1's

Personal

This is a 1 hour lunch where we take the time to update each other on where we are in life. What are the things occupying our minds that are not work related. You can not efficiently promote a work life balance if you know nothing about the person you are working with life. These should both happen 2-3 times a quarter.

Business

This is a 1 hour lunch or meeting where we take the time to get a pulse on how eachother is performing. The objective is to figure out how we can better help each other reach goals and talk big picture. It's another pulse on where we are heading as a business.

Objectives

#1 Nurture a real work/life balance

#2 Nurture transparency

#3 Build leaders

#4 Find ways to be better as people & as a business

Weekly Advisor Call

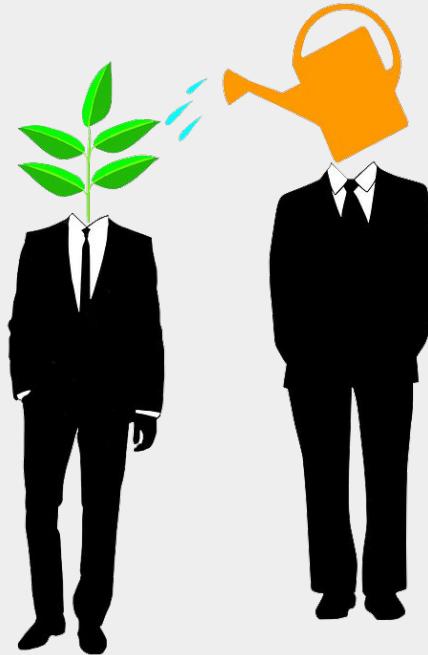
Sunday - 1 Hour

What happened last week?

What are we working on this week?

On track or off track?

Find someone outside of your business (mentor, friend, family member) and set up a weekly call to talk about work and life. Best if both people are sharing what they have going on. This call holds me accountable and keeps my father and mentor up to speed on where we are. The key is to find someone who will challenge you and teach you something. Someone who will propose questions and ideas but does not necessarily need to be in the same line of work.



Daily Standups* Do these!

Everyday - 15 mins

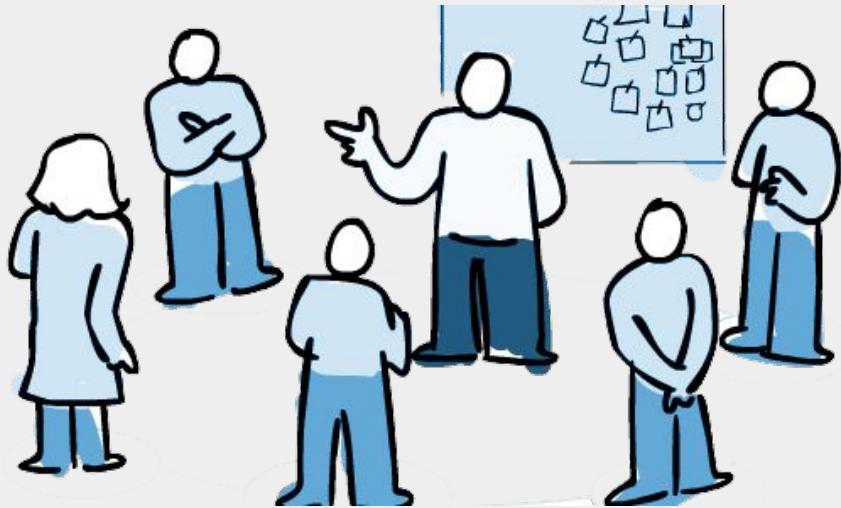
What happened yesterday?

What are you working on today?

On track or off track for the sprint?

Is there anything I can help you with?

This super short daily pulse check is all about accountability, transparency, and teamwork. If people are stuck or off track we need to know so we can help and forecast appropriately.



Agile Is Hard

I'd compare it to meditation. You're going to fail at this. You're going to get so invested in killer opportunities that pop up because you're a hustler that you'll miss standups, demo days, phase reviews, and quarterly reviews. I know we have. That said, if you keep making an effort to come back to this it is going to help you.

At the foundation of agile are core principles like accountability, having a plan, and taking a pulse of where you are today and comparing it to where you were yesterday. Low key, I think agile may just be an adaptation of the scientific method for business. I'm pretty sure this stuff is scientifically proven to increase your chances of growing as a person, entrepreneur, business, musician and literally anything you want to be.

Just like with meditation, you will get better at failing. I am optimistic that someone who is good at failing never fails.



sincerely yours, forever racing